



Migrating Objects and Wanderers between Worlds: Cosmopolitan Selves in Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes*

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Abstract

Edmund de Waal's widely acclaimed family memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) is a hybrid text that fuses biography, autobiography and the biography of objects and interlaces these with critical reflections on art, transnationality, cross-cultural communication and the development of cosmopolitan identities. This article examines the central role of the collection of netsuke synecdochally evoked in the book's title that not only provides the pivotal structural element but also the major conceptual focus of the text. I argue that this idiosyncratic gravitational centre effects the permeability of generic boundaries by establishing an intricate relationality between the narrative's different protagonists, who continuously decentre and reconfigure each other. Moreover, the art objects' own history of migration and multiple belonging becomes a blueprint for de Waal's construction of his Jewish ancestors' highly mobile and cosmopolitan selves, which sidesteps the narrowly circumscribed vision of national or religious identities. The full extent of these connections is revealed through an examination of the author's artistic vision, his ceramic art and art criticism. Finally, I will read *The Hare with Amber Eyes* as an act of restitution in a two-fold sense: as an attempt to undo the politically motivated erasure of some of his ancestors' traces and as a historical reminder of lived forms of cosmopolitanism that can speak to contemporary debates around globalisation and migration.

Keywords: Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, family memoir, biography of objects, relationality, cosmopolitanism

Zusammenfassung

Edmund de Waals vielbeachtete Familiengeschichte *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) (deutsch: *Der Hase mit den Bernsteinaugen* [2011]) ist ein hybrider Text, der Biografie, Autobiografie und Objektbiografie miteinander verschmilzt und mit kritischen Reflexionen über Kunst, Transnationalität, interkulturelle Kommunikation und kosmopolitische Identitäten verschränkt. Der folgende Beitrag untersucht die zentrale Rolle der im Buchtitel bereits evozierten Sammlung von Netsuke, die nicht nur als zentrales Strukturelement fungiert, sondern auch den konzeptionellen Fokus des Textes bildet. Die Durchlässigkeit der Gattungsgrenzen wird maßgeblich durch dieses eigenwillige Gravitationszentrum befördert, das vielschichtige Relationalitäten zwischen den verschiedenen Protagonisten der Erzählung herstellt, die sich immer wieder gegenseitig dezentrieren und rekonfigurieren. Darüber hinaus nutzt de Waal die durch vielfältige Migrationsbewegungen und Zugehörigkeiten geprägte Geschichte der Netsuke als Modell für seine äußerst mobilen und kosmopolitischen jüdischen Vorfahren, deren Selbstkonstruktionen sich engstirnigen nationalen oder religiösen Identitäten entziehen. Ein Rückgriff auf die Keramikunst und Kunstkritik de Waals zeigt, wie stark sich dieses flexible Beziehungsgeflecht aus der künstlerischen Vision des Autors speist. Im Horizont der jüdischen Geschichte stellt *The Hare with Amber Eyes* zudem einen zweifachen Akt der Restitution dar: Erstens widersetzt sich die Rekonstruktion seiner Familiengeschichte der Enteignung und politisch motivierten Spurenverwischung, denen seine Vorfahren ausgesetzt waren, und zweitens leistet sie einen Beitrag zur kulturellen Erinnerung an gelebte Formen des Kosmopolitismus, die auch zeitgenössische Debatten um Globalisierung und Migration bereichern könnten.

Schlüsselwörter: Edmund de Waal, *Der Hase mit den Bernsteinaugen*, Familiengeschichte, Objektbiografie, Relationalität, Kosmopolitismus

Introduction

Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010) is a generically hybrid life-writing text, a kind of family memoir that traces the history of part of the author's own Jewish ancestors, going back to the Ephrussi family in mid-19th century Odessa, grain barons

and bankers who expanded their business interests across Europe by sending two of their sons to settle first in Vienna and then also in Paris. The different branches of the family became part of the wealthy bourgeoisie and key figures in the economic and cultural life of these two cities, with sumptuous palaces in the most fashionable quarters. In the twentieth century, a further dispersion of the family to other European countries as well as to North and South America and Japan was prompted by the anti-Semitic persecutions of the National Socialists and their followers in Germany and Austria in the 1930s. The family history is continued into the present, albeit in a highly selective manner, and ends with the death of the author's great-uncle Iggie in Tokyo in 1994 and the author's decision to embark on writing the book after inheriting his collection of Japanese netsuke, 264 delicately carved little figures made of ivory or wood that had been in the family for more than a century.¹

The chequered history of the Ephrussi family is shaped by social and geographical mobility, processes of emancipation and acculturation, overarching family values, a system of kinship patronage, recurring struggles against anti-Semitic prejudice and prosecution, and marked affiliations with a larger Jewish community including intermarriage with other prominent Jewish families, among them the Rothschilds. This kind of background could have turned the rich archival material unearthed by de Waal into a typical biographical work on one of the outstanding families of the Jewish economic and cultural elites of the 19th and early 20th centuries.² Alternatively, he could easily have aligned his project with the standard narratives emerging from the plethora of Jewish memoirs, autobiographies or autobiographical fictions published throughout the 20th century.³ Although de Waal taps into the reservoir of these models (his book even includes a family tree), he also significantly deviates from them. In his own, slightly disparaging words, he has no intention 'to get into the sepia saga business, writing up some elegiac Mitteleuropa narrative of loss.'⁴ While it is not entirely clear what texts exactly he is referring to with this epithet, one can register a decided unease with the formulaic and with run-of-the-mill generic patterns. In contrast, he is primarily interested in (art) objects and the way they engender stories. More specifically, his focus rests on his heirloom, the collection of netsuke that provide the inspiration for the book: 'I want to know what the relationship has been between this wooden object that I am rolling between my fingers – hard and tricky and Japanese – and where it has been.'⁵ The netsuke originally came into the family when one of de Waal's art-loving forebears acquired the collection from a Parisian art dealer in the 1870s, and were then handed on from generation to generation, travelling from Paris to Vienna to London to Tokyo and back to London. It is their journey that provides the

structural backbone of de Waal's narrative and guides his selection of characters singled out for presentation.

De Waal's own recent inheritance of the netsuke from his great-uncle in Japan compelled him to write the memoir and meet the historical responsibility that came with this legacy. This responsibility not only entails for him to undo the politically motivated erasure of some of his ancestors' traces, as I will argue, but also to explore ways of creating hybrid, basically open and inclusive forms of identity, and to reflect on the role art can play in this process. This paper investigates the different identity constructions of the book's highly mobile and cosmopolitan protagonists. In the context of a Jewish history of displacement, these constructions are necessarily fragile, temporary and flexible, and de Waal's text probes their potential to produce ways of self-fashioning that are able to sidestep the narrowly circumscribed vision of national or religious identities.

