CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"A civilisation is known by its realised dreams. If another age than ours should ask, 'What did you do with your time?' here, in the more than Roman magnificence of our engineering, is one answer we can give." It was the new liner *Queen Mary*, awaiting its launch in front of 250,000 spectators in Glasgow on 26 September 1934, that prompted this celebration in the *Manchester Guardian*. Profoundly impressed, the journalist proclaimed the new vessel to be a revelation because the *Queen Mary* turned an intangible "dream" into a material "reality," and a formidable one at that – a structure over 1,000 feet (300 meters) long and weighing more than 35,000 tons (32,000 tonnes). Although large vessels such as the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Große* (1897), the *Lusitania* (1907), the *Mauretania* (1907), the infamous *Titanic* (1912), the *Imperator* (1913), the *Bremen* (1929), and the *Europa* (1930) had galvanized popular attention on both sides of the Atlantic with almost predictable regularity since the late nineteenth century, neither the press nor its readers had grown accustomed to these giants' ever-increasing size, speed, and luxuriousness. "Never before has the launch of a ship given the popular imagination so lively a thrill in anticipation," claimed one of Britain's leading broadsheets as the *Queen Mary* became ready to take to the water. This boat, every observer agreed, put all previous naval constructions to shame. Even the pouring rain that forced many onlookers of the launch to spend hours in "flooding cornfields, [mud] slowly oozing over their ankles," could not mar the universal mood of joyful anticipation. As the hull entered the water, "one long sigh [traveled] all down the mile long line of" soaked spectators. As much as the nation as a whole, the people of Glasgow stood in awe of their "grand" work. A fitting symbol of an age that prided itself on the "conquest of nature," the *Queen Mary* struck the *Manchester Guardian*, a newspaper that usually shied away from hyperbole, as a "secular miracle."[1]

[1] *Manchester Guardian*, 25 September 1934, 8; 26 September 1934, 8; *Daily Mail*, 25 September 1934, 8. The technical data are taken from James Steele, *Queen Mary* (London, 1995), 51, 235.

By acclaiming Britain's latest transatlantic liner as a "miracle," the *Manchester Guardian* aligned the *Queen Mary* with countless other prominent technological artifacts that had struck observers as "wonders" since the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Industrial machinery, railways, aeroplanes, airships, film, photography, electricity, motor cars, the gramophone, the radio – all these and more counted among the mechanisms that, as a plethora of commentators insisted, filled the world with new, "miraculous" objects. Throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, contemporaries expressed their astonishment at technological transformations by persistently describing innovative mechanisms as the "wonders" of the modern age. Yet the rhetoric of the "modern wonder" of engineering, despite all the fervent enthusiasm it generated, did not prevent the emergence of a profound sense of ambivalence that just as persistently accompanied the appearance of technological innovations. Characteristically, the correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, whom we have just encountered as he marveled at the *Queen Mary*'s magnificence, also drew attention to a disconcerting discrepancy between the boat's creators and their creation. Reflecting on the ship's dimensions, he shuddered at the vessel's hubristic size, noting that mere "six-foot high human beings" were responsible for "this mountain of metal," a "sea mammoth" that dwarfed not only its makers but everything in its vicinity. Like many other spectacular new technological objects, the *Queen Mary* elated observers *and* sent shivers down their spines. While observers fervently admired many innovations, they simultaneously responded to novel mechanisms with anxiety and found spectacular innovations intellectually and emotionally confusing. Throwing contemporaries off balance, technology as a wonder contributed to a pervasive sense of dislocation that coincided with the advent of a time that struck contemporaries as a new, distinctly "modern" age.

