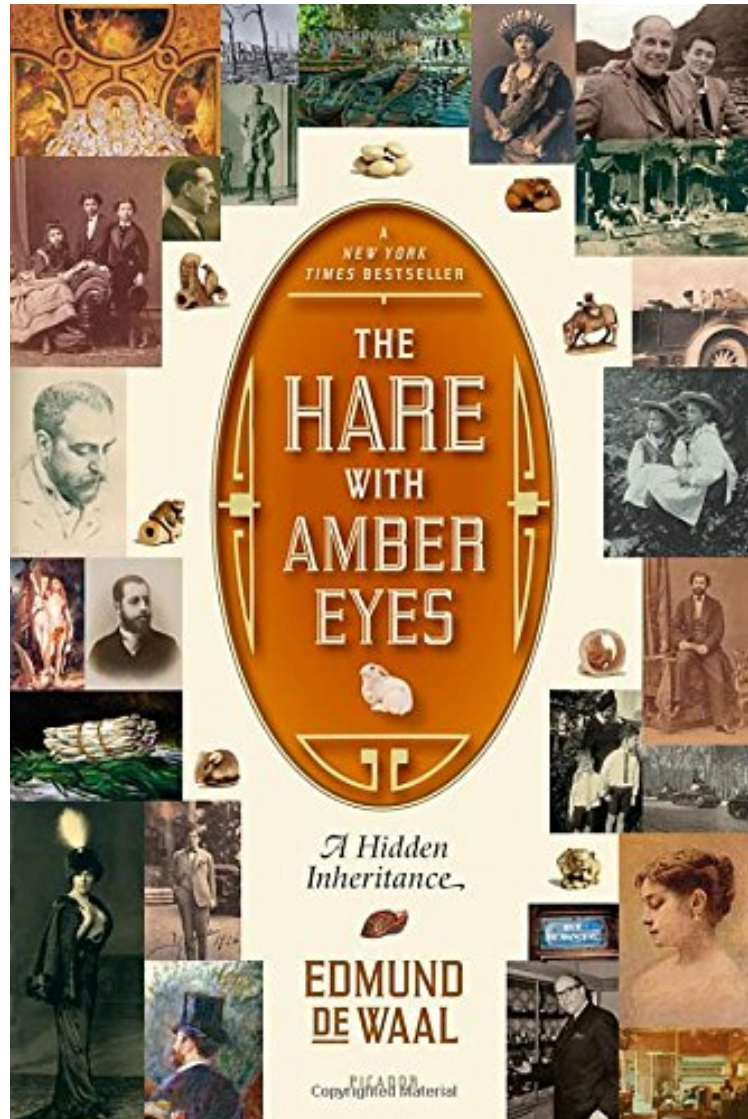


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## The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance

*Edmund de Waal*

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**Edmund de Waal : The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A FAMILY WORTHY OF BEING REMEMBEREDBy Gatas LargasMore than any account I have come across, this book depicts the horror a prominent, wealthy Jewish family experienced during the Nazi takeover of Eastern Europe. It also, on a very personal level, depicts the anti-semitism that existed long before the arrival of Hitler's army. Many of us grew up thinking that Hitler was some kind of aberration with his desire to obliterate the Jewish population when he was actually just fulfilling the fantasy of many

people in many different parts of the world. I especially liked de Waal's way of exploring Paris, Vienna, Japan, England and Russia in order to physically stand in the places where events occurred. When he visited Odessa at the end of the book and realized that it wasn't the ghetto so often depicted, he turned the whole "Jewish question" on its head. Coincidentally I watched the film "The Woman in Gold", another true story of loss in the Ringstrasse of Vienna, and it served to further fill in the history we are never taught in schools. By focusing on the netsukes his ancestor collected rather than one particular family member, he managed to avoid an over-sentimentalized look at the time period. His clear-eyed recounting of events revealed a family of resilience, hope and strength--a family that survived through adaptation as well as assimilation.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Keeping it close  
By silversides  
This is a handsome paperback volume. I love the feel of the paper pages and the heavier smooth, cool-feeling (like netsuke) cover. Holding the book to read is a pleasure. The sketches of netsuke are fittingly small for the small art form they represent. They are refreshing and enjoyable, though not really illustrations in the sense of full- or half-page pictures. The story is fascinating. Contrasting the calm, cool netsuke with the clamor and devastation of war has forever changed my view of history. Keeping track of the various sites of war and family required more attention than I give television. And the resulting involvement is worth it. My earlier hard cover version got away, but this fitting replacement will be kept close.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The objects got lost... but the family tale is captivating  
By yoni  
This book reminded me of the movie *The Red Violin*, which traced an instrument throughout its life of 4 centuries. The netsuke collection in this book is harder to connect with, as it contains 250 pieces, each possibly with its own story and so the tale can only begin logically with a collection rather than at the source of each piece. Which is why that part of the tale is weak or nonexistent, rather intangible, and ultimately makes the story fall flat at the end as there is very little to connect the objects between the then and now. Also the violin was intimately interwoven with its owners' lives as it is not just a tactile piece of art but an instrument of music-making, a livelihood. That being said, the Euro-centric journeys of the objects and their owners are compelling on their own, and, if he were willing to let go a bit, the author might have been able to make a more cohesive framework around just that storyline. The history and drama make for some very satisfying moments. I don't understand the need to possess objects or the joy it brings people, and I didn't dig all the French jargon. At times, especially in the climax of the story, I felt the netsuke and objects in general were more important to this family than the people around them. I'm not sure that was a point the author was trying to make about himself or his ancestors. Which depressed me.