In *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, the netsuke not only play a crucial structural role for the organisation and alignment of the different narrative strands, but, as I will show, they are also set up as the major conceptual focus of the book in that they come to embody the sense of multiple belonging de Waal seeks to explore and act as a catalyst for defusing cultural nationalisms and engendering a network of highly differentiated attachments to and detachments from places and people. De Waal's choice of this idiosyncratic gravitational centre reconfigures the expected design of a family biography with the help of two major distancing or decentring devices: first, the shift from family members and forbears to the author himself and his perspective as an artist, and second, the shift from human subjects to art objects. These devices create a dynamic of oscillations and dialogues between the different players in the text that reject clear specifications, classifications and divisions, for example between biography and autobiography or memoir, in favour of creative fluctuations and (more) open spaces to facilitate conversations between self and other, present and past, text and art object. In the following, I will elaborate on the different parameters of this structural setup, from a discussion of genre to de Waal's artistic vision, his ceramic art and the relevance of art objects in his view on life writing, to, finally, the emergence of cosmopolitan selves from this cultural and textual web.

Whose biography?

The title of *The Hare with Amber Eyes* immediately begs the question of the book's principal subject(s). Judging from the text, several candidates present themselves. First of all, it unravels the life stories of some prominent members of the Ephrussi family in

a roughly chronological manner, and it is based, as we would expect from a memoir, on the author's journeys to his ancestors' former homes in Paris, Vienna and Odessa, on his archival research and on some of his relatives' personal memories. It is this strand of the book that informed the exhibition *The Ephrussis: Travel in Time (Die Ephrussis: Eine Zeitreise)* at the Jewish Museum in Vienna in 2019/2020 based on the Ephrussi Family Archives, which were donated to the museum by the de Waal family. According to the organisers' description, its aim was to examine 'the fate of the Ephrussi family' and, on 'the basis of selected objects, documents and pictures' trace 'the economic and social development of a European-Jewish family, whose descendants now live scattered throughout the world as a result of flight and expulsion during the Nazi era.'⁶ In this context, the 157 netsuke permanently on loan to the museum assumed a largely decorative function, spread out across the whole exhibition space in various vitrines.

The second focal character in *The Hare with Amber Eyes* is the author de Waal, who does not efface himself behind his subjects, but takes centre stage in several parts of the book and draws attention to his own role in the narrative. This becomes most apparent in the prominent place accorded to what Paul John Eakin termed 'the story of the story',⁷ that is the framing of the record of the Ephrussis' past by de Waal's own journey of writing the book, which allows him to introduce a number of reflections on the archival material he is confronted with and on his approach to constructing the family memoir through art objects. De Waal establishes his own narrative perspective as well as his strong affective relationship to his heirloom from the very beginning. The unfolding of the historical family network is prefaced by a section focusing on the more recent past that details his first encounters with the netsuke and his motivation to tell their story. It reveals a second field of interest that links the netsuke with his long-standing passion for Japanese art and, in extension, with his vocation as an artist. It is a connection that goes back to the very early stages of his career as a ceramicist, more specifically his one-year stay in Tokyo on a scholarship in 1992/93 when he regularly visited his great-uncle Iggie, who introduced him to the collection of netsuke and told him the stories surrounding it.⁸

This self-referentiality foregrounds de Waal as the shaper of the family's history, whose design will depend on his own imaginative access to the various characters that will filter the reading of the past. This gesture goes beyond a mere act of self-positioning acknowledging the autobiographical grounding of his biographical work in that it initiates a complex process of personal decentring that brings into play the shaping of his own self and paves the way for further textual displacements. The netsuke connect de Waal to his great-uncle Iggie and, through Iggie, to other members

of the Ephrussi family that he never met personally, and this affiliation makes him aware of the entanglement of his own life with his family's history.⁹ Although this issue is not explored in great detail in the text, it is clear that it emerges as a by-product of his accepting this very special legacy and accompanies him on his journey of researching and writing the book, turning it into an inescapable and open-ended process with an uncertain outcome. This complicated web of bonds and commitments align de Waal's narrative with more recent critical discussions advanced most prominently by Eakin on the relational nature of the self and relational models of life writing¹⁰ that have been variously taken up and differentiated, not least in the realm of the family memoir, but also with respect to auto/biographical texts more generally.¹¹ This kind of relationality counteracts unambiguous genre assignments and clear thematic boundaries, as de Waal himself realizes in the penultimate chapter: 'I no longer know if this book is about my family, or memory, or myself, or is still a book about small Japanese things.'¹² *The Hare with Amber Eyes* belongs to a 'hybrid genre',¹³ which is perhaps best subsumed under the broad and flexible label of life writing that is based on a continuum of different forms rather than on discrete genre categories.¹⁴

De Waal's question whether his work is 'still a book about small Japanese things' in the passage quoted above, leads us back to the titular hare and suggests a third, and perhaps the actual protagonist of the book: the collection of netsuke that the hare with amber eyes synecdochally represents. Carefully and lovingly handling one of the netsuke that he has carried around with him in his pocket prompts the following reflections:

This was a netsuke of a very ripe medlar fruit, made out of chestnut wood in the late eighteenth century in Edo, the old Tokyo. [...] I try and imagine who owned the medlar. It was made long before the opening up of Japan to foreign trade in the 1850s, and thus created for the Japanese taste: it might have been carved for a merchant or a scholar. [...] I realise how much I care about how this hard-and-soft, losable object has survived. I need to find a way of unravelling its story. [...] The medlar's story starts where it is made. Edo, the old Tokyo [...]. But its first resting-place was in Charles's study in Paris. It was in a room looking over the rue de Monceau in the Hôtel Ephrussi.¹⁵

De Waal is interested in both the netsuke's own independent story and the way they connect to the history of his family. They form two parallel narratives that become interlaced at a certain moment in time, cross each other's path, deflect and reorient each other's course. Telling one story leads to the telling of another story. What both

the netsuke and the Ephrussi family share is a history of migration that binds their respective trajectories to the vagaries of history and to a rich cultural and economic exchange between East and West. The fleshing out of this entanglement evolves organically from the Preface, which already constructs a nexus of travelling, multilingualism, art and inheritance as powerful agents of de- and recentring the self, of cultural communication between nations and of individual self-fashioning through geographical and cultural mobility. And it is the characters' relationship to art and art objects that provides insight into their self-constructions and their capacity to engage in a dialogue with the cultural Other.

Moreover, the netsuke also serve as the key to unlock the characters for the author, they provide the gateway to his understanding of others. In that sense they become an instrument to establish relationality. They lead him to his first biographical subject, Charles Ephrussi, and pave the way to overcome his initial dislike of this pompous young man going through juvenile acts of expensive self-stylisation. They guide his imagination, a mixture of empathy and 'pure projection',¹⁶ and their material surface and haptic quality allow him to forge an affective link to Charles through their shared possession and aesthetic sensibility: 'The netsuke – my tiger, my hare, my persimmon – have settled in Charles's study.' – 'I pick up one after another of Charles's netsuke and think of him choosing them.'¹⁷ The netsuke become the catalysts enabling de Waal to 'construct a life entirely through objects.'¹⁸ In this case, the heirloom does not primarily signify absence and loss, as has been claimed for a number of Jewish life writing texts, especially those by descendants of Holocaust victims,¹⁹ but, on the contrary, a highly effective tool to uncover and make present the story of (some of) his ancestors.