Technological change mounted profound emotional and intellectual challenges to the popular imagination because boisterous mechanical progress created and subsequently intensified a novel dilemma in Western societies from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. As technology played crucial roles in reshaping the external world, most people confronted this process of transformation from a position of profound ignorance.[2] Very few individuals had the expert knowledge that would have rendered

[2] A similar lack of understanding has been noted by works on assessments of technology in North America from the middle of the nineteenth century. See John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776–1900* (New York, 1999 [1976]), 141–2; Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electrical Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1988), 17–22.

intelligible the machines that were changing their natural and social environments. Contemporaries not only lacked an understanding of the scientific findings on which many innovations were based; they also failed to comprehend how the new mechanisms that were coming into existence functioned. Although they figured prominently as symbols of change, many inventions remained beyond the grasp of the majority of the population. In addition to transforming the environment, technological innovation also created novel modes of representing and perceiving this ever-changing external world. The first third of the twentieth century witnessed the arrival and proliferation of innovative "representational technologies," which included the tabloid press, photography, film, radio, and the gramophone. As many new media quickly acquired a wide popular following, contemporaries faced the task of determining what kinds of knowledge these novel technologies generated. Commentators found it problematic to locate innovative representational technologies within existing hierarchies of knowledge production.[3] In transforming the external world, as well as the means of representing and perceiving it, technological innovation thus created *a problem of knowledge*.

Of course, a restricted grasp of technological intricacies did not silence public debate; in fact, the opposite was true. Discussion often found ways of addressing technological issues that bypassed details of engineering but were nonetheless crucial to popular understandings of technology. This study examines the frequently passionate British and German public exchanges about technological innovation that, between the last decade of the nineteenth century and World War II, ascribed meanings to technologies as symbols of change and rendered the material transformation of the external world intelligible to technological laypersons. Such public considerations of technologies' significance went far beyond instances of popularization when scientists and engineers explained to non-experts how certain mechanisms were produced and how they worked. Public debate performed the cultural work of advancing interpretations that determined technology's place in contemporary economic, political, and social life. Discussion about technological innovation represented negotiations of ignorance, in the course of which the participants inscribed social and cultural meaning into objects on the basis of a partial technical understanding

[3] On these debates, see Dan LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford, 1988); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1992). On debates about this problem in France, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, 1993).

of technology. Given their ambivalent nature, assessments of technology as a "modern wonder" possessed the potential to generate both public euphoria and technophobia. Public insecurity about technology, however, did not give rise to a cultural atmosphere that opposed change *per se*; instead, the broad range of the interventions that we shall analyze established a cultural climate conducive to innovation – albeit in the presence of deep ambivalence.

To show how public enthusiasm for, and unease about, innovative technology interacted to further technological change in Britain and Germany between the 1890s and World War II, this book investigates the intersecting debates about the following three technologies: aviation, transatlantic passenger shipping, and film. These examples have been selected for several reasons. The technologies in question either came into existence or embarked upon vigorous technological development during the 1890s and early 1900s. At this time, critiques of modernity increased significantly in both countries, and the debates under consideration, therefore, shed light on how contemporaries evaluated technology as anxieties about the "modern age" spread. Since public debate about technology underwent significant transformations after World War II (as the concluding pages will briefly show), the year 1945 provides our chronological endpoint. Furthermore, combining aviation with passenger shipping and film brings into view technology's military and civilian dimensions. Developments in these sectors attracted strong public attention, and discussions about these artifacts, therefore, shaped central assumptions about technological change in times of peace and war. Debates about the technologies in question not only grant opportunities to explore how British and German public interpretations ascribed meanings to a changing world of objects; incorporating discussions about film also allows for an investigation of how contemporaries judged the most successful and most controversial representational technology. Given the speed with which this medium secured a mass market, film undoubtedly, in economic terms, counts among the most prolific technological inventions of the late nineteenth century. Curiously, film, despite its evidently mechanical nature, only rarely received extended consideration as a technological phenomenon in contemporary debate, and we shall chart how cinematography lost its status as a technology and came to be conceived as a primarily cultural phenomenon. Thus this study analyzes how the British and German publics evaluated both the artifacts that transformed the external world and the novel means of representing and perceiving these spectacular metamorphoses. Moreover, an analysis of luxurious ocean liners, aeroplanes, and airships illustrates that economic profits,

