A COMPANION TO EUROPE
1900–1945

Edited by

Gordon Martel
A Companion to Europe 1900–1945
This series provides sophisticated and authoritative overviews of the scholarship that has shaped our current understanding of Europe’s past. Each volume comprises between twenty-five and forty concise essays written by individual scholars within their area of specialization. The aim of each contribution is to synthesize the current state of scholarship from a variety of historical perspectives and to provide a statement on where the field is heading. The essays are written in a clear, provocative, and lively manner, designed for an international audience of scholars, students, and general readers. The Blackwell Companions to European History is a cornerstone of Blackwell’s overarching Companions to History series, covering European, American, and World History.

Published
A Companion to Europe 1900–1945
Edited by Gordon Martel

A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance
Edited by Guido Ruggiero

A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe
Edited by Stefan Berger

A Companion to the Reformation World
Edited by R. Po-chia Hsia

Published
A Companion to Western Historical Thought
Edited by Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza

A Companion to Gender History
Edited by Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks

Published
A Companion to Contemporary Britain
Edited by Paul Addison and Harriet Jones

A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain
Edited by Chris Wrigley

A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain
Edited by Chris Williams

A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain
Edited by H. T. Dickinson

A Companion to Stuart Britain
Edited by Barry Coward

A Companion to Tudor Britain
Edited by Robert Tittler and Norman Jones

A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages
Edited by S. H. Rigby

A Companion to Roman Britain
Edited by Malcolm Todd

Published
A Companion to the American Revolution
Edited by Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole

A Companion to Nineteenth-Century America
Edited by William L. Barney

A Companion to the American South
Edited by John B. Boles

A Companion to American Indian History
Edited by Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury

A Companion to American Women’s History
Edited by Nancy A. Hewitt

A Companion to Post-1945 America
Edited by Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig

A Companion to the Vietnam War
Edited by Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco

A Companion to Colonial America
Edited by Daniel Vickers

A Companion to Twentieth-Century America
Edited by Stephen J. Whitfield

A Companion to the American West
Edited by William Deverell

A Companion to American Foreign Relations
Edited by Robert D. Schulzinger

A Companion to the Civil War and Reconstruction
Edited by Lacy K. Ford

A Companion to American Technology
Edited by Carroll Pursell

A Companion to African-American History
Edited by Alton Hornsby

A Companion to American Immigration
Edited by Reed Ueda

A Companion to the History of the Middle East
Edited by Yousef M. Cloreiri
A COMPANION TO EUROPE
1900–1945

Edited by
Gordon Martel
Contents

Notes on Contributors viii
Preface xiii
Maps xiv
Introduction: Europe in Agony, 1900–1945 xxi
Gordon Martel

PART I  CONTINUITY AND CHANGE; FORCES AND MOVEMENTS  1
1 Urbanization, Poverty, and Crime 3
Paul Lawrence
2 The Revolution in Science 19
Cathryn Carson
3 Feminism: Women, Work, and Politics 35
June Hannam
4 Modernism 50
Robin Walz
5 The Cult of Youth 66
Elizabeth Harvey
6 Sexuality and the Psyche 82
Lesley A. Hall
7 The Economy 98
Peter Wardley

PART II  BEFORE THE DELUGE  117
8 Europe’s World: Power, Empire, and Colonialism 119
Woodruff D. Smith
### CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social Reform or Social Revolution?</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gary P. Steenson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Modernity: Approaching the Twentieth Century</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angela K. Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Politics: The Past and the Future</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Waldron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Coming of War, 1914</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annika Mombauer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART III WORLD WAR I</strong></td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>August 1914: Public Opinion and the Crisis</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David Welch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The War in the Trenches</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Travers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The War from Above: Aims, Strategy, and Diplomacy</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matthew Stibbe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The War and Revolution</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Baker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART IV THE AFTERTHATH OF WAR</strong></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Peacemaking after World War I</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alan Sharp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Demobilization and Discontent</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James M. Diehl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Socialist Experiment</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William J. Chase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Fascist Challenge</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Blinkhorn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Revisionism</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carole Fink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART V THE NEW AGE</strong></td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Jazz Age</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas J. Saunders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The Nazi New Society</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dick Geary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The Popular Front</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Richards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The Strategic Revolution</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tami Davis Biddle</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Hitler and the Origins of World War II</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Anita J. Prazmowska</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PART VI WORLD WAR II</strong></td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Grand Strategy and Summit Diplomacy</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Michael Jabara Carley</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Real War</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>David French</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Home Fronts: Europe at War, 1939–1945</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nicholas Atkin</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>The Holocaust</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>David Engel</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Memories of World War II and the Holocaust in Europe</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Harold Marcuse</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contributors