As this review shows, there is no definite answer to the question of the book's protagonist(s). We are faced with a triangular conversation between three interlocutors – autobiographical self, biographical subjects and art objects – that constitute, focalise but also decentre each other, and in this process advance and shape the narrative. Such a foundational communicative network lends substantial weight to the term life writing that I have used before. The concept of life writing is not simply a convenient generic holdall for unruly texts difficult to classify, but, more importantly, should be considered, as Marlene Kadar has argued, a 'critical practice'²⁰ with a considerable epistemological force that firmly places the individual self in a web of relations and transgresses boundaries between self and other, subjects and objects as well as different media. De Waal establishes his own perspective as an artist as the guiding principle for his book: 'How objects get handled, used and handed on is not just a mildly interesting question for me. It is *my* question.'²¹ Thus he posits an intimate

relationship between his profession as a ceramicist and his task as a writer and, in extension, an intermedial connection between art objects and texts that require a closer inspection of de Waal's aesthetic principles and their intellectual provenance, most notably his indebtedness to Walter Benjamin and, to a certain extent, Marcel Proust, as well as his critical engagement with Bernard Leach, *the* central figure in British studio pottery and 'unimpeachable authority'²² on East Asian ceramics.

Art – text – memory

For de Waal, there is an intriguing similarity, 'some kind of equivalence,'²³ between art and text, a mutually enriching, 'unstable relationship [...] between objects and words and storytelling. [...] they sit near to each other in my life and spill across.'²⁴ This fruitful connection not only stresses the shared concern of de Waal's two occupations as ceramicist and writer but also confirms the conceptual nature of his ceramic art. He describes some of his installations as stories in which the individual pot plays a specific part and carries its own associations. In that sense, ceramic objects are like characters whose narrative potential depends both on the context in which they are placed and on their past history. Their meaning shifts and is dependent on their mobility, which, in de Waal's case, often signifies cultural transfer between East and West, with the pots themselves embodying the Eastern influence in his own art. De Waal's objects are always 'in transit,' and it is no coincidence that he calls his collections of pots 'cargoes,' evoking 'the Silk Road, that conduit of luxurious goods and cultural knowledge, from East to West.'²⁵ As we have already seen, in *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, this spatial component is wedded to a temporal dimension: Objects and storytelling mobilise a web of connections that imbue the present with an often fragmentary past: 'How objects are handed on is all about story-telling. [...] There is no easy story in legacy. What is remembered and what is forgotten? There can be a chain of forgetting, the rubbing away of previous ownership as much as the slow accretion of stories.'²⁶

Especially this last point links the author's installations of porcelain vessels to memory and the arrangement of fragments into a biography. The crucial mediator here is Walter Benjamin, a kindred spirit, a Jewish intellectual who wrote 'under the sign of exile, of displacement, of loss' and who cared 'for the life of things.' Benjamin, who 'believed in mapping the world through objects,'²⁷ is de Waal's professed reference point for his family memoir and an inspiration for some of his art installations, especially the one called *Irrkunst*, a direct nod to Benjamin,²⁸ exhibited at an art gallery in Berlin (Galerie Max Hetzler) in 2016. Its centre piece consists of a large structure made up of smaller wooden units containing porcelain vessels of various sizes and

shapes as well as shards, broken pots indicating disjunction and loss. Some pieces are hidden from sight altogether or only visible behind a frosted sheet of glass. De Waal refers to this piece as ‘a sort of memory palace’:

Light comes into some spaces, not into others. There are shadows of differing intensities. You cannot see everything. Some spaces are empty, emptied. Others are very full. Some are solitary. Some you sense. There are repetitions that echo, attempts at sorting, listing and recording, hiding, storing, recovering. What survives?²⁹

De Waal’s interest in Benjamin is rooted in their shared aim ‘to give objects the attention [...] they deserve,’³⁰ not least because memories are buried in objects and, in turn, memories can be seen as objects to be retrieved. These concerns reverberate through *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, beginning with the epigraph the book opens with, a quotation from Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*. The choice of Proust is significant in more than one way. Most obviously, it anticipates a biographical connection that is later revealed in the text: De Waal’s Parisian forbear Charles Ephrussi, who first acquired the netsuke for his art collection, knew the writer well and served as one of the models for Charles Swann in Proust’s monumental work of remembering. Proust’s aesthetic principles and the role objects play in his writing must have been of even greater interest to de Waal, however, given that Proust is an uncontested master of mapping his protagonists’ inner world through objects that are gradually saturated with emotions and unfold the whole universe of their memories. In other words, with this quotation de Waal showcases Proust’s firm belief in the life-shaping power of objects that also underlies his own work. The passage in question is taken from the fourth part of the *Recherche, Sodome et Gomorrhe* (*Cities of the Plain* in C.K. Scott Moncrieff’s translation), where the ailing Swann explains to the narrator that he looks upon his own precious memories as art objects in a vitrine:

Even when one is no longer attached to things, it’s still something to have been attached to them; because it was always for reasons which other people didn’t grasp ... Well, now that I’m a little too weary to live with other people, these old feelings, so personal and individual, that I had in the past, seem to me – it’s the mania of all collectors – very precious. I open my heart to myself like a sort of vitrine, and examine one by one all those love affairs of which the world can know nothing.³¹

Swann's equation of the collector of art objects with a collector of memories motivates de Waal's vision of the netsuke as catalysts to unfold the stories of the past. Moreover, this quotation alerts us to the crucial function vitrines occupy in *The Hare with Amber Eyes* and in de Waal's artistic work in general. The netsuke are first presented in a vitrine in the salon of Charles's Parisian apartment for his visitors to admire; in Vienna they are placed in a vitrine in Emmy Ephrussi's dressing-room; and Iggie specifically designs a vitrine for them in his house in Japan. By this time, their history has already become intricately linked with that of the Ephrussi so that they trigger memories of his family when he takes them out one by one on his great-nephew's visits. It is the recollection of these scenes that evokes the words of the dying Swann for de Waal. After inheriting the netsuke, he in turn arranges them in a vitrine in his own house in London, and he now performs the action of taking them out, of handling them and weaving them into his family memoir. The vitrine as a container is suggestive. It encases a discrete number of objects and acts as a kind of framing device that metaphorically exposes the process of poetic choice and composition. It points to the modulation of distance and intentional closeness and the artfulness of narrative construction. It isolates the objects it holds from their habitual context, suspends them in time, 'pause[s] them in the world'³² and offers them up for contemplation. It momentarily arrests the viewer, orients their gaze to this or that object, arouses their curiosity towards the one or the other exhibit. For de Waal, it is the 'threshold'³³ that marks the beginning of storytelling.