or expectations of such gains, alone do not explain support for innovation, since the operation of these technologies consistently generated financial losses and, consequently, required substantial subsidies. Contemporaries shared the conviction that the importance of these technologies lay beyond narrow economic definitions, a belief sustaining enthusiasm even for financially costly innovations. There was much more to the love of technology than narrow economic calculation. Finally, the examples under scrutiny guard against an inquiry that employs the concept of "technology" in a reified manner. As technologies proliferated in contemporary society, they gained a wider range of public meanings than studies of one technology or of debates about "technology" in philosophical circles can capture. The debates about heterogeneous technologies bring out the multifaceted, context-related, and frequently contradictory meanings that the term "technology" denotes.

Historical research has not systematically addressed how, given the mixed receptions accorded to a plethora of technological devices, British and German public debate supported technological innovation. Recent work on technology as systems has placed artifacts in specific social and economic contexts by identifying which actors have shaped engineering solutions and applications, as well as, more rarely, by illustrating how these solutions and applications expressed their creators' values. Focusing on the actors who shaped innovations, the approach of studying technologies as systems achieves great insights when it details the choices that lead to the adoption of certain designs and uses in engineering, but it also has a blind spot: it tacitly regards general social and cultural support for innovations beyond entrepreneurial and engineering circles as a fact that requires little explanation in itself.[4] Whereas the "systems approach" tends to examine specific engineering cultures, this book concentrates on the public cultures that arose from debates among technological laypersons upon whose consent technological change was contingent. The question posed here is different and, indeed, more fundamental: why and how did British and German societies foster a cultural climate conducive to innovation processes despite considerable public insecurity about technology between 1890 and 1945?

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[4] Prominent examples include Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society* (Baltimore, 1983); David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Donald MacKenzie, *Inventing Accuracy: A Historical Sociology of Nuclear Missile Guidance* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); Bill Luckin, *Questions of Power: Electricity and the Environment in Interwar Britain* (Manchester, 1990).

Historians of Britain have recently rejected claims that the dominance
of purportedly "rural" and "gentlemanly" ideals predisposed British cul-
ture against technology and industry with grave results for the country's
economic performance in the twentieth century.[5] British society, the argu-
ment runs, promoted technological innovation through military research,
by training large numbers of graduates in engineering subjects and, most
relevant to the topic under consideration, by fostering strong enthusiasm
for new machines in general. Furthermore, ideas of scientific and techno-
logical superiority pervaded imperialist thought and played a crucial role in
defining notions of British modernity.[6] Studies in design history have also
alerted us to the modernist aesthetic impulses that often openly celebrated
technology as an artistic and cultural inspiration.[7] While recent work has
stressed Britain's overwhelmingly pro-technological cultural disposition,
little work has analyzed in detail how fascination and fear interacted in the
public promotion of novel artifacts. Patrick Wright's book on the cultural
reception of the tank is a rare exception, as is Dan LeMahieu's examina-
tion of the reactions of the British educated elite to the development of
a commercial gramophone, radio, and cinema culture.[8] Current scholar-
ship, whether it deals with technology implicitly or explicitly, has often
foregrounded innovative dimensions in British society, politics, economy,
and culture in the first half the twentieth century, thereby touching on a
developing field of inquiry: the study of British modernity, long thought
of as a contradiction in terms.[9]