Mark Baker is Lecturer in Eastern European History at California State University, Bakersfield. His book manuscript, “Peasants, Power and Revolution in the Village: A Social History of Kharkiv Province, 1914–1921,” is currently under review for publication. He has published several articles on the revolutionary period, the most pertinent of which is “Rampaging Soldatki, Cowering Police, Bazaar Riots and Moral Economy: The Social Impact of the Great War in Kharkiv Province,” Canadian–American Slavic Studies 35, Nos. 2–3 (Summer–Fall 2001).

Tami Davis Biddle is George C. Marshall Chair of Military Studies at the US Army War College. Her research focus is on twentieth-century warfare, and she is the author of Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914–1945 (2002), which was a Choice Outstanding Academic Book for 2002. She has also written many articles on various aspects of air warfare, and the history of the Cold War. From 1992 to 2001 she taught military and diplomatic history at Duke University and was a core faculty member of the Duke–University of North Carolina Joint Program in Military History.

Martin Blinkhorn is Professor of Modern European History at Lancaster University. He is the author and editor of numerous works on the Spanish and Portuguese right, Italian fascism, and European fascism from a comparative perspective. This last category includes the edited volume Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe (1990) and his Fascism and the Right in Europe, 1919–1945 (2000).

Michael Jabara Carley is Professor of History at the University of Akron in Ohio. He is interested in early Soviet–western relations, and the author of 1939: The Alliance that Never Was and the Coming of World War II (1999), which has been translated into French (2001) and Russian (2005), and Revolution and Intervention: The French Government and the Russian Civil War, 1917–1919 (1983), plus a great many journal articles.
Cathryn Carson is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, where she directs the Office for History of Science and Technology. She has published on the history of quantum physics, the politics of science in Germany, and the cultural and philosophical lessons scientists have drawn from their work. Her forthcoming book is titled Heisenberg in the Atomic Age: Science and the Public Sphere.

William J. Chase is a Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1929 (1987) and Enemies Within the Gates: The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939 (1999). He is a co-director and co-editor of the Russian Archive Series, a Russian–American collaborative project that has published guides to central Russian archives.

James M. Diehl has recently retired as Professor of History at Indiana University, Bloomington. His main publications are Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany (1977) and The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans after the Second World War (1993). He is currently working on a study of the emergence of a democratic political culture in western Germany after 1945.


David French is Professor of History at University College London. His book Raising Churchill’s Army: The British Army and the War against Germany, 1919–1945 (2000) was awarded the Templer Medal by the Society for Army Historical Research and the Arthur Goodzeit Prize by the New York Military Affairs Symposium. He is now completing a study of the place of the regimental system in British military culture since 1870.

Dick Geary taught at the University of Lancaster from 1973 to 1989, then moved to the Chair of Modern History at Nottingham. His research concerned itself until recently with comparative labor history, the social history of modern Germany, and the history of Marxism. Recently, he has been working on comparisons between Brazilian slavery and free labor in Europe. His books include European Labour Protest, 1848–1939 (1981), Karl Kautsky (1987), The German Unemployed, edited with Richard J. Evans, (1987), Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914 (1989), European Labour Politics from 1900 to the Depression (1991), and Hitler and Nazism (1993, 2000).

Lesley A. Hall is Senior Archivist at the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine in London, and Honorary Lecturer in History of Medicine at the University of London. She has written several books and numerous

**June Hannam** is Reader in History and Associate Dean (research and staff development) in the Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Her publications include *Isabella Ford, 1855–1924* (Blackwell, 1989), *Socialist Women: Britain, c. 1880s to 1920s* (2001) (with Karen Hunt), and *International Encyclopaedia of Women's Suffrage* (2000) (with Mitzi Auchterlonie and Katherine Holden). She has also written numerous articles on feminist and socialist politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.


