Tribhuvan University

Feminist Overtone in Aldous Huxley's *Island*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Central Department of English in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

RanaBahadurGhartiMagar

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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Abstract

A final point that must be made about Huxley is that he by no means was anti-technology; his primary concern was simply technology uncontrolled by humankind and the effects of technological determinism on the transnational social situation. He was both a defender and a critic of technology, and invested his energy and time to making, sharing, and inspiring discourse on these issues. He advocated for a rich universal culture. Machinery has set up a tendency towards the realization of fuller life, but he realized that these possibilities and tendencies are unattainable as long as people are cogs instead of operators of the machine. He knew all too well that at the core of human interactions, developments, and sustenance was a mechanized master that determined the nature and type of relationships, the direction and speed of their growth, and the quality of their lives.

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. RanaBahadurGhartiMagar has completed his thesis entitled"Feminist Overtone in Aldous Huxley's*Island"* under my supervision. He carried out his research from January to April 2016 AD. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

_____

Prof. Dr. BaikunthaPoudel
(Supervisor)

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

Letter of Approval

This thesis titled "Feminist Overtone in Aldous Huxley's *Island"* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuban University by RanaBahadurGhartiMagar has been approved by the under signed members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee

_____ _____

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_____ _____

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I. Huxley As A Feminist

The Utopian Society

By the early 1960s, there was perhaps no better person than Huxley, the well traveled and keenly observant British author and conscientious social critic, to offer the technologically interconnected and dependent world his notes on what's what and suggestions on how to stay human in light of what's what. His international fame suggested that his previous warnings and reiterated forebodings had reached the desired global readership to redirect or at least prioritize the drive to remain either actively involved in technological progress, or to keep from becoming accepting, apathetic automata. In *Island*, Huxley presses his concern, as clear in the above quotation and its placement within the opening chapters of the novel, and suggests that we read and take serious note of the underlying principles of the Palanese. These fundamentals, taken directly from his personal essays and offered in the Old Raja's personal essays, are transnational feminist in nature and intended to stand alone as his solutions for building a humane and equally enriching society for men and women. He follows these principles with a fictional social experiment, if you will, in the citizens of Pala who abide by his/the Old Raja's tenets; moreover, he reveals that while his ideas are reasonable, they may no longer be feasible in a world that shuns self-realization for technological determination.

It's the Old Raja's *Notes on What's What, and on What It Might be Reasonable to Do about What's What.* It merely states the underlyingprinciples. Read about the first. When I get back Shivapuram this evening, I'will give you a taste of history.You'll have a better understanding of what was actually done,if you start by knowing what had to be done – what always and everywhere has to be done by anyone who has a clear idea about what's what. So read it, read it. And don't forget to drink your fruit juice at eleven.(38)

Island is Huxley's most noteworthy contribution to feminism, one can see that the author was not only a lifelong feminist, but also an assertive one until the end of his days.

Island is the culmination of Huxley's feminist concerns into one multi-genre work, as it represents the ideals, practices, and qualms that span the author's seven decades of life and his travels across just as many countries. Before his death in 1963, he had lived in Italy for nearly ten years, he had moved permanently to Los Angeles, California, in 1937, and he had traveled throughout India, the West Indies, Guatemala, Brazil, and Mexico. He witnessed the technological developments and the transnational social, political, and economic repercussions of the atomic bomb in 1945, the barcode in 1952, and the microchip in 1959 (to name a few), and by 1962, he saw the widespread acceptance of TV as a necessity for leisure and news with 90% of US households owning at least one television (Bellis, "1926-1950," Bellis, "1951-1975").

He felt duty bound to make something more of the frightening ramifications of human naiveté in *Island*, and with rapidly declining health at the time that he wrote the book, he knew that he must offer more than the consequences of our foolhardiness – he needed to supply solutions, to present them in as many ways possible and in the tightest package possible, so that the widest readership would receive his final work as the pinnacle of his extensive body of work.

In *Island*, technology has hold over the world but Huxley grounds the story in his present day, early 1960s situation in order that his readers grasp the drastic impact of technology on the quality of human life in the present. Pala signifies the final battleground where humans defensively resist technological determination. In *Island,* Will Farnaby is shipwrecked off the coast of the forbidden island, Pala, and is welcomed ashore by the natives. He meets Dr. MacPhail, a descendant of one of the island's key figures in the development of Palanese policies and traditions, who introduces Farnaby to the Old Raja's

ideals. MacPhail's daughter-in-law, Susila, takes his teachings further and shows the visitor how to use Palanese principles.

In essence, the Palanese keep technology at bay by maintaining an organic lifestyle that favors nature over technology. Reading the story in a feminist framework shows that they take a bold stance against technology by collaborating as a community in order that people remain in control of machinery, and to ensure that men and women are granted the same opportunities to realize self-determined freedom. They have a limited use of machinery, and what they do use is out of necessity and only noticeable within the lushness of the island when Dr. MacPhail points it out. However, the tidal waves of industrialization are briskly moving towards the shores of this small island, and ultimately, the Palanese discover that their island is inescapably in the path of rippling waves of globalization pushed by technological modernization.

Huxley had been contemplating and developing the underlying principles for Palanese society, which, incidentally, is essentially a transnational feminist ideal, for quite some time before designing his book around them and building the island's community upon them. These are exactly the fundamentals offered by the Old Raja in his *Notes on What's What* and fervently upheld by the Palanese.

Not only is *Island* an important work because Huxley clearly inserts perceivably feminist ideals into the literature of the island's guru, but also he also overtly interjects himself into the book through the persona of the Old Raja. This is a point that must be made in part because of the negative criticism the book receives and its typical dismissal as a fluke, a dying man's unfocused rants and ramblings. In *Island* the author literally and figuratively threw himself into this work in the *Notes* and in the Old Raja.

By taking note of this and taking a step back, it is apparent that there is much more to the intermingling genres than previously realized, and that Huxley had grander plans than he is given credit for in a work that "was little publicized and grossly misunderstood" (447).

While Huxley does not explicitly disclose that the Old Raja is his projected fictional self, there is textual evidence to suggest he is and his reasons for channeling his person into the guru are appropriate and beneficial. The book states that the Old Raja's reign "was three years longer than Queen Victoria's" (38), or a grand total of sixty-seven years, and tellingly, Huxley was sixty-seven years old in 1961, the year he completed *Island* (439). Diagnosed with cancer of the tongue in 1960, a condition that had immediate debilitating effects on the author, he was relieved to have completed his final novel before his death (Murray 451), and with his declining health, he probably did not expect to live another year, although he hung on until 1963. Also, while the Old Raja and Huxley are of different nationalities and cultures, it is commonly known that Huxley had lifelong struggles with his defective eyesight, a deficiency he chooses to share with the Old Raja, who is the only character to wear spectacles in the novel.

Granted, the Old Raja may seem a peculiar character choice, as he is long dead by the narrative's commencement. He died in 1938(34) and the book is set in the early 1960s in order to serve unquestionably as commentary crucial to current circumstances. But this distance is beneficial in many ways to the work. For one, by placing the Old Raja at a distance, as a figure from the recent past, Huxley reminds us of the longevity of his own contributions to discourse aimed at discerning the disastrous direction mankind is taking through its dependency on machinery. Also, by equating himself with the wise Old Raja, Huxley urges that his work be taken with the same seriousness that the Palanese place on the *Notes on What's What*. In turn, he places value on science fiction as a valid source of commentary and as an untapped guidebook for facing the here, now, and future.

Finally, Huxley takes this distant stance with the Old Raja because the *Notes* are the heart of the book; it is where Huxley offers his philosophy more so than rules for practice. The *Notes* never suggest using technology (although it never rebukes the prospect) to bring about the utopia promised in these principles, so many of the modern day developments in Pala must be seen as the result of interpretation. The philosophical and fictional aspects coalesce in *Island*, as Huxley toys with the idea of building a utopian society based on his own founding principles in the midst of his contemporary techno-culture. It must be noted that Huxley's principles are not outdated or unrealistic; it is simply that in this scenario, things do not bode well or end well for the Palanese. It was far beyond Huxley to sugar coat his final work, even though the society he creates is based on his fundamentals. He could have chosen to present a fully functioning society, but it is his modus operandi to present the less favorable outcome so that his works make the biggest impact. Readers are challenged by Huxley to *think* – to reflect on the mistakes made by Palanese society, and, in turn, those made by their own cultures, and to determine what's what for themselves. In this reflective way, his book is an ideal resource for transnational feminists.

