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Assignment 1

Book Review for Tony Judt’s Postwar

The book review I chose to focus on was the New York Times Book Review entitled ['Postwar': Picking Up the Pieces](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/books/review/16gottlieb.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1) by Anthony Gottlieb, but I also looked at other short editorial reviews on the [*Barnes & Noble*](http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Postwar/Tony-Judt/e/9780143037750) webpage for the historical book. If you would like to read the reviews I read you can click on the hyperlinks above.

As a whole, the reviews and comments towards this book were incredibly positive; most critics agree that it is an unprecedented achievement. Its complete, comprehensive, and detailed analysis of European history from 1945 to the present is a success that has never been accomplished with the same eloquence that Judt uses in his book. Reviews also mentioned that Judt incorporated perspectives from all countries and explored economic, political, international, social, cultural viewpoints. As a historian Judt was able to give a thorough account of what occurred in Europe after the war and into the contemporary world. A common critique of the novel is that at times Judt suggested questionable ideas for the future of Europe. Judt was very optimistic towards the potential of the European Union, but many political scientists would contest the idea that the 21st century belongs to the EU. However, the outstanding consensus about Judt’s book is that it is an extensive history that is written well, comprehensibly, as well as analytically.

In his NY Times review, Gottlieb focused on the devastation that Judt writes about immediately in his novel and praised Judt’s ability to depict the real problems that faced both Eastern and Western Europe. According to Gottlieb, the complete picture that Judt portrays is both moving as well as highly informative.

Right away, Gottlieb mentions the decimated state Europe was left in after the war, and how, miraculously, in the present it is as if that destroyed past never happened. In fact, Gottlieb says, Europe has endured not only the destruction of the Second World War but also the hostilities of the Cold War, and is now somehow peaceful and prospering. Judt has the explanation to this newfound harmony in Europe. Gottlieb praises the detail that Judt uses throughout his book and specifically to describe the atrocity that was postwar Europe; he throws out some of the statistics and numbers that Judt used in the introduction of his book. Central in Gottlieb’s review was the point that, in his book, Judt was able to show that postwar Europe was not dying, but in fact being reborn after all the destruction. Europeans selectively forgot their past, but Gottlieb points out that Judt examines the ugly past as a passage to Europe’s bright and thriving present state as the European Union. Judt reveals that the war did not truly end in 1945 at all. The mass amount of destruction, displaced peoples, lawlessness, and loss of life that needed to be rectified still plagued the continent long after the war ended. Like Judt, Gottlieb is also optimistic about the lasting effects of the European Union. Though Gottlieb believes that Judt’s novel was ground-breaking, it still made some questionable claims; whether the Europeans will dominate the 21st Century and whether Europe is the now perfect model for the rest of the world are still debatable theories. Judt’s book allows political scientists to examine the complete European history in one place and to create theories and new ideas about Europe’s future. These theories may be either positive or negative, but Judt’s book none-the-less opened a different realm to the study of European history.

~Reviews acclaimed Judt for his ability to put the entire history of postwar Europe in one volume

~At times was not critical enough; I think that comes from him being a historian and not a political scientist

~It is easier to read because it is written so well and comprehensibly

~If I were to review Gottlieb’s review of Postwar I would say that I think he focused too much on the first part of the book where Europe is completely decimated, though I definitely agree with what he says about Judt

~Last class we talked about the selective amnesia

~It’s true that the some of the assertions made by Judt can definitely be contested, as many of the reviews say, like the one we talked about before about Europe being homogenized...

~I think that this book had the potential to be an incredibly boring book chock full of facts, names, and dates, but Judt was able to make the history incredibly interesting