[5] Classic statements can be found in Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial
Spirit, 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 1981); Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (Gloucester, 1984),
19–71; Paul Warwick, "Did Britain Change? An Inquiry into the Causes of National Decline,"
Journal of Contemporary History 20 (1985), 99–134. James Winter has examined early environmentalism
without reference to the debate about decline; see James Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault: Sustaining
the Victorian Environment* (Berkeley, 1999).
[6] A measured inquiry is that of Michael Dintenfass, *The Decline of Industrial Britain, 1870–1980*
(London, 1992). A brief list of critiques of works portraying Britain as anti-technological should
include W. D. Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain, 1750–1990* (London, 1994);
David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation*
(Basingstoke, 1991); *idem, Science, Technology and British Industrial "Decline"* (Cambridge, 1996);
Peter Mandler, "Against 'Englishness': English Culture and the Limits of Rural Nostalgia, 1850–1940,"
Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, sixth series, 7 (1997), 155–75; Michael Adas, *Machines as
the Measure of Man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, 1990).
[7] Michael Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Under-
ground* (New York, 1999); James Peto and Donna Loveday (eds.), *Modern Britain, 1929–1939* (London,
1999); Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (Manchester, 2001).
[8] Patrick Wright, *Tank: The Progress of a Monstrous War Machine* (London, 2000); LeMahieu, *A Culture
for Democracy*. See also Sean O'Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring,
1896–1939* (Manchester, 1998).
[9] See the following recent works: Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds.), *Modern Times: Reflections on a
Century of English Modernity* (London, 1996); Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters (eds.),

In German history, inquiries into public evaluations are embedded in wider examinations of the ways anti- and pro-modern sentiments contributed to the rise, consolidation, and consequences of National Socialism. Recent work has extensively critiqued research that focused on an unfolding narrative of technophobia, claiming that hostility to technology played into the hands of National Socialism with its purportedly anti-modern, agrarian, and anti-urbanist ideology.[10] Jeffrey Herf was among the first to begin a theoretical reorientation by identifying a "reactionary modernism," during the Weimar Republic and in National Socialism, which combined anti-democratic politics with militaristic and productivist notions.[11] Because Herf's focus on intellectual history rendered it difficult to support some of his wide-ranging conceptual claims empirically, other historians have taken up related lines of inquiry in examinations of debates about industrial rationalization in early twentieth-century Germany, metaphorical descriptions of the human body as a machine, enthusiasm for aviation and military equipment, and widespread demands for an ethos of *Sachlichkeit* (sobriety or matter-of-factness) that celebrated the functionalism of the machine as an exemplary model for individual conduct in the interwar years.[12] These approaches, which have demonstrated the pervasiveness of technology in contemporary thought and culture, complement scholarship that emphasizes that the National Socialists strove to bring into existence

    Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945–1964 (London, 1999); Martin J. Daunton and Bernhard Rieger (eds.), *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (Oxford, 2001).

[10] Rolf-Peter Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde: Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1984).

[11] Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984). For an incisive critique of this work see Anson Rabinbach, "Nationalsozialismus und Moderne: Zur Technik-Interpretation im Dritten Reich," in Wolfgang Emmerich and Carl Wege (eds.), *Der Technik-Diskurs in der Hitler-Stalin-Ära* (Stuttgart, 1995), 94–113.

[12] Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (New York, 1994); Thomas Rohkrämer, "Antimodernism, Reactionary Modernism and National Socialism: Technocratic Tendencies in Germany, 1890–1945," *Contemporary European History* 8 (1999), 29–50; Michael T. Allen, "The Puzzle of Nazi Modernism: Modern Technology and Ideological Consensus in an SS-Factory at Auschwitz," *Technology and Culture* 37 (1996), 527–71; Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1992); Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker (eds.), *Science, Technology and National Socialism* (Cambridge, 1994); Frank Trommler, "The Creation of a Culture of *Sachlichkeit*," in Geoff Eley (ed.), *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 465–85; Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, 2001). Some recent work still retains a fairly narrow focus on intellectual history. Thomas Rohkrämer, *Eine andere Moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880–1933* (Paderborn, 1999); Mikael Hård, "German Regulation: The Integration of Modern Technology into National Culture," in Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison (eds.), *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology: Discourses on Modernity, 1900–1939* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 33–67.

