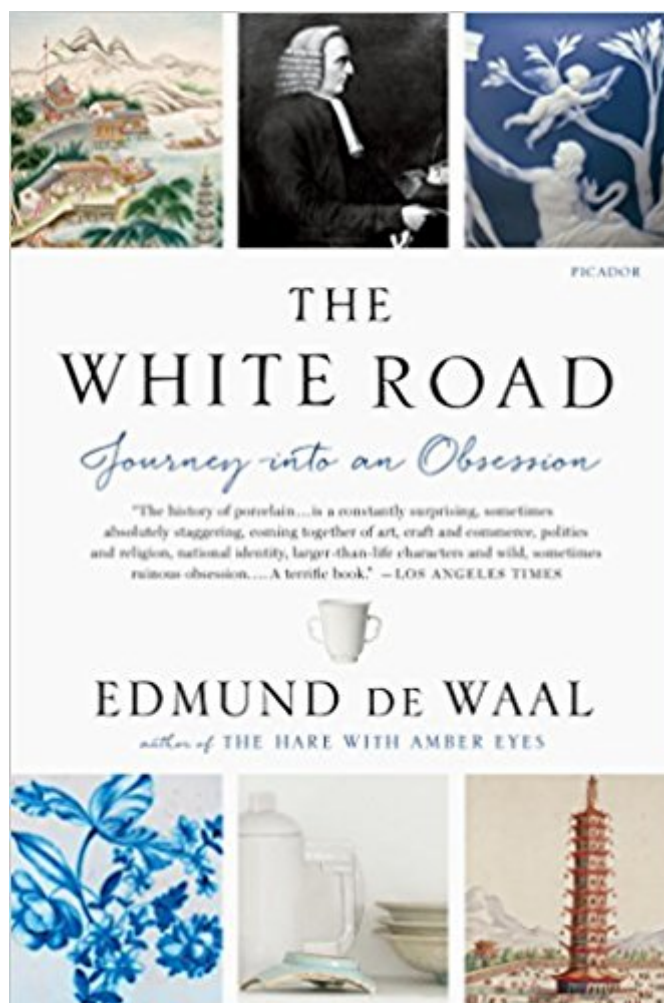


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The White Road: Journey Into An Obsession



Synopsis

An extraordinary blend of narrative history and memoir, by the author of the award-winning and bestselling international sensation, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*. In *The White Road*, artist Edmund de Waal gives us an intimate portrait of his lifelong obsession with porcelain, or "white gold." A potter who has been working with porcelain for more than forty years, de Waal describes how he set out on five journeys to places where porcelain was dreamed about, refined, collected, and coveted—and that would help him understand the clay's mysterious allure. From his studio in London, he begins by travelling to three "white hills"—sites in China, Germany, and England that are key to porcelain's creation. But his search eventually leads him around the globe and reveals more than a history of cups and figurines; rather, he is forced to confront some of the darkest moments of twentieth-century history. Part memoir, part history, part detective story, *The White Road* chronicles a global obsession with alchemy, art, wealth, craft, and purity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The history of porcelain, as told in *The White Road*, is a constantly surprising, sometimes absolutely staggering, coming together of art, craft and commerce, politics and religion, national identity, larger-than-life characters and wild, sometimes ruinous obsession . . . A terrific book. If you read it, you'll never look at porcelain the same way again." —Geoff Nicholson, Los Angeles Times "The White Road is a unique book by a unique person. Polyglot, steeped in art and literature and history, able to throw a pot and turn a sentence with equal skill, endlessly curious and