The netsuke's provenance from Japan gives rise to another line of inquiry that centres on transnational migration, dialogues between East and West and, ultimately, cross-cultural constructions of the self. The model of forward-looking cosmopolitanism de Waal fashions in his family memoir at least partly derives from his critical evaluation and modification of Bernard Leach's artistic credo. The Preface opens with de Waal's two-year stay in Japan on a scholarship geared towards fostering intercultural understanding. Japan is not only a crucial reference point in *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, but also a formative influence on the development of de Waal's concept of art. It is in Japan that his close relationship with his great-uncle Iggie and the netsuke take root. It is there that the young ceramicist learns about Japanese pottery first-hand while working in a ceramics studio. And it is during this longer stay that he tries to fathom his own 'congested infatuation with the country'³⁴ and wrestles with the impact of Bernard Leach (1887-1979), the single most influential exponent and towering *Übervater* of British studio pottery, on his own work. He drafts a 'revisionist history of Leach,'³⁵ later published in the Tate's British Artists series, in an attempt to emancipate himself and find his own artistic voice and style. Leach himself had spent

many years in Japan at different periods throughout his life and called himself ‘a courier between East and West.’³⁶ He was involved in the Japanese folk craft (*mingei*) movement, became a famous potter not only in England but also in Japan and produced work that sought to combine both Western and Eastern traditions.

Leach was *the* authority on traditional East Asian pottery and instrumental in shaping the highly sentimentalised view of a pre-industrial, pure, simple and quasi instinctive folk art unpolluted by the evils of advanced civilisation. De Waal takes issue with Leach’s ideas on several accounts. First of all, he rejects Leach’s romanticised view of East Asian art that thrives on and perpetuates the Western Orientalist cliché of ‘Japan as a place of happy, intuitive craftspeople’, ‘whose immersion in tradition safeguarded them from the perils of innovation.’³⁷ He accuses Leach of considering ‘Orientals as childlike, or mystical, or more attuned to the spiritual’³⁸ and perpetuating ‘pleasingly simple polarities’³⁹ between East and West. Secondly, he addresses Leach’s politics of craft, that is to say, the ideologically problematic nature of his concept of folk art as expressive of a national character or national identity, a belief that also manifests in his intellectual closeness to the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th century. De Waal makes out a similar tendency in the post-war British Folk Art movement, which considered the crafts ‘as an essential reflection of irreducible British character.’⁴⁰ In de Waal’s view, this ‘mapping of nationality through craft’⁴¹ not only traps the artists themselves in a prescriptive formula that thwarts their creativity, but it is also damagingly static, exclusive and backward-looking:

[This craft] depends on alterity. For the Folk Craft movement the otherness [...] is of the idea of portability, taking up your material and walking, walking out, walking elsewhere. The settledness of craft needs unsettledness, what Auden put as an ‘altogether elsewhere’. Rootedness needs others to be deracinated, not to know their place. ‘Real craft’ needs others to be mere bricoleurs, people whose relationship with objects is partial, contingent, arbitrary, intellectual, metropolitan, affected.⁴²

There is no doubt that de Waal aligns himself with the ‘outsiders’ of this movement and sympathises with more future-oriented explorations of the possibilities and the meanings of art. Let me briefly add that while there is much in Leach’s writings that justifies de Waal’s harsh but also perceptive criticism of his ideas, he is certainly not the most generous of Leach’s readers, and there have been more balanced and more appreciative presentations of his work.⁴³ This is immaterial for my purposes, however, since I am predominantly interested in the way de Waal uses his rejection of Leach to

hone his own artistic credo and politics of art, which will resurface as epistemological and ethical principles in *The Hare with Amber Eyes*. The charge of Orientalism translates into the issue of stereotyping and othering that reappears, albeit in a very different way, as the danger of anti-Semitism and its consequences; and his rejection of a backward-looking, national craft leads to the championing of a forward-looking transnational attitude towards art that is more compatible with and reflective of his ideal of open-minded, unfettered cosmopolitan selves.

De Waal's third objection concerns what he sees as Leach's reductionism and simplified reading of East Asian, and specifically Japanese art that neglects 'the dense specificity of meanings that these objects have had in Japan' as well as their recontextualisations and various 'encounters with people' over time,⁴⁴ producing a complex and ever-changing network of significations.⁴⁵ With this argument, de Waal redirects the discussion about the meaning of art objects from specialist interpretations by the initiated, who, as in Leach's case, posit their supposed rootedness in narrowly circumscribed traditional or national practices, to a more open and flexible understanding of objects as successively embedded in social and cultural contexts that adapt, modify and pluralise the ways they signify. This aligns him with a strand in cultural theory influenced by the renewed turn towards materialism that promotes a biographical approach for the study of objects⁴⁶ and that focuses on the 'social life of things', as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai explains:

[...] we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human interactions and calculations that enliven things. [...] it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context.⁴⁷

Such an extended focus on material objects can be felt throughout *The Hare with Amber Eyes*. It not only manifests itself in the affective links the netsuke create between different characters but also in the way de Waal's attention to the surface and haptic quality of the individual miniatures reveals to him the traces of their individual history – much in the sense that Giuliana Bruno thinks of materiality as 'an archive of relations and transformation.'⁴⁸ Moreover, it is a perspective that binds the meaning of objects to their use and their interaction with human subjects and promotes the notion of an intertwining, a mutual imprinting and shaping of subject and object. This vision serves as a basis for the dynamic concept of self de Waal develops in his memoir, which in turn is closely connected to the transnational mobility and outlook of his Jewish

ancestors, as we will see in the following section, and to a kind of rooted cosmopolitanism, which, in Mitchell Cohen's words, relies on 'plural loyalties' and 'a multiplicity of roots and branches.'⁴⁹

Transnational conversations and cosmopolitan selves

As I indicated before, the ordering principle that de Waal chooses for his family history is the journey of the collection of netsuke over more than a century. This constitutes an ingenious way to carve out a consistent narrative based on the selection of a manageable number of characters from a confusingly wide family network and at the same time interlace the biography of objects with that of a set of interrelated subjects. This particular set-up foregrounds the importance of objects and possessions for the creation of a subject's sense of self and is able to tackle questions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism as well as rootedness and mobility.