an "alternative modernity" that blended a disdain for rationalism, indi-
vidualism, parliamentarianism, and feminism with a fascination for mass
politics, social engineering, pronatalism, eugenics, productivism, and tech-
nology.[13] These studies have greatly enhanced our understanding of how
the Nazi movement appropriated and reshaped enthusiasm for technology
so as to cast itself as visibly "modern." Still, it remains unclear why a pas-
sionate fascination for technology existed in Germany in the first place,
despite deep anxieties about the "modern age" in general and prominent
critiques of technological innovation in particular since the late nineteenth
century.

The distinct research agendas in British and German history have pro-
duced investigations that focus on different aspects of national debates
about technological change. Although this contrast renders it necessary
to launch a comparison of the public meanings of technology in Britain
and Germany from two distinct platforms, studies of both countries have
shared an interest in the complexities and ambiguities of modernity. As
scholarship on modernity provides a crucial theoretical framework for this
study, it is essential to define how this inquiry comprehends this concept to
avoid confusion that can arise from several sources. To begin with, theories
of "modernity" have been used in many analytical contexts, a practice that
has frequently endowed the term with contradictory meanings. Further-
more, affirming "the 'modernity' of this or that historical phenomenon," as
Fredric Jameson has recently observed, often awakens "a feeling of intensity
and energy that is greatly in excess of the attention we generally bring to
interesting events or monuments in the past." Considerations of modernity
are prone to fuel contentious debate because they tend to touch on highly
politicized assumptions about the character of the present.[14] Although figur-
ing simultaneously as a multifaceted analytical category and as a polemical
term, modernity does not have to prove a treacherous concept on which to
build a comparison – quite the contrary.

For a start, modernity must be distinguished from artistic modernism,
a term that describes the anti-academic, innovative, initially iconoclastic,

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[13] For some recent scholarship along these lines, see Kees Gispen, *Poems in Steel: National Socialism
and the Politics of Inventing from Weimar to Bonn* (New York, 2002); Margit Szöllösi-Janze (ed.),
Science in the Third Reich (Oxford, 2001); Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between
National Unification and National Socialism* (Cambridge, 1989); Erhard Schütz and Eckhard Gruber,
Mythos Reichsautobahn: Bau und Inszenierung der 'Straßen des Führers', 1933–1941 (Berlin, 1996);
Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft* (Bonn,
1996); Gabriele Czarnowski, *Das kontrollierte Paar: Ehe- und Sexualpolitik im Nationalsozialismus*
(Weinheim, 1991).
[14] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London, 2002), 35.

and stylistically heterogeneous aesthetic movements that sprang up with increasing frequency towards the end of the nineteenth century.[15] In our context, artistic modernism presents a concern only to the extent that it left an imprint on wider public debates about film, aviation, and passenger shipping. Furthermore, this investigation, while focusing on public attitudes to technological modernity, does not claim to contribute to long-standing scholarly exchanges in British and German historiography about the impact of cultural trends on long-term modernization, be it in the form of economic performance, social change, or democratization.[16] In German history, studies of modernization have not only sought to assess to what extent the National Socialist regime succeeded in systematically transforming the country's economy and society after 1933; they have also given rise to heated exchanges over the question whether these structural changes accidentally laid the economic foundations for the success of democracy in the Federal Republic after 1945.[17] While scholarship on Britain has been more hesitant to embrace modernization theory, it has highlighted a plethora of dynamic socio-economic developments to call into question assertions that the country headed for inevitable national decline from the 1890s.[18] Although these studies have invalidated assertions that Germany and Britain suffered from vastly dissimilar forms of traditionalism in the first half of the twentieth century, their claims tend to rest on problematic foundations. To begin with, it has often proved difficult to pin down causal links between cultural attitudes and the patterns of social, political,

