

The Hare with Amber Eyes – A Hidden Inheritance by Edmund De Waal.  
Chatto and Windus 2010.

Edmund de Waal is Professor of Ceramics at the University of Westminster and a world renowned potter, he is also the scion of an extraordinary Russian Jewish family, the story of whom he tells in this wonderful book.

At the core of the story, and holding it together is a fabulous collection of netsuke, assembled originally by De Waal's ancestor Charles Ephrussi in Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which came into the author's possession via his beloved great uncle Ignace, known as Iggie.

The Ephrussi family originated in Berdichev but became fabulously wealthy and spread, like the Rothschilds, to other European countries, where their palaces and lives became bywords for Jewish success, and ostentation. Nowhere was the latter more in evidence than in Vienna where the family, now ennobled, owned a palace on the Ringstrasse; sadly, as is the case with any continental European Jewish family about whom one reads, their fate, and the fate of their possessions and wealth has an inevitable dark ending, and this adds a poignancy to much of the central section of the book.

But its conclusion, which stars Iggie and his long time Japanese companion and lover Jiro Sugiyama is gloriously upbeat and full of hope and joie de vivre.

The Hare with the Amber Eyes tells the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century European Jewish story in microcosm in a delightful way, and is one of those books that is fascinating, engrossing and informative in equal measure.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh