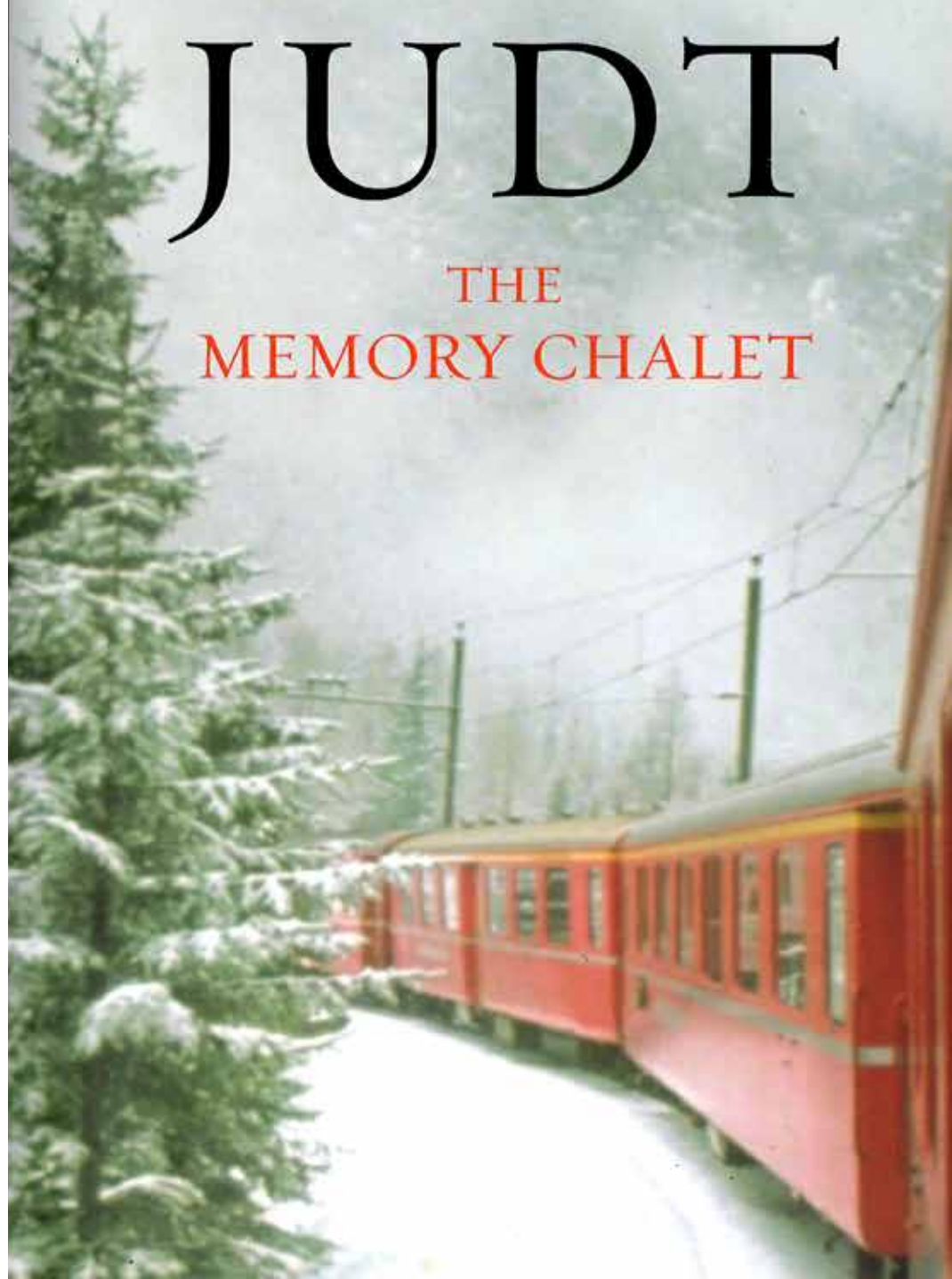


TONY JUDT

THE
MEMORY CHALET



The Memory Chalet is a memoir unlike any you have ever read before. Each essay charts some experience or remembrance of the past through the sieve of Tony Judt's prodigious mind. His youthful love of a particular London bus route evolves into a reflection on public civility and interwar urban planning. Memories of the 1968 student riots of Paris meander through the divergent sex politics of Europe, before concluding that his generation 'was a revolutionary generation, but missed the revolution'. A series of roadtrips across America lead not just to an appreciation of American history, but to an eventual acquisition of citizenship. Foods and trains and long-lost smells all compete for Judt's attention; but for us, he has forged his reflections into an elegant arc of analysis. All as simply and beautifully arranged as a Swiss chalet – a reassuring refuge deep in the mountains of memory.

£16.99

The Memory Chalet

ALSO BY TONY JUDT

Ill Fares the Land

*Reappraisals: Reflections on the
Forgotten Twentieth Century*

*Postwar: A History of
Europe Since 1945*

*The Politics of Retribution in Europe
(with Jan Gross and István Deák)*

*The Burden of Responsibility:
Blum, Camus, Aron, and the
French Twentieth Century*

*Language, Nation and State:
Identity Politics in a Multilingual Age
(edited with Denis Lacorne)*

*A Grand Illusion?:
An Essay on Europe*

*Past Imperfect:
French Intellectuals, 1944–1956*

*Marxism and the French Left:
Studies on Labour and
Politics in France 1930–1982*

*Resistance and Revolution
In Mediterranean Europe 1939–1948*

*Socialism in Provence 1871–1914:
A Study in the Origins of the
Modern French Left*

*La reconstruction du Parti
Socialiste 1921–1926*

The Memory Chalet

Tony Judt



WILLIAM HEINEMANN: LONDON

Published by William Heinemann 2010

4 6 8 1 0 9 7 5

Copyright © The Estate of Tony Judt 2010

'The Memory Chalet' and 'New York, New York' are published for the first time in this book. 'Purney' was published in the *Guardian* and 'Cars' was published in *Folha de S. Paulo* (São Paulo) and is published here for the first time in English. The other essays first appeared, some under different titles, in *The New York Review of Books*.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

First published in Great Britain in 2010 by
William Heinemann
Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London SW1V 2SA

www.rbooks.co.uk

Addresses for companies within The Random House Group Limited can be found at:
www.randomhouse.co.uk/offices.htm

The Random House Group Limited Reg. No. 954009

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 9780434020966

The Random House Group Limited supports The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the leading international forest certification organisation. All our titles that are printed on Greenpeace approved FSC certified paper carry the FSC logo.