**Paul Lawrence** is Lecturer in European History at the Open University, where he helps to run the European Centre for the Study of Policing. His publications include *Nationalism: History and Theory* (2004) and articles on various aspects of immigration, crime, and policing. He is currently working on a history of the relationship between the police and the poor in France and England.

**Harold Marcuse** is a Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His publications include *Steine des Anstosses* (Stones of Contention), the catalog of an exhibition surveying monuments and memorials for events during World War II from around the world (1985), and *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (2001).


**Anita J. Prazmowska** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International History, London School of Economics. She has published two monographs on Polish–British relations prior to and during World War II: *Britain, Poland and the Eastern Front, 1939* (1987) and *Britain and Poland 1939–1943: The Betrayed Ally* (1995). More recently she has published a book on origins of communism in Poland entitled *Civil War in Poland, 1942–48* (2004). Her next project is a wide-ranging analysis of the events of 1956 in eastern Europe.

**Michael Richards** lectures in contemporary European history at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He is author of *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco’s Spain, 1936–45* (1998) and co-editor of *The Splintering of

Matthew Stibbe is Senior Lecturer in History at Sheffield Hallam University. His publications include German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918 (2001) and Women in the Third Reich (2003). He is currently writing a book on civilian POWs during World War I, with special reference to the Ruhleben camp for British nationals interned in Germany.

Tim Travers became Professor Emeritus of the University of Calgary in 2004. He is the author of The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900–1918 (1987) and How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917–1918 (1992), Gallipoli 1915 (2001), and co-author of World History of Warfare (2002). Currently, he is working on a history of piracy.

Peter Waldron is Professor of History at the University of Sunderland. His publications include The End of Imperial Russia 1855–1917 (1997) and Between Two Revolutions (1998) and he is currently working on the political culture of Russia before 1917.

Robin Walz is Associate Professor of History at the University of Alaska Southeast. A specialist in the history of popular culture in modern France, he is the author of Pulp Surrealism: Insolent Popular Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Paris (2000).

Peter Wardley is Principal Lecturer in Modern Economic and Business History at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He was Information Technology Editor of the Economic History Review, has written several articles on historical computing, and edited the Bristol Historical Resource CD. His ongoing research project, which has resulted in a number of publications, inves-
tigates the emergence and consolidation of “Big Business” in the first half of the twentieth century.

I wish to thank Andrew MacLennan for suggesting this project to me during his short tour of duty at Blackwell Publishing; his zeal for making books is infectious. Since its initial inception, Tessa Harvey has been responsible for seeing the project through to completion and during this process her intelligence and humor have provided invaluable support. In its final stages, Angela Cohen has given helpful and timely guidance. I sincerely thank them all for their encouragement and their assistance.

My greatest debt is to the contributors. The challenge of covering such enormous and complicated ground in such a short space is a daunting one – but they have been brave enough to try. I believe that they have succeeded in writing essays that are thoughtful, informative, and based on vast reading and careful reflection. They are also clear and engagingly written and will, I believe, be helpful to any and all students of the subject. I sincerely thank them for their efforts and for their willingness to put up with a demanding and overbearing editor.
Map 1  Europe 1900–1914
Map 4  World War I in Europe
Map 5  The settlement of central and eastern Europe 1917–1922
Map 6  Greater Germany 1933–1945
Europe, over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, was transformed, and its transformation was caused primarily, if not entirely, by the experience of war. The geopolitical map, politics, society, and culture were reshaped, rethought, and reconstructed, and it is impossible to understand Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century without coming to grips with the sufferings endured by Europeans between 1914 and 1945. This is not what people had expected in 1900. Viewed from the vantage points of London and Paris, Berlin and Vienna – even St. Petersburg and Rome – the twentieth century was expected to be Europe’s finest. The “world” was European: controlled by Europeans and their descendants, or becoming “European” by accepting its political institutions, its economic model, and its values. The wars of religion that had beleaguered the continent were distant memories, of interest only to antiquarians; the last great war of ideology – that waged against the French revolutionaries – was now remembered as a triumph over Napoleon. Secular societies aimed not to impose their vision on other Europeans, but to improve the health and welfare of their own people. Governments were coming to regard it as their duty to eradicate crime, promote education, protect the sick, and sustain the elderly. The sciences – both physical and social – promised to find ways of achieving these lofty goals: technology was producing undreamed-of prosperity and creature comforts; research into the minds and bodies of human beings was unraveling the mysteries of behavior and disease. Civilization was European, and the twentieth century would be the most civilized, humane, and progressive in the history of humanity. Europeans could believe in this future in spite of problems that were evident – particularly to critics – in 1900: poverty, prejudice, racism, and violence, both within Europe itself and within the European empires in Africa and Asia. But even Europe’s harshest critics believed that Europe could overcome these problems; indeed, that it was Europe’s duty to humanity as a whole to do so.

