



# Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives

*Nicols Fox*

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From the cars we drive to the instant messages we receive, from debate about genetically modified foods to astonishing strides in cloning, robotics, and nanotechnology, it would be hard to deny technology's powerful grip on our lives. To stop and ask whether this digitized, implanted reality is quite what we had in mind when we opted for progress, or to ask if we might not be creating more problems than we solve, is likely to peg us as hopelessly backward or suspiciously eccentric. Yet not only questioning, but challenging technology turns out to have a long and noble history.

In this timely and incisive work, Nicols Fox examines contemporary resistance to technology and places it in a surprising historical context. She brilliantly illuminates the rich but oftentimes unrecognized literary and philosophical tradition that has existed for nearly two centuries, since the first Luddites—the "machine breaking" followers of the mythical Ned Ludd—lifted their sledgehammers in protest against the Industrial Revolution. Tracing that current of thought through some of the great minds of the 19th and 20th centuries—William Blake, Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, William Morris, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Graves, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and many others—Fox demonstrates that modern protests against consumptive lifestyles and misgivings about the relentless march of mechanization are part of a fascinating hidden history. She shows as well that the Luddite tradition can yield important insights into how we might reshape both technology and modern life so that human, community, and environmental values take precedence over the demands of the machine.

In *Against the Machine*, Nicols Fox writes with compelling immediacy—bringing a new dimension and depth to the debate over what technology means, both now and for our future.

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