Our paper procurement policy can be found at:
www.rbooks.co.uk/environment



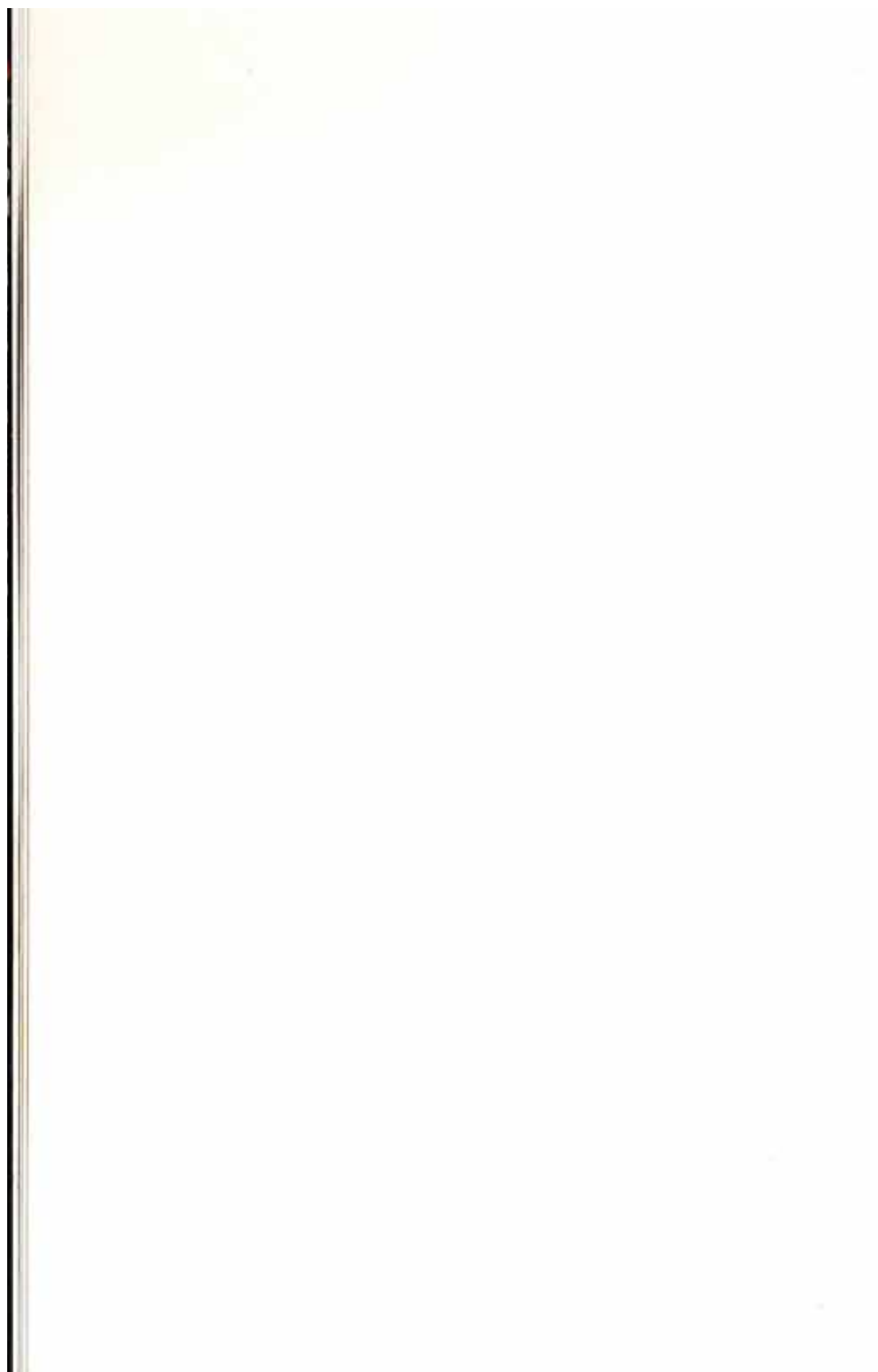
Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests and other controlled sources
www.fsc.org Cert no. TT-COC-2139
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

Designed by Claire Naylor Vaccaro

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives Plc

For Jennifer, Daniel and Nicholas



Contents

Preface *xiii*

I. The Memory Chalet *i*

II. Night *15*

Part One

III. Austerity *25*

IV. Food *33*

V. Cars *41*

- VI. Putney 49
- VII. The Green Line Bus 57
- VIII. Mimetic Desire 65
- IX. The *Lord Warden* 73

Part Two

- X. Joe 83
- XI. Kibbutz 91
- XII. Bedder 101
- XIII. Paris Was Yesterday 111
- XIV. Revolutionaries 119
- XV. Work 127
- XVI. Meritocrats 135
- XVII. Words 147

Part Three

XVIII. Go West, Young Judt 157

XIX. Midlife Crisis 165

XX. Captive Minds 173

XXI. Girls, Girls, Girls 183

XXII. New York, New York 193

XXIII. Edge People 201

XXIV. Toni 209

Envoi

XXV. Magic Mountains 219



Preface

The essays in this little book were never intended for publication. I started writing them for my own satisfaction—and at the encouragement of Timothy Garton Ash, who urged me to turn to advantage the increasingly internal reference of my own thoughts. I do not think that I had any idea what it was I was embarking upon, and I am grateful to Tim for his confident support of the initial scribblings that resulted.

About halfway through the writing of these *feuilletons* I showed one or two of them to my agents at the Wylie Agency, as well as to Robert Silvers at the *New York Review of Books* and was heartened at their enthusiasm. However, this raised an ethical question for me. Because I did not write them with the view to immediate publication, these short pieces never benefitted from an internal editor—or, more precisely, a private censor. Where they spoke of my parents

P R E F A C E

or my childhood, of ex-wives and present colleagues, I let them speak. This has the merit of directness; I hope it will not cause offense.

