CONTENTS

- 1 INVENTIONS AND INNOVATIONS: A LONG HISTORY AND MODERN INFATUATION 1
- **2** INVENTIONS THAT TURNED FROM WELCOME TO

UNDESIRABLE 19

Leaded Gasoline 23 DDT 36 Chlorofluorocarbons 49

3 INVENTIONS THAT WERE TO DOMINATE—AND DO NOT 63

Airships 66 Nuclear Fission 79 Supersonic Flight 93

4 INVENTIONS THAT WE KEEP WAITING FOR 107

Travel in a (Near) Vacuum (Hyperloop) 109 Nitrogen-Fixing Cereals 123 Controlled Nuclear Fusion 135

5 TECHNO-OPTIMISM, EXAGGERATIONS, AND REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS 151

Breakthroughs That Are Not 152 The Myth of Ever-Faster Innovations 160 What We Need Most 171

FURTHER READING 185 INDEX 209