Social placement in terms of location and the display of possessions is part and parcel of the ambitious self-fashioning of the Ephrussi family members. This becomes clear when de Waal reflects on the imposing mansions they built in Paris and Vienna in the early 1870s:

The Hôtel Ephrussi was a family house, but it was also the Parisian headquarters of a family in its ascendancy. It had its counterpart in Vienna, the vast Palais Ephrussi on the Ringstrasse. Both the Parisian and Viennese buildings share a sense of drama, of a public face to the world.⁵⁰

Taken together, location, architecture and interior decoration become part of a strategy, 'a staging of intent,'⁵¹ to announce the family's aspirations, and they exude a sense of infinite possibilities that takes its confidence from the patriarch Charles Joachim Ephrussi's soaring success and business acumen in Odessa in the mid-19th century. The netsuke, however, are more specifically connected to those characters who, while participating in and profiting from the family's social status and wealth, place themselves to a certain degree outside the rigidities of family conventions, the running of the family business and the perpetuation of the Ephrussi lineage. This is true of the first owner of the collection, Charles, 'the bookish one,'⁵² who as the third son is free to follow his own interests. He travels widely, becomes a collector of art and furniture and an art critic. When he acquires the netsuke in the 1870s and places them in a vitrine, they become the centerpiece in his 'performance of salon life', a 'collection within a collection' entering into dialogue with the European art displayed around

them.⁵³ Charles is a character whose gift of refashioning expresses itself through his relationship to objects: ‘Charles could not resist the world of things: touching them; studying them; buying them; rearranging them.’⁵⁴ In 1899 he sends the netsuke to his first cousin Viktor in Vienna as a wedding-gift. De Waal reads the fact that Charles parts with the netsuke at a time when Japonaiseries had become mainstream as a sign of his mobility in taste in keeping with his role as a trend-setter in matters of art. At the same time, he interprets his subsequent interest in the French 18th century and in the Empire style as an indicator of greater formality, of his wish to finally blend in, to occupy a stable and unambiguous position in the centre of French society. This perspective allocates the netsuke the function of a preciously dynamic force of unconventionality that unfolds in Charles’s life as long as they are in his possession.

In the Vienna part of the narrative, this attribute cannot come to fruition. Viktor Ephrussi lives in the family home built by his father, in a world of stuffy opulence and oppressively rigid social etiquette governing the lives of the wealthy Jewish families inhabiting the Ringstrasse. Accordingly, the future is neatly mapped out for their male offspring:

[Their lives were] set out in front of them on dynastic tram-lines, family expectations driving them forward. It meant a life lived under the gilded ceilings of their parents’ homes, marriage to a financier’s daughter, endless dances, years in business unspooling in front of them. It meant *Ringstrassenstil* – Ringstrasse-style – pomposity, over-confidence, the parvenu.⁵⁵

It is a style that stands for their attempt to fit into Viennese upper-class society and its ossified conventions. At first it seems as if Viktor would be able to evade this kind of fate, since being ‘the spare son,’⁵⁶ like Charles, he will not have to become a banker but can pursue his literary tastes and partake in the bohemian world of the Viennese coffee houses frequented by young intellectuals and literati. This changes dramatically, however, when his elder brother Stefan elopes with his father’s Russian-Jewish mistress and is disinherited and banished from the family forever. Viktor is pushed into taking his place, has to learn the banking trade and is obliged to contract a suitable marriage, continue the family line and manage the Ephrussi bank. This turning-point marks the distance between Charles and Viktor that plays out in their different approaches to art. Charles’s salon inviting appreciative sampling of his latest art objects is contrasted with the ‘accumulation of stuff from four decades of affluent shopping’⁵⁷ in Viktor’s apartment in the Palais Ephrussi, an environment that proves intrinsically hostile to the lightness and subtlety of the netsuke. Furthermore, the

wedding-gift, coming from Paris, embodies an alternative world that will now forever be closed to Viktor, and 'he doesn't want it sitting and reminding him of an elsewhere, another life.'⁵⁸ Consequently, the netsuke are hidden away in Viktor's wife Emmy's dressing-room where their children are allowed to play with them – and where they find an ardent admirer in their son Iggie.

After the persecution and expropriation of the Jewish citizens in Vienna following the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, and the flight of the Ephrussi family, the netsuke are hidden from the Gestapo by a loyal servant of the family. It is Iggie who, after their restitution to their owners, takes them with him to Japan in 1947, where he is posted on business and where he will live for almost five decades until his death in 1994. Even more so than Charles, he evolves into the most significant character in the narrative to exemplify a successful model of cosmopolitanism, of cross-cultural dialogue and of productive and complex integration of present and past. Iggie is another exceptional and highly mobile subject who manages to break away from the stuffiness of the Ringstrassen-Palais and carve out an independent life for himself. As the first son of the family, he is destined for a career in banking. He studies finance in Cologne, then works for a bank in Frankfurt. But when he is expected back in Vienna to start in the Ephrussi bank in 1933, he bolts. He goes to Paris instead to learn fashion design, then to New York and later to Hollywood. During the Second World War, he is posted to Europe as an intelligence officer and later becomes a successful banker after all, the representative for Swiss Bank in Tokyo. In Japan, the netsuke resume the social existence they had in Charles Ephrussi's Paris, since they take pride of place in the centre of Iggie's house and 'in the centre of his life.'⁵⁹

With their return to Japan, the netsuke's story folds back on itself, but the intervening timespan and the history they have acquired elsewhere produce a number of disjunctions. While they are deeply embedded in Japanese culture, 'they are part of a lost world'⁶⁰ for Iggie's Japanese guests. They have moved from objects of everyday use to exotic collectors' items to cultural artefacts of the past. With their complex history of cultural transfer and relations, they reflect Iggie's own life and identity, and as such they become part of his and his partner Jiro's cosmopolitan self-positioning that is expressed in their tastes and the objects with which they surround themselves, indicating a mingling of both their cultural heritage. Jiro, who studied at an American university, shares Iggie's Western taste in music and art; and Iggie loves Tokyo, because he 'identifie[s] with the city's capacity for reinvention. The chance to reinvent himself was one that seemed a godsend.'⁶¹ The cultural mix of Iggie's and Jiro's life is their 'kind of Real Japan,'⁶² which is sharply set against the tourists' romanticising fantasy of a 'Real Japan' in the sense of a piece of unspoilt country untouched by

Western influences. This contrast reflects de Waal's criticism of the concept of folk art that would permanently fix a nation's cultural essence in a supposedly pure and faraway past, depriving it of any kind of development and transformation through cultural exchange. For de Waal the identities of objects, people and countries are never fixed; they are always more or less in flux, infiltrated, and often enriched, by foreign influences that add to their own heritage and reshape or redirect their sense of being.

Iggie's and Jiro's cultural eclecticism that displays a taste for both Japanese food and French wine or American whisky, for Japanese films as well as American jazz music, and that effortlessly juxtaposes Viennese portraits and Japanese porcelain in their home, exemplifies what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls cultural 'contamination,' a counter-ideal which he sets against notions of 'cultural purity' or 'authentic culture.'⁶³ For Appiah, cultural purity is an 'oxymoron,' because every culture is always already a conglomerate of different cultural influences 'that come from many places.'⁶⁴ In a diachronic perspective, this means that culture is continuously subject to change, modified and augmented by imports from elsewhere, which are integrated into a specific local context. This model of culture acts as a blueprint for Appiah's concept of rooted cosmopolitanism, which combines local attachment with 'other, different places that are home to other, different people,'⁶⁵ thus enabling 'cross-cultural conversations' in the sense of meaningful engagements with the Other⁶⁶ that provide individual subjects with new possibilities to construct their identities.⁶⁷ Seen in this light, Iggie's self-fashioning is based on a purposeful eclecticism that marks his groundedness in different places (Vienna, the USA, Japan), which converge in his multifaceted living space and manifest in his accumulated objects and habits.