stupendously diligent, aesthetic to his fingertips but also deeply moral, Mr. de Waal brings a lot to the table, and with *The White Road* he goes all in." • Ben Downing, *The Wall Street Journal* "It is rare for someone to write as well as Edmund de Waal, all the more since it's his secondary vocation . . . *The White Road* is the story of how objects, through the accumulation of intent, labor and the patina of history, accrue a sense of self." • Brian Thomas Gallagher, *The Seattle Times* "[A] shimmering paean to porcelain . . . De Waal digs deep into the substance of his life, and what he shares is precious." • Jean Zimmerman, NPR • De Waal is a master of telling stories through material objects. He can see a vase and not only imagine the kind of room it once inhabited but the type of woman who might have brushed her fingertips across its lip . . . It's de Waal's own obsession • the man counts pots when he can't sleep at night • that infuses the narrative with a true sense of the hunt . . . He is wonderfully manic in his research . . . He allows himself to get lost for weeks, to travel someplace only to return empty-handed • which makes for a true adventure and a pleasure to read. • • Thessaly La Force, *The New Yorker* • *The White Road* is filled with marvelous examples of storytelling, and de Waal has a gift for inhabiting his characters. Also, the historical material is interleaved with stories from de Waal's own life as a ceramicist, which adds an extra and very welcome dimension to the tale. • • Christina Thompson, *The Boston Globe* • At once meditation, memoir, and travelogue as well as history, *The White Road* is one of those unclassifiable books that simply astounds with the author's infectious love of his subject . . . De Waal's prose is both elegant and powerful . . . Despite covering so many places, so many historical periods, and so many themes, de Waal's beautiful narrative voice and his love for his subject manage to shape this book into an almost seamlessly formed whole. Which leaves me with my one resentment regarding *The White Road*: It's damned unfair that such a distinguished artist should also be such a great writer. • • Kevin O'Kelly, *The Christian Science Monitor* • De Waal reveals the depths and permutations of his life-shaping fascination with porcelain . . . [He] brings a historian's ardor for detail and a poet's gifts for close observation and radiant distillation to this exquisite chronicle of his extensive porcelain investigations . . . De Waal's passionately and elegantly elucidated story of porcelain, laced with memoir and travelogue, serves as a portal into the madness and transcendence of our covetous obsession with beauty. • • Donna Seaman, *Booklist* (starred review) • A lyrical melding of art history, memoir, and philosophical meditation . . . In short passages of allusive, radiant prose, [de Waal] chronicles his journeys in search of both the materials and the history of porcelain, discovering along the way men as obsessed as he . . . De Waal's poetically recounted journey is a revelation. • • Kirkus Reviews (starred review) • [De Waal] blends art history and personal travelogue in this immersive

hands-on study of porcelain and its commercial and artistic appeal over the centuries . . . He enlivens his account with portraits of the people whose quirky personalities and entrepreneurial zeal advanced the manufacture of porcelain across Europe . . . A truly remarkable story.â••â•• Publishers Weekly (starred review)â•œAn immensely enjoyable meditation on what happens when the right mix of stone and clay enter the incandescent heat of a kiln . . . Journeying to Jingdezhen, Dresden, South Carolina, and southwest England, de Waal tells the story of determined experimenters who reproduced the magic the Chinese had mastered . . . [A] page-turning account, both sweeping and intimate.â••â•• Library Journal

Edmund de Waal is one of the worldâ™s leading ceramic artists, and his porcelain is held in many major international collections. His bestselling memoir, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, was shortlisted for numerous prizes and won the Costa Biography Award and the RSL Ondaatje Prize.

This is a book full of history - not only of porcelain but of the way people lived in China for centuries; the way the West's besottedness with porcelain led to excess and to cut throat business practices; and, importantly, De Waal's own history and feeling for porcelain and his artistic expression through it.

I know his smooth, poetic style of writing. As a potter I am, 'White Road' is really a treasure to me. He took roads to the origin of Porcelain, China. He talks so fluently how the original Kaolin and bone in China was meshed and made to so white or so blue, green surfaced pots, and dragon and peony flowers in color drawing. Silkroad spread this clay to Europe. He is British and his simple porcelain cups installed in galleries. I was so mesmerized. The word Porcelain came from Italy. Wow! This is a documentary book, and esp. ceramicists can not miss this.

Glorious, insight filled and poetic, Edmund De Waal has constructed a fascinating, beautifully written look at the history of porcelain, and in doing so shares his artistic soul/vision. It is a book to be savored. Art history and a look at the artistic soul combined. Excellent!

The book is quite slow borderline boring. It is filled with the author's personal impressions and not so much data. It is nothing like his other book *The Hare*... Etc

An unusual, imaginative and inviting history of porcelain. Totally different from *The Hare With Amber*

Eyes, but with the same curiously interesting sentence structure.

Purchased as a gift

Interesting. Charts the author's obsession with porcelain - a fragmented narrative and not in the same category as "The Hare With Amber Eyes", but a "must read" for any porcelain lover.

Complete survey of porcelain making history world wide, yet concise enough to follow each country. It is interesting to read how social and political background influenced porcelain production and physical effects of the workers of the early years.

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