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[15] For a general evaluation of recent scholarship on modernism from a historian's perspective, see Robert Wohl, "Heart of Darkness: Modernism and Its Historians," *Journal of Modern History* 74 (2002), 573–621. On modernism in England, see Stella K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism, 1900– 1920: Early Modernism and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Edwardian England* (London, 1988); Peter Stansky, *On or About December 1910: Early Bloomsbury and its Intimate World* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); J. B. Bullen (ed.), *Post-Impressionists in England* (London, 1988). Classic German studies include Thomas Nipperdey, *Wie das Bürgertum die Moderne fand* (Berlin, 1988); Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession: Modernism and its Enemies in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1980).

[16] Classics are Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge, 1960); Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, 1971).

[17] In German history, Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum initiated a re-evaluation of the years between 1933 and 1945 by arguing that the Nazis unintentionally effected a modernization. See Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City, 1969), 381–96; David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Garden City, 1966). For a measured intervention, see Axel Schildt, "NS-Regime, Modernisierung und Moderne: Anmerkungen zur Hochkunjunktur einer andauernden Diskussion," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Geschichte* 23 (1994), 3–22.

[18] On Britain, see the literature in footnote 5 (p. 6) and Barry Supple's classic lecture: Barry Supple, "Fear of Failing: Economic History and the Decline of Britain," in Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock (eds.), *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1997), 9–29.

and economic behavior that serve as indicators of modernization. More importantly in our context, research on modernization frequently operates with normative concepts of modernity that prioritize one model over another and thereby risk obscuring alternative interpretations of the modern that coexist at a given point in time.[19]

Since a wide range of phenomena struck Britons and Germans from many political backgrounds as "modern," normative concepts cannot capture the rich inconsistencies that shaped public debate about modernity. In fact, since the late nineteenth century it was semantic breadth rather than analytical precision that characterized the use of the term "modern" in the public sphere from the political Right to the Left. Virtually omnipresent in the public arena, the epithet "modern" provided an elastic category to celebrate and denounce a plethora of transformations and transitions in British and German society. Consequently, a vast number of interpretations of modernity were in public circulation at any given moment. While semantic flexibility contributed to the category's public ubiquity, and while everyday use often rendered the term vague, it still possessed a solid core meaning. Most importantly, the word "modern" captured the widespread conviction that the historical present was first and foremost an era of profound, irreversible, and man-made changes. In industrialized turn-of-the-century Europe, public calls for a straightforward return to the past had an increasingly unrealistic and anachronistic ring, because fewer and fewer people believed that the past provided recipes for present and future problems. As a consequence, history, as Jose Harris has written, became a "lost domain," and commentators across the political and cultural spectrum proclaimed that Europe had entered a new, unique historical era: "modern times."[20]

Of course, this sense of living in a novel age was not ahistorical. A host of historical tales threw into sharp relief the exceptional character of the modern age, no matter whether they stipulated a fundamental rupture between the present and the past, explained the outstanding features of the present as the culmination of continuous, incremental change, or construed heroic

[19] Critiques of normative concepts of modernity include Peter Fritzsche, "Nazi Modern," *Modernism/Modernity* 3 (1996), 1–22; Michael T. Allen, "Modernity, the Holocaust, and Machines Without History," in Michael T. Allen and Gabrielle Hecht (eds.), *Technologies of Power: Essays in Honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 175–214. It should be noted in this context that normative concepts of modernity underpin the arguments of both those who deny and those who emphasize the modernizing effect of the National Socialist regime. Influential examples are Rainer Zitelmann, "Die totalitäre Seite der Moderne," in Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (eds.), *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung* (Darmstadt, 1991), 1–20; Hans Mommsen, "Nationalsozialismus als vorgetäuschte Modernisierung," in Walter H. Pehle (ed.), *Der historische Ort des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1990), 31–46.

[20] Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain, 1870–1914* (Harmondsworth, 1994), 36.