I have not altered or rephrased any of the original texts, which were written with the help and collaboration of my long-time colleague Eugene Rusyn. Reading them over, I see that I have been quite open and occasionally even critical of those I love, whereas I was judiciously silent for the most part regarding people of whom I have retained a less-than-affectionate regard. Doubtless this is how it should be. I do hope that my parents, my wife and above all my children will read in these exercises in fond recall further evidence of my abiding love for them all.

The Memory Chalet

For me the word “chalet” conjures up a very distinctive image. It brings to mind a small *pensione*, a family hotel in the unfashionable village of Chesières, at the foot of the well-heeled Villars ski region in French-speaking Switzerland. We must have spent a winter holiday there in 1957 or '58. The skiing—or in my case, sledding—cannot have been very memorable: I recall only that my parents and uncle used to trudge over the icy foot bridge and on up to the ski lifts, spending the day there but abjuring the fleshpots of the *après-ski* in favor of a quiet evening in the chalet.

For me this was always the best part of a winter holiday: the repetitive snow-bound entertainment abandoned by early afternoon for heavy armchairs, warm wine, solid country food, and long evenings in the open lounge decompressing

P R E F A C E

or my childhood, of ex-wives and present colleagues, I let them speak. This has the merit of directness; I hope it will not cause offense.

I have not altered or rephrased any of the original texts, which were written with the help and collaboration of my long-time colleague Eugene Rusyn. Reading them over, I see that I have been quite open and occasionally even critical of those I love, whereas I was judiciously silent for the most part regarding people of whom I have retained a less-than-affectionate regard. Doubtless this is how it should be. I do hope that my parents, my wife and above all my children will read in these exercises in fond recall further evidence of my abiding love for them all.

The Memory Chalet

For me the word “chalet” conjures up a very distinctive image. It brings to mind a small *pensione*, a family hotel in the unfashionable village of Chesières, at the foot of the well-heeled Villars ski region in French-speaking Switzerland. We must have spent a winter holiday there in 1957 or '58. The skiing—or in my case, sledding—cannot have been very memorable: I recall only that my parents and uncle used to trudge over the icy foot bridge and on up to the ski lifts, spending the day there but abjuring the fleshpots of the *après-ski* in favor of a quiet evening in the chalet.

For me this was always the best part of a winter holiday: the repetitive snow-bound entertainment abandoned by early afternoon for heavy armchairs, warm wine, solid country food, and long evenings in the open lounge decompressing

Words

I was raised on words. They tumbled off the kitchen table onto the floor where I sat: grandfather, uncles, and refugees flung Russian, Polish, Yiddish, French, and what passed for English at one another in a competitive cascade of assertion and interrogation. Sententious flotsam from the Edwardian-era Socialist Party of Great Britain hung around our kitchen promoting the True Cause. I spent long, happy hours listening to Central European autodidacts arguing deep into the night: *Marxismus*, *Zionismus*, *Socialismus*. Talking, it seemed to me, was the point of adult existence. I have never lost that sense.

In my turn—and to find my place—I too talked. For party pieces I would remember words, perform them, translate them. “Ooh, he’ll be a lawyer,” they’d say. “He’ll charm

the birds off the trees”: something I attempted fruitlessly in parks for a while before applying the admonition in its Cockney usage to no greater effect during my adolescent years. By then I had graduated from the intensity of polyglot exchanges to the cooler elegance of BBC English.

The 1950s—when I attended elementary school—were a rule-bound age in the teaching and use of the English language. We were instructed in the unacceptability of even the most minor syntactical transgression. “Good” English was at its peak. Thanks to BBC radio and cinema newsreels, there were nationally accepted norms for proper speech; the authority of class and region determined not just how you said things but the kind of things it was appropriate to say. “Accents” abounded (my own included), but were ranked according to respectability: typically a function of social standing and geographical distance from London.

