



# The Luddite Legacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

The legend of Ned Ludd - 2



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## About this course

Date	Topic
10/26	The Tale of General Ludd
<b>11/2</b>	<b>Romantics, Workers, and Marxists</b>
11/9	The word for today is <i>techno-determinism</i> .
11/16	The Neo-Luddites
11/30	Rebels Against the Digital Age

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Slides, videos, and reference materials available on

<https://queenlake.com/wise/wise-fall-2023/the-legend-of-ned-ludd/>



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Questions?



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# Ludd and Literature



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## Frankenstein and the Luddites



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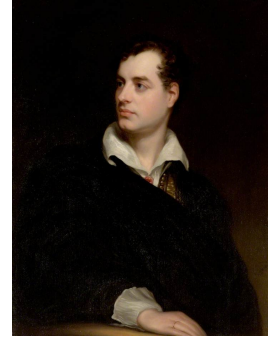
Misery generates hate : these sufferers hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them : they hated the buildings which contained those machines ; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings.

### Luddism, Medievalism and Women's History in *Shirley*: Charlotte Brontë's Revisionist Tactics

... as Brontë conceives it, history is twice made, first by the men and women who live it and then by the historians who record, redefine and reshape it.



But suppose it past,—suppose one of these men, as I have seen them meagre with famine, sullen with despair, careless of a life which your lordships are perhaps about to value at something less than the price of a stocking-frame; suppose this man surrounded by those children for whom he is unable to procure bread at the hazard of his existence, about to be torn for ever from a family which he lately supported in peaceful industry, and which it is not his fault than he can no longer so support; suppose this man—and there are ten thousand such from whom you may select your victims,—dragged into court to be tried for this new offence, by this new law,—still there are two things wanting to convict and condemn him, and these are, in my opinion, twelve butchers for a jury, and a Jefferies for a judge!”



Lord Byron Defends the Luddites in his Maiden Speech in the House of Lords, February 1812



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George Gordon, born in January 1788, died in 1824 while fighting in Greece. (Blood-letting didn't help.)

He became sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale when his great-uncle, "Wicked" Lord Byron, died in 1798. He inherited the ancestral home, Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire.

Ref. to Baron Lord Jeffreys was a hanging judge in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Monmouth Rebellion who sentenced 200 people to death by hanging, 800 sent to Australia, and hundreds more to flogging

The Works of Lord Byron

[https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Works\\_of\\_Lord\\_Byron/i8lCAQAAMA-AJ](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Works_of_Lord_Byron/i8lCAQAAMA-AJ)

**XLVII.**

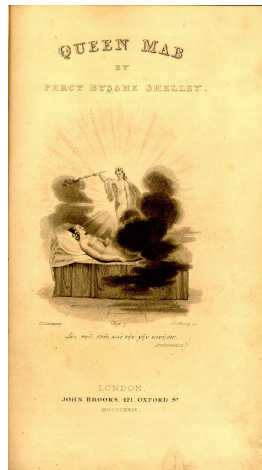
**“ And at length when ye complain,  
With a murmur weak and vain,  
'Tis to see the tyrant's crew  
Ride over your wives and you :—  
Blood is on the grass like dew.**

*The Mas*

Massacre, published in 1832, after Shelley's death



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## Queen Mab By Percy Bysshe Shelley · 1832



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# The Riots Continued



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~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
We are sorry to learn that the principles and practices of the Luddites have, within these few days, been brought into action in the immediate neighbourhood of Leeds. It seems that on Sunday and Monday last several hundreds of men, belonging to what is termed the "Clothiers' Union," paraded the townships of Batley, Hanging Henton, Dawgreen, and Heckmondwike, creating the greatest alarm. In many instances they attacked and brutally treated those workmen who were not enrolled in their Union; but we have not as yet heard of their proceeding to any other acts of violence.—(*Chester Paper.*)

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has notified to the Gentlemen usually concerned in the Lottery contracts, that he will be ready to treat with them next Saturday.

Cobbett's Evening Post, 24 Feb. 1820.





