Review: Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art and Individual Lives
By Nicols Fox

Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller
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Nicols Fox. *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art and Individual Lives.* A Shearwater Book. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003. 406 pp. ISBN 1-55963-860-5 US$25.00. Recycled acid-free paper.

Freelance writer Nicols Fox (*The Economist*) presents the history of Luddism or the attempt to battle technology and industrialism in her easily accessible book. Luddism is a rejection of technology that began with Ned Ludd and his followers, who expressed their anger against industrialization in the early 1800's by destroying the mechanical weaving machines that were replacing them (thereby also destroying their lives and their communities).

Fox reminds us that Luddism should not imply violence; rather it is a "philosophy that respects tradition, intuition, spirituality, the senses, human relationships, the work of the hand, and the disorderly and the unpredictable nature of reality." Luddites also like to be outdoors, enjoy their gardens, and buy organic.

Since the early 1800's many writers and artists have traditionally expressed their rejection of technology. Included in the work are discussion of some of the greatest artists and thinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries: William Blake, Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, William Morris, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Robert Graves, Aldo Leopold, Rachael Carson, and others. Included in the history is the development of our concern for Nature as well as our appreciation of the outdoors.

Against the Machine is eclectic and insightful. One can see how Luddism was also part of related movements like The Back To The Farm Movement, and The Environmental Movement. Those who are carrying the Luddite torch are now referred to as Neo-Luddites. Today we rage against the computer and the military technology that can destroy us.

Against the Machine acknowledges our dissatisfaction with the recent turn of events that has forced us to adapt to technology. As Fox states, the aversion has had a powerful impact on some people's lives.

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