A New York Times Bestseller  
An Economist Book of the Year  
Costa Book Award Winner for Biography  
Galaxy National Book Award Winner (New Writer of the Year Award)  
Edmund de Waal is a world-famous ceramicist. Having spent thirty years making beautiful pots which are then sold, collected, and handed on he has a particular sense of the secret lives of objects. When he inherited a collection of 264 tiny Japanese wood and ivory carvings, called netsuke, he wanted to know who had touched and held them, and how the collection had managed to survive. And so begins this extraordinarily moving memoir and detective story as de Waal discovers both the story of the netsuke and of his family, the Ephrussi, over five generations. A nineteenth-century banking dynasty in Paris and Vienna, the Ephrussi were as rich and respected as the Rothschilds. Yet by the end of the World War II, when the netsuke were hidden from the Nazis in Vienna, this collection of very small carvings was all that remained of their vast empire.

.com Best of the Month, September 2010: At the heart of Edmund de Waal's strange and graceful family memoir, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, is a one-of-a-kind inherited collection of ornamental Japanese carvings known as netsuke. The netsuke are tiny and tactile--they sit in the palm of your hand--and de Waal is drawn to them as "small, tough explosions of exactitude." He's also drawn to the story behind them, and for years he put aside his own work as a world-renowned potter and curator to uncover the rich and tragic family history of which the carvings are one of the few concrete legacies. De Waal's family was the Ephrussi, wealthy Jewish grain traders who branched out from Russia across the capitals of Europe before seeing their empire destroyed by the Nazis. Beginning with his art connoisseur ancestor Charles (a model for Proust's Swann), who acquired the netsuke during the European rage for Japonisme, de Waal traces the collection from Japan to Europe--where they were saved from the brutal bureaucracy of the Nazi Anschluss in the pockets of a family servant--and back to Japan and Europe again. Throughout, he writes with a tough, funny, and elegant attention to detail and personality that does full justice to the exactitude of the little carvings that first roused his curiosity.

--Tom Nissley  
From Publishers Weekly  
In this family history, de Waal, a potter and curator of ceramics at the Victoria Albert Museum, describes the experiences of his family, the Ephrussi, during the turmoil of the 20th century. Grain merchants in Odessa, various family members migrated to Vienna and Paris, becoming successful bankers. Secular Jews, they sought assimilation in a period of virulent anti-Semitism. In Paris, Charles Ephrussi purchased a large collection of Japanese netsuke, tiny hand-carved figures including a hare with amber eyes. The collection passed to Viktor Ephrussi in Vienna and became the family's greatest legacy. Loyal citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Vienna Ephrussi were devastated by the outcome of WWI and were later driven from their home by the imposition of Nazi rule over Austria. After WWII, they discovered that their maid, Anna, had preserved the netsuke collection, which Ignace Ephrussi inherited, and he settled in postwar Japan. Today,

the netsuke reside with de Waal (descended from the family's Vienna branch) and serve as the embodiment of his family history. A somewhat rambling narrative with special appeal to art historians, this account is nonetheless rich in drama and valuable anecdote. 20 bw illus. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Bookmarks Magazine A duel, and a duet, of elegy and irony (Boston Globe), de Waal's extraordinary family memoir brings his forebears vibrantly to life. To augment his research, de Waal visited his surviving relatives and toured his ancestors' palatial homes, and these intimate explorations, relayed in self-assured and unsentimental prose, imbue his story with the solemn, awe-inspired air of a pilgrimage. The critics praised this sensitive and richly detailed history, particularly de Waal's powerful account of the Nazis' atrocities. While the San Francisco Chronicle, the sole voice of dissent, found de Waal's story boring, the Christian Science Monitor declared that "there isn't a dull moment" in it. The Hare with Amber Eyes--part biography, part travelogue, and altogether a rip-roaring good story--should appeal to readers as well.