Initially, it seems the implementation of the Old Raja's principles by the Palanese gains them optimal results in a positive gender-equal society. They appear comfortable, intelligent, aware of the outside world, and well-adapted ecologically with the help of strategically placed technology. Dr. MacPhail states that their happy lifestyle is a direct result of their adherence to and interpretation of the Old Raja's notes and their system indubitably seems well formed upon his tenets. The doctor explains to Will Farnaby, the British shipwrecked visitor of the island:

> Well, to begin with we don't fight wars or prepare for them.
>
> Consequently, we have no need for conscription, or military hierarchies, or a unified command. Then there's our economic system: it doesn't permit

> anybody to become more than four or five times as rich as the average. That means that we don't have any captains of industry or omnipotent financiers. Better still, we have no omnipotent politicians or bureaucrats. Pala's a federation of self-governing units, geographical units, professional units, economic units so there's plenty of scope for small-scale initiative and democratic leaders, but no place for any kind of dictator at the head of a centralized government. Another point: we have no established church, and our religion stresses immediate experience and deplores belief in unverifiable dogmas and the emotions which that belief inspires. (149)

His speech is an elaboration of the ideals set forth in the *Notes on What's What*, and because these successes do not seemdependent on technology, the Palanese appear to be truly self-defining and balanced inregard to freedom and duty.

In fact, the Palanese know exactly what benefits the industrial enticer at their shores has to offer, but they are content to live by their own rules, not those of the machine. Theirs is a culture based on transnational pursuits of "knowing who in fact we are results in Good Being, and Good Being results in the most appropriate kind of good doing. But good doing does not of itself in Good Being" (39), and this philosophy of the Raja is reflected in his subjects, who ask, "Why would anyone want to exchange something rich and good and endlessly interesting for something bad and thin and boring? We don't feel any need for your speedboats or your television, your wars and revolutions, your revivals, your political slogans, your metaphysical nonsense from Rome and Moscow" (73). Huxley's utopians, whose principles are aligned with transnational feminism,understand the need to define themselves and to refrain from depending on of technology.

They are resistant because they are savvy to the high price of technologically afforded luxuries. When discussing the prospect of wholesale industrialization in Pala, Dr.

MacPhail relates, “The West wants it because our labor costs are low and investors’ dividends will be correspondingly high. And the East wants it because industrialization will create a proletariat, open fresh fields for Communist agitation and may lead in the long run to the setting up of yet another People’s Democracy” (110).

Neither option is acceptable to a people who maintain a society in which “there are only voluntary associations of men and women on the road to full humanity” (176).

This adherence to the Old Raja’s *Notes on What’s What* is evident in the status and treatment of women on the island. The women in *Island* hold prominent positions of power and prestige in their society, and are foundational upkeepers of Palanese principles. In his discussions with his wife, Lakshmi, Dr. MacPhail acknowledges the crucial role she has played in his education:

> “But *you* educated *me* all right,” he assured her. “If it hadn’t been for you coming in and pulling my hair and making me look at the world and helping me to understand it, what would I be today? A pedant in blinkers –in spite of all my training. But luckily I had the sense to ask you to marry me, and luckily you had the folly to say yes and then the wisdom and intelligence to make a good job of me. After thirty-seven years of adult education I’m almost human.” (37)

Their daughter-in-law, Susila, is just as crucial to the development of the central character, Farnaby, as she serves as his educator, doctor, mother, counselor, and selfless guide. Through her lessons, Farnaby weans himself off technology, including medicines and medical technology, in order that he may heal himself and find himself synchronously. He discovers the meaning of the Old Raja’s note, “If I only knew who in fact I am, I should cease to behave as what I think I am; and if I stopped behaving as what I think I am, I should know who I am” (38), as Susila teaches him the practice of self-determination, or “Destiny Control”

(98). From the basis of his learnings from Susila, Farnaby goes on to learn the various ways that self-determination plays into other facets of this unfamiliar, simple, yet alluring society.

He notices the effects of self-determination on sexual liberation, and ascertains that on this island, while there are connections and even long-term relationships, there are no required arrangements for couples. This is done with the intent that people freely live a life of personal choice and identity:

> Will turned to Ranga. “And will you be glad if she consoles herself, while you’re away, with another boy?”
>
> “I’d like to be,” he said. “But whether I actually shall be glad – that’s another question.”
>
> “Will you make her promise to be faithful?”
>
> “I won’t make her promise anything.”
>
> “Even though she’s your girl?”
>
> “She’s her own girl.”
>
> “And Ranga’s his own boy,” said the little nurse. “He’s free to do what he likes.”(72)

He learns that the idea of self-determination is applied to parenthood. With Mutual Adoption Clubs (MACs), in which each unit has fifteen to twenty-five assorted couples that adopt everyone else, there is no pressure to define oneself exclusively by physiology. Susila explains:

> In our part of the world “Mother” is strictly the name of a function. When the function has been duly fulfilled, the title lapses; the ex-child and the woman who used to be called ‘Mother’ establish a new kind of

> relationship. If they get on well together, they continue to see a lot of one another. If they don't, they drift apart. Nobody expects them to cling, and clinging isn't equated with loving – isn't regarded as anything particularly creditable. (89)

Because the man who embodies Westernization, and who, like the restless and insatiable machine, "won't take yes for an answer" (20), is able to learn such lessons, and to learn that he can control his own destiny, one senses that a reversal might happen, that the rest of the world might turn away from technological oppression to the self-realizing and cooperative ideals of the Palanese. However, Farnaby is but one man and ultimately the Palanese stand an island's chance in a hurricane of weathering the technological storm. Although they insist on their ability to control technology, to use it to supplement their lives, they are unwittingly in the center of the storm, not on its outskirts, and they are on borrowed time until the maelstrom passes overhead. They feel they have the danger of such subjugation at bay, that they are the masters of their lives. But Huxley reveals just how serious the threat of technological overpowerment is, and how easily people are consumed. Huxley's point here is valid to transnational feminists, who use technology as a primary outlet for activism. Baumgardner and Richards write that the main criticism of the transnational movement is that seems abstract, intangible, and miniscule in its present digital form, and that the use of the Internet and other technologies are both a blessing and detraction (18).

As Huxley plays out this scenario for the Palanese, the correlations between their situation and that of transnational feminists is foregrounded.

Feminist Overview on Technological Advancement

No matter how much they positively perceive and present their mastery of technology, the Palanese have already been seduced by the prestige afforded by technology

and have passed the point of no return. Dr. MacPhail's statement, quoted above, serves to verify that they are attracted to the power afforded by technology, the power to use it to stake a claim in the techno-scape. Technology allows them to live out their ambitions, to compete against the rest of the world, and to control their lives. In much the same way, transnational feminists find themselves facing the same circumstances. They are breaking new ground in activism by redefining feminism and they are reaching new heights in building a global community. But the attainment of these rights can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, they are subject to on-line anonymity and in the media. On the other, transnational feminism, even if it isn't sideswiped by technology because activists remain unaware of the seriousness of complete technological oppression, has the potential, itself, to be defining and domineering as it asserts its own principles on society.

The Palanese stand behind their conservative application of technology, but their contradictory actions reveal that not only do they want the type of power granted by technology and Westernization, but also that they are willing to do what it takes to attract it. This is obvious when they send a recruiter to the outside world with the exact lures to pull in valued and expensive foreigners:

> He was from Pala and had been commanded by His Highness, the Raja, toseek out and bring back with him a skillful surgeon from the West. Therewards would be princely. Princely, he insisted. There and then Dr.Andrew accepted the invitation. Partly, of course, for the money; butmostly because he was bored, because he needed a change, needed a tasteof adventure. A trip to the Forbidden Island – the lure was irresistible.(122)

> "Whereas *we*," said Dr. Robert, "have always chosen to adapt our economy and technology to human beings - not our human beings to somebody else's

> economy and technology. We import what we can't make; but we make an import only what we can afford. And what we can afford is limited not merely by our supply of pounds and marks and dollars, but also primarily - *primarily*," he insisted – "by our wish to be happy, our ambition to become fully human." (143)

By welcoming their first Westerner, even with the best intentions, they are dooming themselves. The opening chapter of this study lays out the progress feminism has made in response to technological progress and presents it as a benefit to the growing movement; however, Huxley suggests that because they seek out male-constructed methods and tools for expansion that they are continually self-assimilating themselves into a patriarchal world, instead of creating their own. With the Westerner comes the lure of the benefits and luxuries of technology with a focus on detaching women from the experience of child-bearing: "Painless childbirth—and forthwith all the women of Pala were enthusiastically on the side of the innovators" (131). If these similarities are not enough of a red flag that Pala is on the direct path to becoming indoctrinated into the brave new world, the speed with which technology bursts through this small window of opportunity is proof enough of their plight. The lesson that transnational feminists should take away from this worst case scenario is that their awareness and activism is at risk of mollification by the availability of and dependence on technology. In fact, Baumgardner and Richards point out that despite the vast improvements and advancements in feminism there is still no Equal Rights Amendment for women (75).