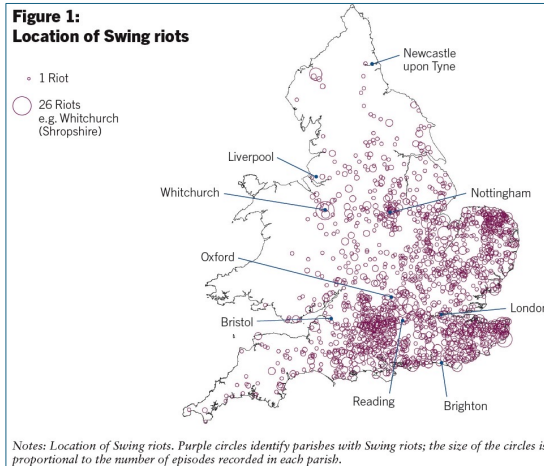


## The Swing Riots of the 1830s

Captain Swing and the last great rising of agricultural labourers



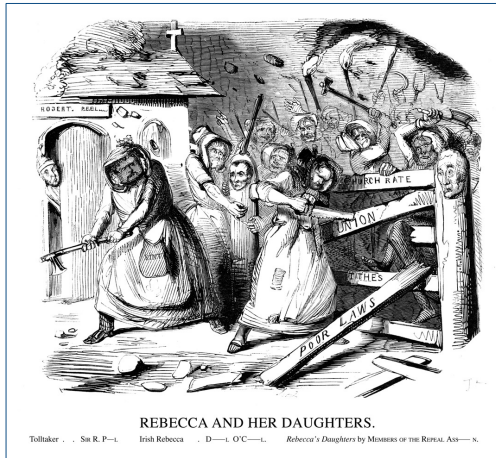
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The riots spread south and east



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## Rebecca and Her Daughters – 1839-43

Male farmers and labourers – many of them dressed in women's clothes – rioted in protest against unfair laws and taxes, low wages and toll roads.



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If the Luddites of 1812 were slow to learn their economic lessons about the impossibility of resistance to technological change, workmen of later generations have been equally slow.

Malcolm Thomis, *The Luddites: Machine-Breaking in Regency England*. Ashgate, p 168



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# Machine Breaking Elsewhere and Later



CROWD ACTIONS IN  
BRITAIN AND FRANCE  
FROM THE MIDDLE AGES  
TO THE MODERN WORLD



Gender and machine-breaking: violence and mechanization at the dawn of the industrial age (England and France 1750-1850)





The Industrial Revolution in England. The Great French Revolution and Its Influence upon Germany.



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The Luddite Movement in France - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1898836>



## Girl Power in 1824: The First Factory Strike in America

Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Mill owners increased working hours with no additional pay and cut pay of power-loom weavers by 25%. The weavers affected were all women and girls aged 15 to 30, whom were previously being paid "extravagant wages for young women," according to the employer

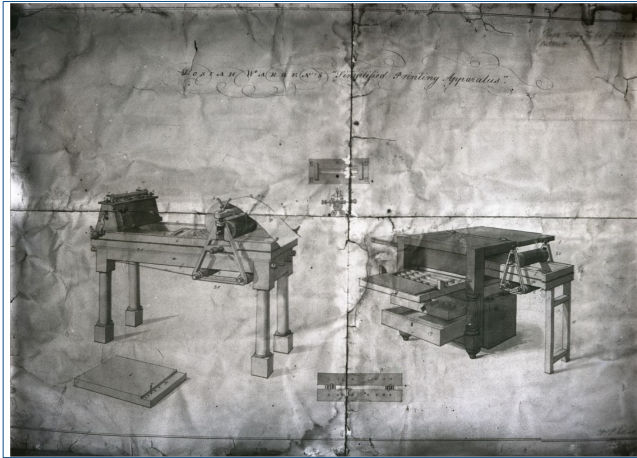


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Josiah Warren's printing sabotaged by printers