A sense of mobility and a desire for self-invention are features that characterise all members of the Ephrussi family. Not only their commercial aspirations but their whole way of being is steeped in a sense of cosmopolitanism that finds its clearest expression in their linguistic versatility: 'With languages, you are *at home anywhere*.'⁶⁸ Furthermore, the last chapter discards the idea of origins altogether when it turns out that the family's 'roots' do not lie in Odessa at all, but that it was in Odessa where the family reinvented itself by changing or adapting their Jewish names to become self-determined and self-made agents in a world offering opportunities for shaping one's future: 'This is where they became the Ephrussi from Odessa.'⁶⁹

This capacity for reinvention is of course also intimately linked to the vicissitudes of Jewish history, alternating between integration, emancipation⁷⁰ and anti-Semitic oppression or persecution, a factor that de Waal is very much aware of in his exposure of the xenophobic slurs Charles is confronted with in Paris and of the unprecedented

pogroms against Jews after the Nazis' accession to power. Such conditions vastly complicate the question of 'what belonging to a place means':

Charles died a Russian in Paris. Viktor [...] was a Russian in Vienna for fifty years, then Austrian, then a citizen of the Reich, and then stateless. Elisabeth kept Dutch citizenship in England for fifty years. And Iggie was Austrian, then American, then an Austrian living in Japan.⁷¹

Historical experience necessitates a certain amount of circumspection and reserve: 'You assimilate, but you need somewhere else to go. You keep your passport to hand. You keep something private.'⁷² Consequently a high degree of adaptability was essential to survival, but it was also instrumental in producing a great variety of self-positionings and a flexibility conducive to the kind of urbanity that characterizes the protagonists of de Waal's family biography, especially his great-uncle Iggie: He 'had a capacity to get along, wherever he was.'⁷³ It is this intricate balancing between a transnational mindset, multinational affiliations and a commitment to one's country of residence that forms the basis of a kind of cosmopolitanism that contradicts the idea (or 'ideal') of an ethnically homogeneous, self-contained national identity. By reading his characters in this particular way, de Waal underscores his own rejection of identitarian essentialisms in favour of flexible identities that are not bogged down by static and divisive models of exclusive nationalism.

Furthermore, in *The Hare with Amber Eyes* de Waal uses the netsuke as an additional refinement of the processes of dislocation and relocation, decentring and recentring involved in migratory experience, specifically with respect to the two characters most receptive to their influence, Charles and Iggie. For the other characters, cosmopolitanism mainly facilitates acculturation and assimilation to a different country and a new context. Coupled with the serious social ambitions of the Ephrussi family, this tends to result in new restrictions, potentially stifling rigidities and calcifications, especially in 19th-century Vienna. In contrast, de Waal seems to suggest that Charles and Iggie, building on their cosmopolitan legacy, are able to transcend these limitations, not least through their quasi-existential engagement with art. Iggie, in particular, represents a kind of model for a cosmopolitan subject who is able to easily fluctuate between different worlds and integrate them into a multi-dimensional, transnationally oriented self.

Conclusions

As the foregoing analysis has shown, the collection of netsuke that are synecdochally referenced in the title of the book, act both as focal point and decentring agent in *The Hare with Amber Eyes*. As the crystallisation point on which the narratives of the different characters converge, they ensure the structural unity of the memoir. Their own biography is interlaced with that of the book's central players, and de Waal's reflections on their history of migration and resignification provide the lens through which he reads his ancestors' identities. They exemplify a model of cross-cultural conversation that also underlies the cosmopolitan worldview embodied by Charles and Iggie in particular. Moreover, they become a catalyst for the intertwining of East and West, present and past, subject and object, processes that are closely linked to the text's generic border crossings. These have drawn our attention to the author's autobiographical investment in this project. The netsuke not only provide a point of access for the artist de Waal to unravel his family's history, but giving them such a central place in the narrative opens the way to inscribe himself into the text through his artistic vision. A closer inspection of his art criticism and his own ceramic art has revealed the close entanglement between his self-image as a ceramicist, his concepts of self and art and the cosmopolitan identities he devises for some of his forebears. This interdependence is symbolically reflected in the triangular connection that emerges between Iggie Ephrussi, Edmund de Waal and Bernard Leach, whose common denominator is their infatuation with Japan and their respective readings of its culture. Thus de Waal constructs a narrative that allows him to insert himself into the family line and explore his emotional and intellectual attachment to its history to make sense of his own identity and, as he states in an interview, work out 'who I am in the world.'⁷⁴

Taking up his place in the Ephrussi lineage (and in the family tree at the beginning of the book), raises the question of his responsibility towards the family's legacy embodied in the netsuke he inherited from Iggie. For one thing it entails exposing and undoing the politically motivated anti-Semitic effacement of especially his Viennese ancestors' traces. In that sense he performs an act of restitution, a complicated and intricate concept he approaches via Iggie's sister, his grandmother Elisabeth de Waal, a doctor of law, a poet and writer and a citizen of the world in her own right,⁷⁵ who fought a frustrating and only marginally successful battle for restitution of the family's property after the Second World War. Her novel *The Exiles Return*, which was written in the late 1950s but not published until 2013, is based on these experiences and enacts 'the return from exile of the stories of the dispossessed families of Vienna,'⁷⁶ as

Edmund de Waal suggests in its preface, stressing the role of narrative and authorial agency in restituting a repressed or forgotten past. In this specific sense, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* also constitutes a form of restitution, the telling of ‘a story on my own terms about my own family,’⁷⁷ just as, in a similar vein, the Ephrussi family has been restored to Vienna and its history when the Ephrussi archive was handed over to the Jewish Museum in Vienna in 2018.⁷⁸ In a further sense, de Waal’s extensive exploration of the hybrid, open and inclusive forms of identity that he attributes to some of his ancestors, contribute yet another legacy to cultural memory. Very much in the way Appiah uses stories about his Ghanaian father for illustration in his philosophical works, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* presents examples of lived forms of cosmopolitanism that not only testify to a long tradition of Jewish internationalism⁷⁹ but also speak to contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism which mostly ignore the Jewish historical legacy in this field. The so-called new cosmopolitanism⁸⁰ may respond to somewhat different social and political challenges of contemporary globalisation and patterns of migration, but it is still very much concerned with considerably older ethico-political issues like citizenship, national and transnational affiliations, mobility, displacement and rootedness as well as multidirectional cross-cultural communication.

If we link the question of restitution and legacy to the hybrid form of life writing and its flexible mode of connecting self and other and of establishing a network of multiple relationalities, we can see how this ‘web of entanglement’⁸¹ is extended beyond the family circle as de Waal, in his role as mediator, reaches out to museums, critics, audiences and readers and draws them into an ‘ongoing conversation’⁸² about art, cultural mobility, Jewish heritage, historical responsibility and, ultimately, one’s own identity. Indeed, in his most recent book on the Musée Nissim de Camondo in Paris, housing the collection of another eminent Jewish family, he argues that restitution does not mean closure but forms part of a continuing historical process that is not individual but collective and that attaches itself to objects: ‘History is happening. It is not the past [...]. It unfolds in our hands. That is why objects carry so much, they belong in all the tenses, unresolved, unsettling.’⁸³ In the light of these reflections, the donation of the family archive and a substantial number of the netsuke to the Jewish Museum in Vienna as well as de Waal’s auctioning off of another part of the collection to raise money for a refugee charity,⁸⁴ appear as acts of controlled dispersal of family objects, as centrifugal gestures to transfer engagement with the historical significance of these objects to the public realm.