The likenesses between the situation of the Palanese and transnational feminists go on, especially in that the fact that the appropriation of technology is a point of pride for both groups. Dr. MacPhail boasts about the strategic "improvements" as a result of technology in Pala. He obliviously reveals the extent of his society's dependence on the machine. He tells Farnaby:

> "Painless operations for stone and cataract and hemorrhoids—and they had won the approval of all the old and the ailing. At one stroke more than half the adult population became their allies, prejudiced in their favor, friendly in advance, or at least open-minded, toward the next reform." "Where did they go from pain?" Will asked. "To agriculture and language.To bread and communication. They got a man out from England to establish Rothamsted-in-the-Tropics, and they set to work to give the Palanese a second language…English schools were set up and a staff of Bengali printers, with their presses and their fonts of Caslon and Bodoni, were imported from Calcutta." (131- 32)

As Dr. MacPhail and Farnaby tour the island, the doctor points out more evidence of Pala's growing dependence in the "indispensable imports" of electrical equipment and the "high priority" communal freezer (147). Further, his equation for success notably includes technology, which Huxley suggests is dangerous regardless of how it is used: "Electricity minus heavy industry plus birth control equals democracy and plenty. Electricity plus heavy industry minus birth control equals misery, totalitarianism and war" (147). Of course, the same danger applies to transnational feminists.

The depth of technological dependence for the Palanese is further revealed in the areas within which they focus their technological advances after the Raja's death, and one cannot help remark on the similarities in their foci and that of transnational feminists. With the Palanese method of Deep Freeze and Artificial Insemination, they are on their way to creating the biotechnologically perfected humans. "There's been some diabetes among my father's people; so they thought it best – he and my mother – to have both their children by Artificial Insemination. My brother's descended from three generations of dancers and, genetically, I'm the daughter of Dr. Robert's first cousin, Malcolm Chakravarti-MacPhail, who was the Old Raja's private secretary" (192-93). Huxley indubitably had a finger on the pulse

of feminism, as the movement also insists upon its own technological development in areas of advanced reproduction technology, which emphasizes its dependence on technology. Transnational feminists favor abortion, which, while they have the rights of women to make choices concerning their bodies, is arguably a form of genetic selection. Also, as feminists attempt to bridge the gap between feminism and science, they find themselves immersed in the issue of genetic engineering of humans. Huxley writes that relinquishing the benefits of natural reproduction to technology is a potentially irrevocable act that pushes us over the edge towards dehumanization. The subject of genetic engineering is at the forefront of topics, and feminists are debating whether to fight against the manipulation of genes in light of the politics of choice, or whether to appropriate the technology to service feminist genetic engineering. Huxley's work is a perfect resource during these times and for feminists like AnnaleeNewitz, who asks in the article, "Feminists Prefer Genetic Engineering," "Why the hell shouldn't feminists seize the means of reproduction and turn them to our own best interests? Why shouldn't we be at the table when policy makers determine the best ways to regulate cloning, genetic engineering, and new reproductive technologies?"

Although technology is not their primary concern as a threat, by asking these questions, feminists prove they are at least not as far along as the Palanese, whose censoriousness and smugness described by Furbank disallows them to foresee or accept their full-scale involvement in technology. The one person who could potentially see these consequences is Murugan, the current Raja of Pala, who rebelliously reads science fiction:

> "What's the literature?" Vijaya asked.
>
> "*Science Fiction*." There was a ring of defiance in Murugan's voice.
>
> Dr. Robert laughed. "Anything to escape from Fact." Pretending not to have heard him, Murugan turned a page and went on reading. (162)

Intriguingly, Murugan's defiant answer can be construed in two separate ways. While he may be referring to any of the popular magazines circulating at the time, including *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Galaxy Science Fiction*, or *Fantasy &Science Fiction* (Miller, "Magazine Index"), he may be simply referring to the genre as a whole and stressing the importance he places on such literature by speaking of it in the grandiose fashion his mother uses to speak of matters of import. In either case, Murugan shows a high regard for science fiction as it introduces him to a vastly different world from Pala, but it is intriguing to note that in the latter case, the unnamed book he reads very well may be *Brave New World*, which, as the preceding chapter posits, offers evidence of the detrimental effects of technology to both genders, all classes, and any disposition. Regardless, Murugan does not wish to temper technology with the Old Raja's principles; instead, he fantasizes about the prospects of industrialization and technological innovation that he reads about in the literature, completely overlooking the blatant cautionary tales provided frequently by the genre. Interestingly, feminists are more like Murugan than the rest of the smug Palanese, as they, too, have access to warnings such as Huxley's, yet are guilty of infatuation with technology as they scramble to modernize as frantically as the Raja.