Evansville, Ohio 1840



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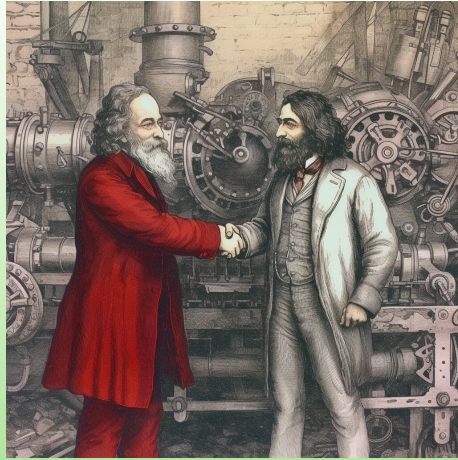
## Jacobins, Chartists, and Socialists



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# Ludd and Marx



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And now for something completely different



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The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist. – Karl Marx, 1867



Bing Image Creator:

Every organ of sense is injured in an equal degree by artificial elevation of the temperature, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise, not to mention danger to life and limb among the thickly crowded machinery, which, with the regularity of the seasons, issues its list of the killed and wounded in the industrial battle.

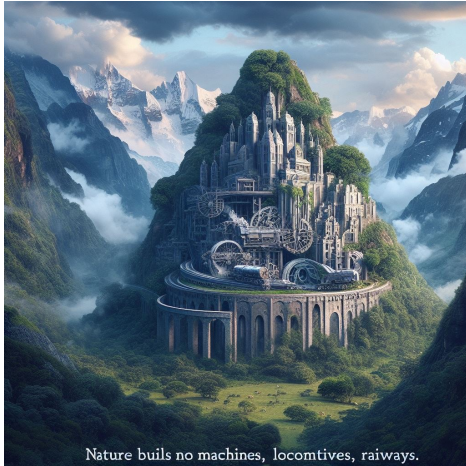
Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, Chapter 15



The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself.

Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Notebook VI / VII – The Chapter on Capital





Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified.

Marx, *Grundrisse, Notebook VII*



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This is the great age of invention and mechanical improvements, and the introduction of labor-saving machinery should have had the effect of turning millions from mechanical to agricultural pursuits, or, if not needed there, to the construction of public improvements and the embellishment of the earth; but such has not been the case. Instead, this surplus horde hang about the manufacturing establishments, working on half- time and drawing half-pay, the sufferers from the very inventions which, admirable as they are, add not a jot to the world's wealth or the people's comfort and happiness.



### Rational Communism The Present and the Future Republic of North America



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### ***The Ballot Box.***

*Considering*, That the economical emancipation of the working classes is the great end, to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;

*Considering*, That the Workingmen's Party of the United States in the first place directs its efforts to the economical struggle;

*Considering*, That only in the economical arena the combatants for the Workingmen's Party can be trained and disciplined;

*Considering*, That in this country the ballot box has long ago ceased to record the popular will, and only serves to falsify the same in the hands of professional politicians;

*Considering*, That the organization of the working people is not yet far enough developed to overthrow at once this state of corruption;

*Considering*, That this middle class Republic has produced an enormous amount of small reformers and quacks, the intruding of whom into the Workingmen's Party will only be facilitated by a political movement, and

*Considering*, That the corruption and misapplication of the ballot box as well as the silly reform movements flourish most in the

## **WORKINGMEN'S PARTY**

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olution

ice 5 Cents.

NEW YORK.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PRINTING ASSOCIATION, 154 ELDRIDGE STREET.

1876.

years of presidential elections, at such times greatly endangering the organization of workingmen;

For these reasons the Union Congress meeting at Philadelphia this 22d day of July 1876, *Resolved*,

The sections of this party as well as all workingmen in general are earnestly invited to abstain from all political movements for the present and to turn their back on the ballot box.

The Workingmen will therewith save themselves bitter disappointments, and their time and efforts will be directed far better towards the organization of the workingmen, which organization is frequently destroyed and always injured by a hasty political movement.

Let us bide our time! It will come!

## Communism in America By Henry Ammon James · 1879



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Old Communism of the colonies and religious societies  
New Communism from Marx

Accordingly, the reviving of the dead in those revolutions served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parodying the old; it served the purpose of exaggerating to the imagination the given task, not to recoil before its practical solution; it served the purpose of rekindling the revolutionary spirit, not to trot out its ghost.

Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand.

### The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte by Karl Marx



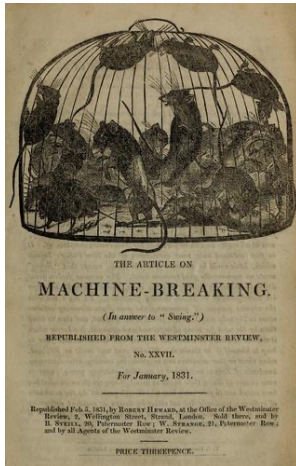
For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus **makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.**

*The German Ideology, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1846*



What would a Luddite ideal  
society look like?

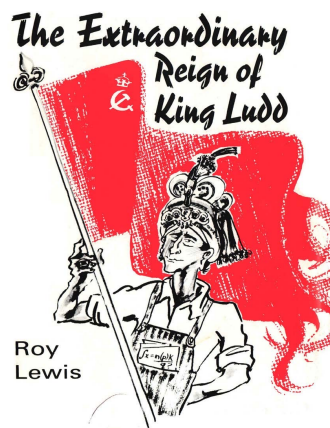




If, after emerging from Noah's Ark, people had said, "This is a plough ; and by harnessing the clean beasts to it, you would do six times as much work as with a spade ; therefore break the plough , and take the spade . Your wife too has a spindle, with which she can spin so many threads an hour; but I could show her a way, that would not spin half as much. Let us be machine - breakers ; and then we shall all be comfortable."

### Letter on Machine-Breaking, *The Westminster Review*, 1831





The Future Encyclopedia of Luddism – what if the Luddites had won?



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A fantasy, counterfactual novel where the Luddites win, Victoria abdicates, and socialism prevails

**“Why, that there machine is takin’ bread out of the mouths of 500 men what would be required to do the same work with hand shovels.”**

**George laughed.**

**“Go on” he said, “you don’t reason right. Look-a-here, if this steam diggin’ would give work to 500 men with shovels, why not get 5.000 men with teaspoons for the job?”—Philadelphia Press.**

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1908 July 30, The [Cincinnati Price Current](#), An Economical Idea  
(Acknowledgement to Philadelphia Press)





Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

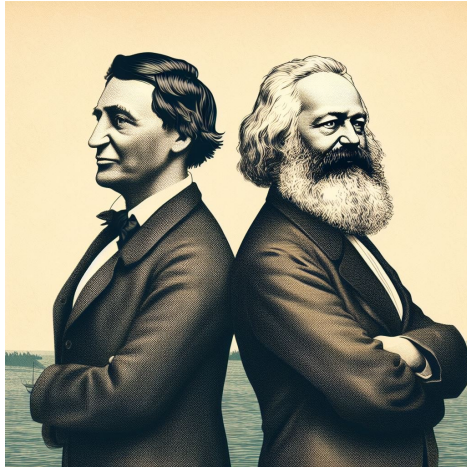
Ezekiel 17-9, KJV

The Luddites, in some measure, were Ezekielites



# Utopian Societies – agrarian, industrial, and political





Romantics see utopia in the past ; socialists see it in the future;.





“We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us.” – HDT, *Walden*



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New Lanark established as a socialist utopia by Robert Owen in 1799



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Failed utopia in New Harmony, Indiana -  
<https://www.newlanark.org/introducing-robert-owen>



October 11, 1841 – Utopians Purchase Brook Farm



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Thoreau avoided news of Europe; Margaret Fuller wrote about it.

“The political is being merged in with the social struggle; it is well; whatever blood is to be shed, whatever altars cast down.” – Fuller, reporting on the 1848 Paris revolts for Horace Greeley’s *Tribune*





## The Florence (Mass.) silk mills



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<https://www.historicnorthampton.org/northamptons-silk-industry.html>





## The Oneida Christian Perfectionists The Wallingford Oneida Community

The scandalous story behind a popular  
silverware brand: free love, religion and eugenics



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<https://connecticuthistory.org/the-wallingford-oneida-community/>



## Were/are the Amish Luddites?

The Amish rejected connection to the electric grid in 1920. Batteries to start engines were ok.