By 1945 these expectations seemed naive at best, wicked at worst. The nineteenth century, reviled by the “modernists” of 1900–14, seemed peaceful, comfortable, and civilized in comparison with what Europeans suffered between 1914 and 1945. The world wars, the civil wars, the influenza pandemic, and the Holocaust had killed
something like 100 million people. The wars waged in Europe since 1815 had resulted in the deaths of not much more than a million; the “potato famine” in mid-century Ireland and central Europe paled in comparison with the influenza pandemic; there was nothing like the deliberate extermination of a European people such as occurred in the Holocaust or was perpetrated against the Armenians during World War I. By the end of World War II and in its aftermath the remembrance of suffering and horror had inscribed itself onto the European psyche; after 1919, memorials to the dead had replaced the triumphalist art and architecture, iconography and statuary of previous postwar eras. Even the victors looked back on their victories as the triumph of endurance over horror; shrines to unknown soldiers and tours of battlefield graveyards after 1918 and of extermination camps after 1945 replaced the glorification of war and warriors located at the Brandenburg Gate, the Arc d’Triomphe, and Trafalgar Square.

Emotionally, the Europe of 1945 was a vastly different place than the Europe of 1900. France had suffered a shattering defeat, then physically divided and occupied, which led to national self-doubt, soul searching, and internecine conflict. The bombing of Britain and the imminent prospect of invasion had destroyed forever the sense of insular invulnerability. In central and eastern Europe Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland had been pillaged and brutalized; the USSR had almost collapsed and suffered the most devastating human losses of any of the combatant states. But the differences between 1900 and 1945 were not only emotional, not merely in the minds of Europeans. At the end of World War II Germany was conquered, divided, and occupied. The streets of Weimar, Frankfurt, and Hamburg were patrolled by Russian, American, and British soldiers and, in the case of Berlin, by all three with the addition of the French. Within a year of Adolf Hitler’s suicide in his Berlin bunker, Winston Churchill was declaring that an “iron curtain” had descended and divided Europe between east and west. Russian troops were stationed throughout eastern Europe; American troops throughout western. No one had foreseen such things a half-century before, not even the wildest prophet could have envisioned such a fundamental reshaping of European geopolitics.

The United States had been of no consequence in European affairs in 1900. Russia was, of course, a European power with a vast Asian empire – but, while the tsarist autocracy was reviled by the liberals and democrats of western Europe, few feared that this power would be used to impose an ideological system on its neighbors, and the revolution of 1905 encouraged them to believe that the tide of history had already turned against it. European liberals believed that backward political structures would be shattered and that the autocrats and aristocrats who benefited from them would disappear. The politics of 1945 appeared to be of a fundamentally different order than those of 1900: the contest between the communists and the “free world” was central to all debates; there seemed to be little or no middle ground; every issue was ideological. Such a simplistic, philosophical division would have been unrecognizable to the politicians of 1900. From Vienna and Berlin to Paris and London, politics at the turn of the century centered on issues of constitutional reform: extension of the suffrage farther down the socioeconomic scale; extending the franchise to women; electoral reform; parliamentary control over budgets; civilian control over the military; where there was no constitution – as in Russia – reformers and revolutionaries demanded one. The positions taken on these issues were variegated and complicated
within each of the countries of Europe – and Europeans would have been astonished at the notion that their politics would, a half-century later, have become internationalized and polarized.