In fact, Murugan is wildly infatuated with the idea of technological development and his very demeanor reflects the fervor of his desire and the strength of the hold of technology on his impressionable mind:

> "I'll show them who's the boss around here," he said in a phrase and tone which had obviously been borrowed from the hero of some American gangster movie. "These people think they can push me around," he went on, reciting from the dismally commonplace script, "the way they pushed my father around. But they're making a big mistake." He uttered a sinister snigger and wagged his beautiful, odious head. "A big mistake," he repeated. (40-41)

As Farnaby points out, he seems quite scripted and automated already, and as he lays out his plans, it becomes clear that while the other Palanese are blinded by their denial of technology, his vision is so clouded by the onslaught of it that he quickly becomes a cog of the machine. When he is not speaking like a goon in a movie of the power offered by technology, he speaks robotically and as though he were a recording of Colonel Dipa's Greater Rendang speeches on "glory and power. The pleasures of vanity and the pleasures of bullying. Terrorism and military parades at home; conquests" (109).Murugan echoes, "Top priority: get this place modernized. Look at what Rendang has been able to do because of its oil royalties" (41). While he comes across as an automaton when he speaks of the draw of power, it is when he shows excitement that we see that the pleasures afforded by technology are what the young Raja selfishly desires.

Murugan shamelessly flirts with technology and is openly courted by the outside world, and it is the promise of toys and luxuries that most excites the ruler and causes him to salivate over such novelties as sleek Italian-style motor scooters in a Sears' catalog. In fact, Farnaby cannot help take note of Murugan's attraction to motor vehicles, remembering that along with the catalog, the Colonel unabashedly panders to Murugan in his materialistic seduction of the boy. Although Farnaby misreads their relationship as sexual at first, stating, "Only an infatuated lover would have entrusted himself, not to mention his guest, to such a chauffeur," as the Colonel acquiesces to Murugan's request to drive his Mercedes (19), he quickly ascertains that there is manipulation where Murugan sees thoughtfulness, and that the industrialization that Dipa represents has the upper hand in the bond:

> What an odd kind of present from Hadrian to Antinous! He looked again at the picture of the motorbike, then back at Murugan's glowing face. Light dawned; the Colonel's purpose revealed itself. The serpent tempted me, and I did eat. The tree in the midst of the garden was called the Tree of Consumer Goods, and to the inhabitants of every underdeveloped Eden the

> tiniest taste of its fruit, and even the sight of its thirteen hundred and fifty-eight leaves, had power to bring the shameful knowledge that, industrially speaking, they were stark-naked. (136-37)

Farnaby, who floats between the outside world and Pala as an onlooker of the island's demise, is on target concerning the relationship between the military dictator and the Raja. He realizes "that, good or bad, and regardless of what the Palanese may feel about it, this thing is going to happen. One doesn't have to be much of a prophet to foretell that Murugan is going to succeed. He's riding the wave of the future. And the wave of the future is undoubtedly a wave of crude petroleum'" (56). However, Murugan cannot see at this point that, especially for rulers, automation and dehumanization are requirements for success. He has not learned that what makes a leader prominent is not his power and wealth, but the industry that makes him powerful and wealthy.

Murugan fails to recognize that Colonel Dipa is no longer a man; he is Greater Rendang and armaments. He cannot discern that Lord Aldehyde is less than human, although such is hinted at on at least a few occasions. For instance, Farnaby wonders why Murugan does not import Sears' catalogs for everyone, "To whet their appetite for possessions. Then they'll start clamoring for Progress – oil wells, armaments, Joe Aldehyde, Soviet technicians" (137). As Farnaby considers his boss, it is clear that the man is the summation of the technological pursuits that seduced him: "Newspapers were only one of Lord Aldehyde's interests. In another manifestation he was the South East Asia Petroleum Company, he was Imperial and Foreign Copper Limited" (20). Eventually, just as these men sacrificed their humanity for industry and technology, Murugan foolhardily accepts the same fate.

There can be no disputing this change in the Raja; after he drives with soldiers to Dr. MacPhail's home and has him assassinated, his speech reflects how fully he has become a

satiated, yet senseless cog: "'This is your Raja speaking,' the excited voice proclaimed. After which, *da capo*, there was a repetition of the speech about Progress, Values, Oil, True Spirituality" (295). In light of this change, the Palanese are left to hope for the best and to make do, but this would not be the case if they, too, had owned up to their part in bringing technology to the island.