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Notes

¹ Netsuke were traditionally used as toggles that held the cord in place by which small items like purses or tobacco pouches were suspended from the belt of a kimono, then worn by both men and women. After the introduction of Western dress in Japan in the mid-19th century, they lost their everyday function, became collectors’ items and were later specifically produced as ornamental objects for the foreign market. See Barker, Richard, and Lawrence Smith, *Netsuke: The Miniature Sculpture of Japan*. London: British Museum Publications, 1976; Jirka-Schmitz, Patrizia, *Netsuke*. 112

Meisterwerke/Masterpieces: The Trumpf Collection. Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2000; Tollner, Madeline R., *Netsuke: The Life and Legend of Japan in Miniature*. San Francisco: Fearon Publishers, 1954.

² Elisabeth Kraus discusses the standard characteristics of the genealogical works of this type in the introduction of her biography of the Mosse family, founders of a hugely successful publishing enterprise in Berlin: *Die Familie Mosse: Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. München: Beck, 1999 (9-12).

³ See Mosley, Marcus. 'Autobiography and Memoir.' *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 27 July 2017, https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Autobiography_and_Memoir. Date accessed: 7 January 2021.

⁴ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance* [2010]. London: Vintage, 2011 (15).

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Jewish Museum Vienna, 'The Ephrussi: Travel in Time.' Exhibition website, <http://www.jmw.at/en/exhibitions/ephrussis-travel-time>. Date accessed: 20 January 2021.

⁷ Eakin, Paul John, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Lives*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999 (59).

⁸ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (5f.).

⁹ This recognition is also reflected in a scene when he looks at a family photograph and notices the likeness between his great-grandfather, his grandfather and his own father and wonders 'how long I've got before I too start to look like this' (idem, p. 234).

¹⁰ Eakin, Paul John, *How Our Lives Become Stories* (43-99).

¹¹ For the family memoir see Davis, Rocío G., *Relative Histories: Mediating History in Asian American Family Memoirs*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011; or Saunders, Max. "'Fusions and Interrelations": Family Memoirs of Henry James, Edmund Gosse, and Others.' In: Adam Smyth (ed.), *A History of English Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 255-268. For auto/biographical texts in general see for example Rüggeheimer, Anne, *Die relationale Autobiographie: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie, Poetik und Gattungsgeschichte eines neuen Genres in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur*. Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2014.

¹² De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (342).

¹³ Herman, David. "'I don't know what sort of a genre this is'." *PN Review* 200, 37:6 (June-July 2011) (19).

¹⁴ See Banerjee, Mita. 'Life Writing.' In: Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (ed.), *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*. Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018, 336-341; Howes, Craig. 'Life Writing – Genre, Practice, Environment.' In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* 27 October 2020, 1-30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1146>. Date accessed: 24 January 2021; Jolly, Margareta, 'Editor's Note.' In: Margareta Jolly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*. Vol. I: A-K. London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001, ix-xii.

¹⁵ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (12f.).

¹⁶ Idem, p. 32.

¹⁷ Idem, pp. 67 and 106.

¹⁸ Idem, p. 70.

¹⁹ See Fischer, Nina, *Memory Work: The Second Generation*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 (29-68); Rüggeheimer, Anne. 'Beyond the Subject – Towards the Object? Nancy K. Miller's *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past* (2011) and the Materiality of Life Writing.' *European Journal of Life Writing* 5 (2016) 36–54, <https://ejlw.eu/article/view/31466>, <https://doi.org/10.5463/ejlw.5.186>. Date accessed: 24 January 2021.

²⁰ Kadar, Marlene. 'Coming to Terms: Life Writing – from Genre to Critical Practice.' In: Marlene Kadar (ed.), *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992 (3).

²¹ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (16).

²² Cooper, Emmanuel. 'Use and Beauty.' In: *Bernard Leach: Concept and Form*. Penzance: Penlee House Gallery and Museum, 2002 (11).

- ²³ De Waal quoted in Crichton-Miller, Emma. 'Can a Poet be a Potter of Song?' In: Edmund de Waal, Emma Crichton-Miller and Toby Glanville, *Edmund de Waal*. London: Phaidon Press, 2014, 11-87 (23).
- ²⁴ De Waal, Edmund. No title. In: Edmund de Waal, Emma Crichton-Miller and Toby Glanville, *Edmund de Waal* (202).
- ²⁵ Crichton-Miller, Emma, 'Can a Poet be a Potter of Song?' (42).
- ²⁶ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (17).
- ²⁷ De Waal, Edmund, *Irrkunst*. Berlin and Paris: Galerie Max Hetzler, 2016 (3, 1).
- ²⁸ De Waal borrows this term from Benjamin's *Berlin Chronicle* (*Berliner Chronik*. In: *Berliner Chronik / Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*. Ed. by Burkhardt Lindner and Nadine Werner. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2019 [17]), where it refers to losing oneself or getting lost in a big city, an art that Paris taught him, as Benjamin remarks. 'Irrkunst' has a number of connotations that Malte Kleinwort tries to capture by the word disorientation ('Desorientierung') ('Zur Desorientierung im Manuskript der Vorrede zu Benjamins Trauerspielbuch.' In: Daniel Weidner and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Benjamin-Studien* 2. München: Fink, 2011, 87-107). It seems that de Waal chose this term for its highly evocative and protean quality that offers many points of contact with his own art: It particularly resonates with his concern with objects getting lost and being retrieved, with losing an object and finding another, with losing oneself and becoming another or with losing oneself in objects. And, above all, it evokes an art that requires perceptive sensibility, contemplation and deliberate drifting.
- ²⁹ De Waal, Edmund, *Irrkunst* (5).
- ³⁰ Idem, page 1.
- ³¹ Quoted in De Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (n.p.).
- ³² De Waal quoted in Munroe, Alexandra. 'This stilling that I love.' In: Edmund de Waal, Emma Crichton-Miller and Toby Glanville, *Edmund de Waal* (181).
- ³³ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (66).
- ³⁴ Idem, page 4.
- ³⁵ Ibidem.
- ³⁶ Leach, Bernard. 'Belief and Hope.' In: *Bernard Leach: Fifty Years a Potter*. The Arts Council, 1961, 15-17 (15).
- ³⁷ De Waal, Edmund. "'Art without finish": Japanese Art in the West.' In: *Timeless Beauty: Traditional Japanese Art from the Montgomery Collection*. Essays by Edmund de Waal, Rupert Faulkner, Gregory Irvine, Anne Jackson and Annie M. Van Assche. Milano: Skira editore, 2002, 9-13 (10, 12).
- ³⁸ De Waal, Edmund. 'Homo Orientalis: Bernard Leach and the Image of the Japanese Craftsman,' *Journal of Design History* 10:4 (1997) 355-362 (360f.).
- ³⁹ De Waal, Edmund, *Bernard Leach* [1998]. London: Tate Publishing, rev. ed. 2014 (93f.).
- ⁴⁰ Idem, page 70.
- ⁴¹ De Waal, Edmund, *The Homesick Object: Crafts and Place*. Text for Think Tank 2006. Cream Papers 02. London: Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media, University of Westminster, 2006 (n.p.).
- ⁴² Ibidem.
- ⁴³ Leach himself repeatedly stresses the need 'to rid ourselves of dualism' and fathom the 'wide experimental field between two cultures' in his autobiographical book with the telling title *Beyond East and West* (Leach, Bernard, *Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays* [1978]. London: Faber and Faber, 2012 [115, 186]), for example, or warns against paying too much 'attention to the work of the past' while neglecting 'the needs of our time' (Leach, Bernard. 'Thoughts on Japanese Crafts.' *Kōgei (Crafts)* 53 [May 1935] [1]). For a further gauging of these different views see for example De Waal, Edmund, and Kenji Kaneko, *Rethinking Bernard Leach: Studio Pottery and Contemporary Ceramics*. Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 2007.
- ⁴⁴ De Waal, Edmund, "'Art without finish'" (9).
- ⁴⁵ Idem, pages 9f. and De Waal, Edmund, *Bernard Leach* (66).
- ⁴⁶ See Kopytoff, Igor. 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process.' In: Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 64-91. – For an overview of the different 'materialisms' loosely grouped under