Popular culture mirrored the transformation in political culture. The radio, motion pictures, and record players had created new forms of mass entertainment that transcended political boundaries and polarized masses and elites. Traditionalists sneered at “the pictures” and reviled “jazz” and the latest dance crazes at the same time that they worried that these activities would erode the foundations of European civilization. The authorities attempted to control them: states took responsibility for broadcasting and established codes of conduct and imposed censorship in order to prevent these mass pursuits from undermining conventional values and acceptable forms of behavior. The fact that so much of the new culture was “American” also meant that it introduced foreign ideas into realms that were previously the domain of the national state; the fact that some of this new culture was “Afro-American” threatened to undermine the foundations of European civilization itself. While the established authorities of Europe sought to contain and control these new pastimes of the masses, “modern” politicians arose – usually from the masses – who saw the opportunity to create a new kind of politics from them.

By 1945 the reality of mass culture was widely accepted as a permanent feature of modern European life. The experience of 1900–45 had demonstrated that the forces behind it were irreversible, but that the fears of its effects had not been exaggerated: it had transformed more than the way people entertained themselves – it was altering their behavior and their beliefs. Everyone in a position of authority in 1945 recognized that the world had changed dramatically in half a century. Along with movies and music, dancing and the radio came new sensibilities concerning youth and adolescence, women and sexuality. There had been no “youth culture” to speak of in the Europe of 1900: adolescents were not regarded as a group, as a thing apart from their parents; they did not have an identity, an ethos of their own; they were expected to inherit the places and the property of their elders and – depending on what this inheritance consisted of – to be trained or educated in a manner that fit the places they would inevitably come to occupy. But with masses of “teenagers” congregating together in state-run schools where they spent their days with others of almost exactly the same age, they had come to regard themselves as sharing more with their peers than their parents. And one of the things they shared (and their parents feared) was a growing fascination with sex – which, given the proximity of girls or boys of their own age and class – they were able to act on in ways unimagined before the twentieth century.

By 1945 Europeans had come to accept the idea that sex was, if not the primary driving force behind their behavior, certainly one of the most important. This was partly because of the vibrant sexuality of the new popular culture, but also because of the efforts of psychoanalysts, psychologists, and social scientists to comprehend and explain where this drive came from, how it operated, and how it might be contained or at least channeled in directions where it might do less harm. The new sciences of the mind that paid less attention to the physical functioning of the brain and more to the emotional dynamics of the psyche revolutionized the way that Europeans understood themselves. Although this was fiercely contested ground, few doubted that comprehending the power of sexual drives was fundamental to an
understanding of human behavior. And nowhere was this revelation more profound in its impact than on the “high culture” of art and literature. In 1900 the number of artists and writers whose work was informed by an interest in sexuality was tiny; by mid-century many – critics of modernism and postmodernism, especially – believed they were mesmerized by it. The gulf between high culture and popular grew throughout the first half of the century. Those on the borderlines of “acceptable” art around the turn of the century – the impressionists, the avant-garde in literature – had achieved iconic status. Unheard-of prices were paid for Monets and Gauguins, Van Goghs and Picassos; Eliot and Woolf, Schnitzler and Mann were coming to be regarded as modern classics, published in cheap editions and taught as texts in schools. Fifty, even twenty, years earlier they had been regarded as renegades unworthy of serious consideration.

The new sensibility that penetrated the canon of European art, literature, and music over the first half of the century perplexed those who puzzled over its meaning. What were those lines in a Mondrian painting meant to be? Could there really be a “found” art as the surrealists claimed? What was poetry if it had no rhyme and perhaps no meter? What was music without a melody? Was it still music? The fact that these paintings found their way into the most important galleries, that the rebel modernists of the early century were anthologized and lionized, that Stravinsky and Schoenberg were performed in the leading concert halls certainly indicated that there had been a seismic shift in sensibilities.

At least as confusing to those untutored in modernist tastes, however, was the revolution that occurred in science. Like the eruption of new insights in psychoanalysis and the invention of new techniques in the arts, the revolution in science began around the turn of the century and seemed the domain of a few maverick thinkers who could be dismissed by those in the mainstream as frivolous and insignificant theorists. The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki obliterated any remaining skepticism that these theories were nonsensical and impractical.