To Huxley, all of this – the perversion of principles, the ruthless assimilation of a people, and the exploitation of a power-hungry young leader – is preventable by placing ethics in technological development and by focusing on the underlying principles on which the novel rests. Certainly, his outlook is grim, but why shouldn't it be, as his job is to force us to ask questions, especially when the solutions to those inquiries are becoming fewer and fewer. In fact, he offers a single question for us to consider as we continue headlong into our technologically determined fates: "How will this thought or action contribute to, or interfere with, the achievement, by me and the greatest possible number of other individuals, of man's Final End?'" (Foreword ix).

By seeking the answers to this question, we will have a society in which, as Birnbaum states were the goals of Huxley's desires, "scientists [are] more actively responsible for the technological improvements they help to bring into existence morally responsible for their actions and people recognize the fact that the advantages of technology also bring with them disadvantages" (Birnbaum 149).

Whatever we do, things will probably not turn out the way we want, but ultimately, we must somehow remain human. The seemingly insurmountable job for transnational feminists, whose aim it is to lead the interconnected techno-culture by laying the groundwork for more productive and equitable social relations worldwide, is to focus their attention on the effects of technological determinism and to be mindful of their wariness towards technology when devising what is morally good and right.

II. Technological Impact On Transnational Feminism

Re-defining Feminism for the Twenty-First Century Techno-Culture

Historically, interconnecting economic, socio-cultural, and political systemsthrough technologically-driven expansion has been a chief concern of feminists, whoselong narrative of change experienced waves of revaluation and reinvention in line withtechnological advancements. This reaction of feminists is due to the consequentialspread of narrow traditionalist preconceptions on the capacities of marginalized groupsthrough the long, yet deliberate process towards techno globalization, or Westernization,which privileges a select group of male elitists who control the means to purge and filterinformation and to choose goals and representations.

Feminists are all too familiar with making paradigmatic shifts in practice tomodernize alongside technology and globalization, as they have customarily reacted tointernationalism by using the very technological developments devised for exploitation tocall attention to the movement's farther-reaching concerns.

In the case of fifteenth-centurywriter and analyst Christine de Pizan, the author was involved in "implicitlyguaranteeing the overall coherence of each of her major single-author manuscripts [and] self-representation" by appropriating a dominantly male field intended to promote classic patriarchy (339). As "the first professional writer", she challenged the notion that writing was a man's pursuit and generated a Europeanwide readership for her groundbreaking feminist works, including the 1405 work, *TheBook of the City of Ladies*, sustaining herself and her family on a writer's earnings(33, 339). And as the first "defender of women" (33), she revealed in *City of Ladies* that personal issues facing women were shared by themajority of women, and she collated in one text a collective story of women from myth,history, and contemporary experience that highlighted the contributions from women fora transnational audience. De Pizan, taking advantage of male-driven advances

inglobalization, offered a feminist theory that debunked the slanderous misconception ofwomen as valueless social contributors that was spread and internationalized by centuriesof male writers and critics.

In fact we have come to vanquish from the world the same error intowhich you had fallen, so that from now on, ladies and all valiant womenmay have a refuge and defense against the various assailants, those ladieswho have been abandoned for so long, exposed like a field without asurrounding hedge, without finding a champion to afford them anadequate defense, notwithstanding those noble men who are required byorder of law to protect them, who by negligence and apathy have allowedthem to be mistreated.

De Pizan's book became the model for later feminists who continued their interplay andgrowth with male-dominated territorialism and kept a watchful eye on technologicalpursuits and commerce.

Feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, taking cues from de Pizan, wrote andpublished profound feminist texts such as *A Vindication of the Rights ofWoman* (1792)that crossed into and countered a genre made for and dominated by men, and was widelycirculated. Wollstonecraft's deconstructive theory of feminism, however, showedsignificant evolution from de Pizan's, in that globalization and the means forcommunication made her aware of a surprising number of sympathetic men whosealignment with feminists broke down the archetype of the unwavering and hardened man.In *A Vindicationof the Rights of Woman,* Wollstonecraft appeals to the sensibilities of such men whosesympathy contradicts overriding presumptions that women and men have separate,unconnected roles and agendas:I then would fainconvince reasonable men of the importance of some ofmy remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenorof my observations. I appeal to their understandings; and, as a fellowcreature,claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts. Ientreat them to assist to emancipate their companion....Would men

butgenerously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowshipinstead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observantdaughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonablemothers – in a word, better citizens. (35)

Prominent men like John Stuart Mill answered this call, writing philosophical treatisesarguing for the rights of women and marching alongside women in protest of inequalitiesand profiteering through racial, sexual, and economic exploitation. With the involvementof men and its new multicultural intent, the feminist movement was showing movementtowards the contemporary unifying theory, but it required more radical advances inglobalization and technology to reach that point.