the label of thing theory see for example Hoskins, Janet. 'Agency, Biography and Objects.' In: Christopher Tilley e.a. (eds.), *Handbook of Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2006, 74-84, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607972.n6>. Date accessed: 11 June 2021; Wasserman, Sarah.

'Thing Theory.' In: *Literary and Critical Theory - Oxford Bibliographies*. June 2020, 18 pp., DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780190221911-0097. Date accessed: 11 June 2021.

⁴⁷ Appadurai, Arjun. 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value.' In: Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things*, 3-63 (5).

⁴⁸ Bruno, Giuliana. No title. In: David Joselit, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, and Hal Foster (eds.), 'A Questionnaire on Materialisms.' *October* 155 (January 2016) 14-15 (15).

⁴⁹ Cohen, Mitchell. 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism: Thoughts on the Left, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism.' *Dissent*, Fall 1992, 478-483 (483).

⁵⁰ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (23).

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² *Idem*, page 32.

⁵³ *Idem*, pages 64f.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, page 156.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, pages 128f.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, page 127.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, page 138.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *Idem*, page 305.

⁶⁰ *Idem*, page 307.

⁶¹ *Idem*, page 319.

⁶² *Idem*, page 323.

⁶³ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York and London: Norton, 2006 (111).

⁶⁴ *Idem*, page 113.

⁶⁵ Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 'Cosmopolitan Patriots.' *Critical Inquiry* 23:3 (1997) 617-639 (618).

⁶⁶ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *Cosmopolitanism* (97, 85).

⁶⁷ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 'Cosmopolitan Patriots' (625).

⁶⁸ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (31; italics in original).

⁶⁹ *Idem*, page 344.

⁷⁰ I draw upon Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson's discussion of the concept of emancipation as 'access by Jews to the profound shifts in ideas and conditions wrought by the Enlightenment,' which largely refers to admission to citizenship as well as political, economic and cultural participation. According to the authors, this allowed for a plurality of self-definitions including the possibility to 'remain meaningfully Jewish' ('Emancipation and the Liberal Offer.' In: Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (eds.), *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, 3-36 [4f.]).

⁷¹ De Waal, Edmund, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (326).

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Idem*, page 308.

⁷⁴ Ghert-Zand, Renee. 'How Tiny Japanese Sculptures Prompted a Quest into Jewish Roots – and Nazi Looting.' Interview with Edmund de Waal. *The Times of Israel*, 22 November 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-tiny-japanese-sculptures-prompted-a-quest-into-jewish-roots-and-nazi-looting/>. Date accessed: 01 February 2021.

⁷⁵ Born into the Viennese branch of the Ephrussi family, she had a polyglot upbringing, studied law, philosophy and economics, wrote poetry and political essays, corresponded with Rilke and the philosopher Eric Voegelin, travelled to the USA on a Rockefeller Scholarship, lived in France, in the Italian Tyrol and in Switzerland and finally settled in Tunbridge Wells, where she became a kind of centre for the dispersed Ephrussi family after the Second World War. This eminently cosmopolitan

character, whose passion was for words and ideas rather than art objects and who displayed no particular interest in the netsuke, is not given much prominence in the book on account of Edmund de Waal's structural choice to build his narrative around the journey of the netsuke and their formative influence on their owners' personalities.

⁷⁶ De Waal, Edmund, 'Foreword.' In: Elisabeth de Waal, *The Exiles Return: A Novel*. New York: Picador, 2013. v-xiv (xiv).

⁷⁷ De Waal in Ghert-Zand, Renee. 'How Tiny Japanese Sculptures Prompted a Quest into Jewish Roots – and Nazi Looting.'

⁷⁸ Jewish Museum Vienna, exhibition 'The Ephrussi: Travel in Time' (2019). Video clip from Edmund de Waal's opening speech.

⁷⁹ Some more recent studies have addressed the importance of Jewish internationalism for the project of European unification. See for example Sorrels, Katherine, *Cosmopolitan Outsiders: Imperial Inclusion, National Exclusion, and the Pan-European Idea, 1900-1930*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Sznajder, Natan, *Jewish Memory and the Cosmopolitan Order: Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Condition*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2011.

⁸⁰ See for example Fine, Robert. *Cosmopolitanism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007; Cheah, Pheng. 'Cosmopolitanism.' *Theory, Culture & Society* 23:2-3 (2006) 486-496. Kwame Anthony Appiah's already mentioned study *Cosmopolitanism* of 2006 is also part of this more recent interest. In addition, see Appiah, Kwame Anthony and Homi Bhabha. 'Cosmopolitanism and Convergence.' *New Literary History* 49:2 (2018) 171-198.

⁸¹ Nancy K. Miller quoted in Rügge-meier, Anne. 'Beyond the Subject' (49).

⁸² This phrase takes up Stuart Hall's definition of identity as 'the product of an endlessly ongoing conversation with everybody around you' in John Akomfrah's documentary *The Stuart Hall Project: Revolution, Politics, Culture and the New Left Experience* (UK, 2013) (chapter 9/12, 1:01:00). It is also echoed in the title of Akomfrah's three-screen installation *The Unfinished Conversation* on Hall's life and work (Tate Britain, London, 2013).

⁸³ De Waal, Edmund, *Letters to Camondo*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2021 (156).

⁸⁴ See idem, page 158.