I was seduced by the sheen of English prose at its evanescent apogee. This was the age of mass literacy whose decline Richard Hoggart anticipated in his elegiac essay *The Uses of Literacy* (1957). A literature of protest and revolt was rising through the culture. From *Lucky Jim* through *Look Back in Anger*, and on to the “kitchen sink” dramas of the end of the decade, the class-bound frontiers of suffocating respectability and “proper” speech were under attack. But the barbarians themselves, in their assaults on the heritage, resorted to the perfected cadences of received English: it never

occurred to me, reading them, that in order to rebel one must dispense with good form.

By the time I reached college, words were my “thing.” As one teacher equivocally observed, I had the talents of a “silver-tongued orator”—combining (as I fondly assured myself) the inherited confidence of the milieu with the critical edge of the outsider. Oxbridge tutorials reward the verbally felicitous student: the neo-Socratic style (“why did you write this?” “what did you mean by it?”) invites the solitary recipient to explain himself at length, while implicitly disadvantaging the shy, reflective undergraduate who would prefer to retreat to the back of a seminar. My self-serving faith in articulacy was reinforced: not merely evidence of intelligence but intelligence itself.

Did it occur to me that the silence of the teacher in this pedagogical setting was crucial? Certainly silence was something at which I was never adept, whether as student or teacher. Some of my most impressive colleagues over the years have been withdrawn to the point of inarticulacy in debates and even conversation, thinking with deliberation before committing themselves. I have envied them this self-restraint.

Articulacy is typically regarded as an aggressive talent. But for me its functions were substantively defensive: rhetorical flexibility allows for a certain

feigned closeness—conveying proximity while maintaining distance. That is what actors do—but the world is not really a stage and there is something artificial in the exercise: one sees it in the current US president. I too have marshaled language to fend off intimacy—which perhaps explains a romantic penchant for Protestants and Native Americans, reticent cultures both.

In matters of language, of course, outsiders are frequently deceived: I recall a senior American partner at the consulting firm McKinsey once explaining to me that in the early days of their recruitment in England he found it nearly impossible to choose young associates—everyone seemed so articulate, the analyses tripping off their pens. How could you tell who was smart and who was merely polished?

Words may deceive—mischievous and untrustworthy. I remember being spellbound by the fantasy history of the Soviet Union woven in his Trevelyan Lectures at Cambridge by the elderly Trotskyist Isaac Deutscher (published in 1967 under the title *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917–1967*). The form so elegantly transcended the content that we accepted the latter on trust: detoxification took a while. Sheer rhetorical facility, whatever its appeal, need not denote originality and depth of content.

All the same, *inarticulacy* surely suggests a shortcoming of thought. This idea will sound odd to a generation praised for what they are trying to say rather than the thing said. Articulacy itself became an object of suspicion in the 1970s:

the retreat from "form" favored uncritical approbation of mere "self-expression," above all in the classroom. But it is one thing to encourage students to express their opinions freely and to take care not to crush these under the weight of prematurely imposed authority. It is quite another for teachers to retreat from formal criticism in the hope that the freedom thereby accorded will favor independent thought: "Don't worry how you say it, it's the ideas that count."

Forty years on from the 1960s, there are not many instructors left with the self-confidence (or the training) to pounce on infelicitous expression and explain clearly just why it inhibits intelligent reflection. The revolution of my generation played an important role in this unraveling: the priority accorded the autonomous individual in every sphere of life should not be underestimated—"doing your own thing" took protean form.

Today "natural" expression—in language as in art—is preferred to artifice. We unreflectively suppose that truth no less than beauty is conveyed more effectively thereby. Alexander Pope knew better.¹ For many centuries in the Western tradition, how well you expressed a position corresponded closely to the credibility of your argument. Rhetorical styles might vary from the spartan to the baroque, but style itself was never a matter of indifference. And "style" was not just a well-turned sentence: poor expression belied poor thought. Confused words suggested confused ideas at best, dissimulation at worst.

The “professionalization” of academic writing—and the self-conscious grasping of humanists for the security of “theory” and “methodology”—favors obscurantism. This has encouraged the rise of a counterfeit currency of glib “popular” articulacy: in the discipline of history this is exemplified by the ascent of the “television don,” whose appeal lies precisely in his claim to attract a mass audience in an age when fellow scholars have lost interest in communication. But whereas an earlier generation of popular scholarship distilled authorial authority into plain text, today’s “accessible” writers protrude uncomfortably into the audience’s consciousness. It is the performer, rather than the subject, to whom the audience’s attention is drawn.