Concepts like relativity, that time was not fixed, that subatomic particles existed that could not be seen but whose presence could be theorized, were extremely difficult to grasp. The new science of the twentieth century, unlike that of the nineteenth, was not something to be played with, and it seemed as remote from reality as the metaphysical questions posed by medieval theologians. The technological consequences, in spite of the atomic bomb, were largely unknown, unpredictable, and lay in the future. In some ways the manner in which life was lived in the Europe of 1945 was not fundamentally different than that of Europe in 1900: using airplanes as a form of mass transportation was still a dream; ownership of an automobile was still confined to a privileged elite; the television sets, computers, and mobile telephones that would transform leisure, work, and entertainment were unknown, unimagined, or dismissed as gimmicks that no one would want or could need.

The technology that was gradually transforming the lives of Europeans in the first half of the twentieth century was largely the consequence of nineteenth-century science. Alltagsgeschichte, everyday life, continued to be shaped by mechanical innovations that gradually found their way into homes: sewing machines, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners were altering the domestic lives of Europeans. Servants were gradually displaced from middle-class homes; the drudgery of cleaning and cooking was gradually giving way to time for leisure activities or work outside the home –
trends that were slowly changing the lives of women in particular. Where people lived and how they worked were changing as well: subway systems, electric trams, and automobiles encouraged the movement of people away from city centers and to the “suburbs”; and when people got to work they were more and more likely to perform “white collar” jobs in offices, or to become more technological themselves, more mechanized, becoming a cog in a complicated industrial machine. Dramatic events such as the world wars seem to turn lives upside-down, but do they do so fundamentally or permanently? Or are they temporary aberrations? This is a perplexing question that is not easily answered: millions of women performed the work traditionally done by men during World War I – but most of them returned to their homes or customary roles when the war ended, and it is at least arguable that more enduring changes in the lives of women were produced by a mechanized workplace that placed less emphasis on size and strength. The typewriter and the telephone – although less dramatic than war or revolution – may ultimately have produced changes that were more profound.

The recognition that many, if not most, of the ways in which people live their lives changes very slowly is one of the frustrating conclusions of much historical research. Whereas journalists and social scientists are inclined to announce a revolution of some kind almost weekly, historians are disinclined to agree and more likely to argue in some way or another that plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose. Whether one sees sudden, seismic changes or gradually changing patterns of life depends largely on who, what, and where is being studied. The events of 1900–45 certainly changed some lives in dramatic (and often deadly) ways. Take, for example, a German boy born in 1900, sent off to the western front to fight as a 17-year-old in World War I and who, after the armistice of November, returning home to find no job, decides to keep his rifle, stay in uniform, and join paramilitary forces fighting against social revolutionaries within Germany; when the revolution is quashed and the Weimar republic stabilizes he remains unemployed and uprooted and joins the Sturmabteilung; after a decade or so of upheavals he flourishes under the Nazis and is elevated to a position of importance in the Schutzstaffel; he ends his days leading an assassination squad in the Soviet Union, where he is killed at the age of 44. Such a life (led, in fact, not by hundreds, but thousands of such men in Germany) did not fit the well-established patterns of a nineteenth-century existence. It was a life that was unpredictable and unpredictable – governed largely by the singular events of the century.

Nor was the life and death of a man caught up in the phenomenon of Nazism the only one dramatically altered by events that had not been foreseen in 1900. Almost forgotten are the hundreds of thousands of young women whose young husbands did not survive the carnage of World War I. Their stories were undramatic, their response to their situation unpolitical: no new ideology or mass movement grew from them – they suffered in silence. Living in dire poverty, some with minuscule pensions, some without even this support, they survived for decades on the margins of existence; most, with little education or training (and little prospect of gainful employment even if they did) had expected to live on the earnings of a male partner. With such a proportion of Europe’s young manhood dead between the wars (and especially – contrary to myth – working-class men), the shape of demography changed dramatically, making it extremely difficult for younger women without property or prospects to find a male partner. It might be argued that their lives were as tragic as the deaths
of their young men, yet no memorials were erected to their endurance and they have practically disappeared from the landscape of memory. Why do we choose to remember some lives and forget others? Is there a political economy of death as there is for life? While thousands of books and articles have been written on almost every aspect of Nazism and fascism, anyone seeking to understand the disrupted and devastated lives of young, working-class European women between the wars will have to look very hard indeed.