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Anabaptists split from mainstream Protestants around 1525.

Adult baptism

"Free church" separated from state control

First Amish arrived in America in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, settling in Pennsylvania

PBS – [Amish in America](#)

[Several amish men got Shunned today when the emergency alert test came across the phone 🤔🤔](#)

**But, lol men  
have become  
the tools of  
their tools.**

The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep, he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! man has become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer: and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of *agri*-culture.

Henry David Thoreau, Walden; or, Life in the woods



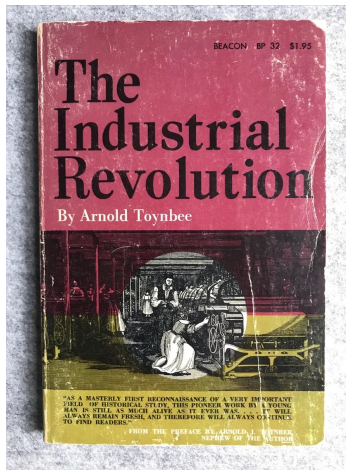
# The Inevitability of Machines



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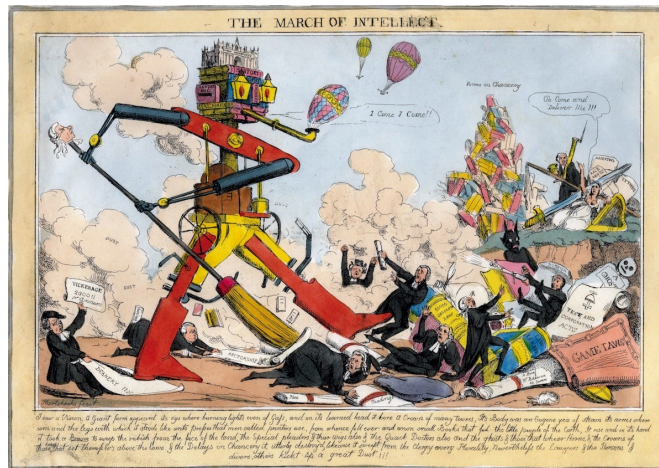
## Arnold Toynbee - Lectures on the Industrial Revolution



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## “March of Intellect” Cartoons (1828–29)



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The principle of the factory system then is, to substitute mechanical science for hand skill, and the partition of a process into its essential constituents, for the division or graduation of labour among artisans. On the handicraft plan, labour more or less skilled, was usually the most expensive element of production—*Materiam superabat opus*; but on the automatic plan, skilled labour gets progressively superseded, and will, eventually, be replaced by mere overlookers of machines.

### The philosophy of manufactures by Andrew Ure

Andrew Ure's Explanation and Promotion of the Factory System as a Self-Regulating Automaton



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*Materiam superabat opus*: The work exceeded the material



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Day by day, however, the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by day we are becoming more subservient to them; more men are daily bound down as slaves to tend them, more men are daily devoting the energies of their whole lives to the development of mechanical life. The upshot is simply a question of time, but that the time will come when the machines will hold the real supremacy over the world and its inhabitants is what no person of a truly philosophic mind can for a moment question.

To the Editor of the Press, Christchurch, New Zealand, 13 June, 1863.



Under the convulsive pressures of technology pouring through time, turning social orders into ever-new kaleidoscopic patterns, all thought, all policies, and all actions in the sphere of statecraft -political science-must be formulated unless, forsooth, we are to resort to utopias and academic sterilities.

Charles A. Beard,  
“Time, Technology, and the Creative Spirit in Political Science”



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“No group can afford to pay lip-service to one unalterable characteristic of technology... Technology is irreversible.” – R. W. Reid



Reid, R.W. *Land of Lost Content: The Luddite Revolt, 1812*. in Cardinal by Sphere, 1986. <https://books.google.com/books?id=Xd4gAAAAMAAJ>.



Next week



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