Cultural insecurity begets its linguistic doppelgänger. The same is true of technical advance. In a world of Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter (not to mention texting), pithy allusion substitutes for exposition. Where once the Internet seemed an opportunity for unrestricted communication, the increasingly commercial bias of the medium—“I am what I buy”—brings impoverishment of its own. My children observe of their own generation that the communicative shorthand of their hardware has begun to seep into communication itself: “people talk like texts.”

This ought to worry us. When words lose their integrity so do the ideas they express. If we privilege personal expres-

sion over formal convention, then we are privatizing language no less than we have privatized so much else. "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." Alice was right: the outcome is anarchy.

In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell castigated contemporaries for using language to mystify rather than inform. His critique was directed at bad faith: people wrote poorly because they were trying to say something unclear or else deliberately prevaricating. Our problem, it seems to me, is different. Shoddy prose today bespeaks intellectual insecurity: we speak and write badly because we don't feel confident in what we think and are reluctant to assert it unambiguously ("It's only my opinion . . ."). Rather than suffering from the onset of "newspeak," we risk the rise of "nospeak."

I am more conscious of these considerations now than at any time in the past. In the grip of a neurological disorder, I am fast losing control of words even as my relationship with the world has been reduced to them. They still form with impeccable discipline and unreduced range in the silence of my thoughts—the view from inside is as rich as ever—but I can no longer convey them with ease. Vowel sounds and sibilant consonants slide out of my mouth, shapeless and inchoate even to my close collaborator. The vocal muscle, for

sixty years my reliable alter ego, is failing. Communication, performance, assertion: these are now my *weakest* assets. Translating being into thought, thought into words, and words into communication will soon be beyond me and I shall be confined to the rhetorical landscape of my interior reflections.

Though I am now more sympathetic to those constrained to silence I remain contemptuous of garbled language. No longer free to exercise it myself, I appreciate more than ever how vital communication is to the republic: not just the means by which we live together but part of what living together means. The wealth of words in which I was raised were a public space in their own right—and properly preserved public spaces are what we so lack today. If words fall into disrepair, what will substitute? They are all we have.

1. True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest, What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Express. —Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711)

PART THREE

The Memory Chalet is a memoir unlike any you have ever read before. Each essay charts some experience or remembrance of the past through the sieve of Tony Judt's prodigious mind. His youthful love of a particular London bus route evolves into a reflection on public civility and interwar urban planning. Memories of the 1968 student riots of Paris meander through the divergent sex politics of Europe, before concluding that his generation 'was a revolutionary generation, but missed the revolution'. A series of roadtrips across America lead not just to an appreciation of American history, but to an eventual acquisition of citizenship. Foods and trains and long-lost smells all compete for Judt's attention; but for us, he has forged his reflections into an elegant arc of analysis. All as simply and beautifully arranged as a Swiss chalet – a reassuring refuge deep in the mountains of memory.

£16.99



TONY JUDT was educated at King's College, Cambridge and École Normale Supérieure, Paris and taught at Cambridge, Oxford and Berkeley. He was the Erich Maria Remarque Professor of European Studies at New York

University; in addition to Director of the Remarque Institute, which is dedicated to the study of Europe and which he founded in 1995.

The author or editor of fourteen books, Professor Judt was a frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Times* and many other journals in Europe and the US. Professor Judt is author of *Ill Fares the Land*, *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*, and *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, which was one of the *New York Times Book Review's* Ten Best Books of 2005, the winner of the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Book Award, a finalist for Pulitzer Prize and shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize. He died in August, 2010 at the age of sixty-two.

Original jacket design © Gabrieli Wilson. Jacket photo © Tim Thompson Corbis. Arthur photo © John R. Riffin

ISBN 978 0 434 02096 6

WILLIAM HEINEMANN
RANDOM HOUSE
20 VAUXHALL BRIDGE ROAD
LONDON SW1V 2SA

www.rhbooks.co.uk