Whether remembered or forgotten, memorialized or disappeared, these are lives that changed dramatically as the result of forces largely beyond their control. And there were millions of other lives, fitting different social categories, occupying different spaces, which were also twisted out of recognition by events. Nevertheless, millions of others continued to live in ways that, judging by appearances, remained unaltered. The numbers of men who did not die, did not fight, vastly outnumbered those who did; the numbers of women who did not lose their young men, who did not work in munitions factories, did not go off to nurse the wounded at the front, vastly outnumbered those who did. Although tradesmen and teachers, laborers and lawyers saw their living standards alter with the changing circumstances of war and peace, the fundamentals of their existence remained unchanged: they occupied the same place in the social hierarchy; they dwelt in the same houses in the same neighborhoods in the same cities, towns, and villages of Europe; they followed the same religion they had always done, attended the same schools and married within the same circle of friends and acquaintances. Quite possibly they continued to identify with the same nation-state, share the values of the same social class, and support the same political party as they had done at the beginning of the century. A social scientist in 1900, predicting what their place, their behavior, and their beliefs were likely to be a half-century later, could have done so with surprising accuracy.

Trying to understand how much changed and how much remained the same, then accounting for why they did or did not change, is a puzzle that always confronts historians. There was nothing entirely “new” in the Europe of 1945 – nothing that had not been present in some form in 1900. The two most obvious sociopolitical innovations – fascism and communism – did not spring from nothing. Communism owed its philosophical essence to the writings of Marx and Engels, and they took much of their inspiration from the experience of the French revolution. Fascism, which disdained philosophical systematizing, owed its appeal to the rabid nationalism, aggressive imperialism, and “scientific” racism of the nineteenth century. It is arguable that neither would have succeeded in taking hold of the apparatus of the state in Russia, Italy, and Germany without the shattering experience of World War I. The tsarist autocracy in Russia, the most powerful conservative force throughout most of the nineteenth century, fell to pieces because of its inability to withstand the demands imposed upon it by fighting Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. The Bolsheviks saw and seized the opportunity that the war presented to them. This was, in essence, what occurred in Italy and Germany as well. The Italians, convinced that they had been cheated out of the gains that were properly theirs for having chosen to fight on the side of the Entente, were persuaded that “liberal” Italy could not grow and prosper in the postwar world, that something more daring, more dynamic, would have to take its place. Mussolini, marshaling his blackshirts, offered them an alternative to the bourgeois politics of the past half-century. The Germans,
persuaded to give “social democracy” a try in the aftermath of defeat, were more gradually disillusioned, convinced that they had not really lost the war, that the *Diktat* of Versailles imposed upon them a kind of perpetual servitude. Hitler, evoking hatred and suspicion of all things un-German – including German Jews, communists, socialists, and bourgeois democrats – offered them an alternative to defeat and second-rate status in Europe.

Insofar as the most dynamic, innovative political systems were concerned, the experience of war and the impact of its outcome were instrumental in altering how people thought and how they behaved – but their thinking and their behavior were rooted in the prewar world. Similarly, the structure of the European state system itself was shaken by the war and the peace: frontiers were moved; some states disappeared while others were created – but these changes were firmly rooted in the ambitions and fears demonstrated by nations and empires before World War I.

