



# The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance

By Edmund de Waal

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**The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance** By Edmund de Waal

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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 Ephrussis, over five generations. A nineteenth-century banking dynasty in Paris and Vienna, the Ephrussis 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.

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## **The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance** By Edmund de Waal Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon 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 Ephrussis, 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 Ephrussis, 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 Ephrussis 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 b&w illus.

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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.

### Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Kevin Serna:**

As people who live in the modest era should be upgrade about what going on or info even knowledge to make these keep up with the era which can be always change and progress. Some of you maybe will update themselves by studying books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which one you should start with. This The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

**Kathryn Robinson:**

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**Catherine Hershey:**

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