Each of the great powers of Europe believed that the war would determine their destiny: Austria-Hungary initiated the crisis that precipitated the war in order to “solve” the problem of Serbian nationalism that was threatening to dissolve the multinational Habsburg Empire; Germany was prepared to support this initiative because failing to do so would ultimately reduce its ability to grow and prosper – and power and influence in the twentieth century would, the Germans believed, go to the great empires of the world: Russia, Britain, the United States; their only chance to compete on an equal footing was to establish a great central European entity stretching from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The Russians feared that if this Habsburg/Hohenzollern vision were realized, they would lose their influence over the western borderlands stretching from Finland and Poland to Serbia and Turkey; Germanic influence in the old Ottoman Empire would imperil Russia’s standing in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf. The French feared that without a strong Russia and an effective alliance they would be overwhelmed by German power and that their empire in Africa and Asia would not save them from being reduced to satellite status. Britain was satisfied with the balance that competition between the competing alliance systems produced in Europe; it was only when it appeared likely that the central powers might succeed in overwhelming France and Russia that the British reluctantly attempted to redress the balance by coming into the war on the side of the Entente. The thinking behind these calculations was firmly rooted in the experience of the nineteenth century, during which states grappled with the consequences of nationalism and imperialism and calculated how to withstand their destructive capabilities or utilize their constructive possibilities.

The “new” Europe that was created in 1919 was founded upon two guiding principles of nineteenth-century liberal idealism: that it was the desire and the destiny of “nations” to be free, and that peace and progress could only be achieved when these nations were governed by representative, constitutional regimes. Ideologically, the Entente was hampered by the reality of the tsarist autocracy, and once that regime collapsed, a consistent position on the future shape of Europe was easier to arrive at. Thus, while the possibility of dismantling the “national” German state was never entertained seriously at Paris in 1919, the Habsburg Empire appeared to have disintegrated on its own accord, largely along “national” lines and therefore could be – needed to be – restructured on the basis of the principle of nationality. Poland is the most important example of this thinking: created (or recreated) from territories
formerly ruled from Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, it was assumed that linguistic, religious, and historical forces would combine to establish a coherent, stable, and constitutional state; it would not be aggressive or expansionist because the goal of national unity would have been achieved. The same principle was, in essence, applied to Czechoslovakia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia – as well as to Austria and Hungary. Everywhere in Europe the nationalists had claimed that ruthless autocratic regimes had prevented them from realizing their dreams of establishing nations based upon the will of the people through the instrument of representative governments. Thus was the new Europe designed to endure for as far into the future as anyone could foresee; sorting out the frontiers between the national states was difficult and messy, but with good will to guide those who drew the boundaries, and with a new League of Nations to assist in resolving disagreements, the grievances and instability that had plagued the old Europe would gradually disappear. Thus was the Europe of the interwar years simultaneously old and new. The peacemakers of 1919 had recognized both the complexities of national identities and ambitions and the power that nationalism had to undo their efforts – and had created a new international code of behavior in the form of “Minority treaties” which sought to give rights to minorities that had been created by their frontier adjustments and to protect them from the majority.

The victorious powers who had conceived of and then created the new Europe laid themselves open to the charge of cynical self-interest. The most compelling case against them could be made by looking at the map outside of Europe. Here there was no more than lip-service paid to the principle of national self-determination: the empires of the British and French were expanded to an unprecedented extent; those of the Germans and the Turks dismantled. The British succeeded in limiting the old tsarist threat to their empire in Asia; the French succeeded in limiting the German threat in Europe through the imposition of demilitarization, punishing reparations and recapturing Alsace and Lorraine. The peace of enlightened progress could be dismissed by its critics as one of hypocrisy; Germans and Russians could agree that it was not national self-determination that established its foundations, but acquisitive imperialism. The complaints of Poles, Hungarians, and Italians concerning this or that frontier arrangement were petty in comparison with those of Germans and Russians who argued that the French and the British were seeking to keep them forever in chains.

And thus was the new Europe of 1919 beleaguered by attacks on its very essence. According to its critics, the only thing that had changed since 1900 was the Machiavellian realization of the goals of western imperialism. And the way to reverse the judgment imposed by the French and the British was to restore those elements of imperial might that had enabled their opponents to succeed: they must rebuild their armies and navies. Indeed, in order to succeed where they had previously failed they needed to go further: they would have to build political and social systems that were more cohesive and dynamic than those that had collapsed under the weight of war. Thus, in Soviet Russia, then fascist Italy, and finally in Nazi Germany, there was little nostalgic yearning to restore the world of 1900; instead, they promoted a “futurist” vision of a new society that would harness the power of modernity to overcome the limitations imposed by history and tradition. Mass communications and massive assemblies would allow a charismatic leader to mobilize his nation, race,