The globalizing forces behind the Industrial Revolution in the UK and in theUS, which were manifested in the convenient and highly-productive rotary press, aswell as newspapers, mass transit systems, assembly lines, and the car (to name a few keydevelopments), provided international communication and support for separatenationalist feminist movements in the two countries (37,7-9).Feminist communities in both countries grew exponentially and began to reorganizeparadigms in light of the potential for (mis)use of mass production, soaring trade, andstandardization. Following de Pizan'sexample, they reexamined women's progress andtheir ongoing subjugation, contemporized their goals by including ex-slaves (who wereprey to the same social structures as women) in the suffrage movement, and pressed theirviews (literally and figuratively) in response to increasing awareness of global patriarchalpursuits.

Feminists of the 1960s to late 1980s experienced such a burst of economic,technological, and commercial advancement, as theirs was the era when marketcapitalismwas carried into the international sphere and international consumerismexploded. Feminists had a host of new challenges that required another paradigmaticshift and a deeper involvement with the extending web of globalization. They

created *MsMagazine*, fought before the Supreme Court for ownership of their bodies with *Roe vs.Wade*, organized consciousness-raising organizations, and formed high-profile rallies andprotests that reached an international audience (13-15). They alsodeveloped a surge of feminist manifestos and literary criticisms of incontrovertible worththat contributed to the continued deconstruction of the canon, revaluation of women'sexperience, challenges to representations of women and gender, and questioning ofmainstream literary interpretations (134).

But despite their visibility and major achievements that spoke to their desire forfull social and economic equality for all people, feminists were still limited anddependent on technological advance and globalization for their cause to reach atransnational level. Baumgardner and Richards explain that in the US, their image wasskewed in the overruling and manipulative media, which presented feminists as manhatersbent on feminine domination (51-52). Their issues favored middle-class workingwhite woman, and this separatist attitude caused black and lesbian feminist groups toemerge and discouraged involvement from men who were sensitive to the cause, yet werereluctant to become involved in a seemingly "women's only" movement. What wereneeded were a highly collaborative network that coalesced multicultural and non-genderspecific criticism and awareness of issues of inequality and global justice.

The last two decades have marked significant change for feminists, especially inthe mode of their interaction, as they have adjusted their activism to keep with rapidtechnological developments on the cusp of the twenty-first century. As they haveestablished an international community with the help of advanced communicationtechnology, their focus now encompasses transnational issues and problems that hamperthe liberation of the individual. Indeed, they have found support and contributions fromthe most unlikely and unexpected places, namely in the literature and scholarship of malefeminists.

For modern transnational feminists and concurrent with past shifts in themovement, this momentous change in multinational social dynamics demands an equallydramatic adjustment of scope and direction in order for theirs to remain a relevantnarrative of change. This push of feminist rethinking is evident in discourse bytransnational feminists, whose "vision of transnational feminism builds on globalnetworks of communication, which bring about a 'shifting of borders' that allows for theemergence of transnational dialogues between feminists the world over". Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards who co-authored 2000 book, *Manifesta*, offer definitions of contemporary transnational feminists and their updated principles:

> Who are the feminists? And what is feminism? By feminists, *we*mean each and every politically and socially conscious woman orman who works for equality within or outside the movement, writesabout feminism, or calls her- or himself a feminist in the name offurthering equality…In the most basic sense, feminism is exactly whatthe dictionary says it is: the movement for social, political, andeconomic equality for men and women.We prefer to add to thatseemingly uncontroversial statement the following: Feminism meansthat women have the right to enough information to make informedchoices about their lives. And because women is an all-encompassingterm that includes middle-class white women, rich black lesbians, andworking-class straight Asian women, an organic intertwining withmovements for racial and economic equality, as well as gay rights, isinherent in the feminist mandate. Some sort of allegiance betweenwomen and men is also an important component of equality. Afterall, equality is a balance between the male and female with theintention of liberating the individual. (54-55)

These carefully worded definitions, which encompass the range of multicultural feministthinkers, activists, and writers, also reflect the current transversal, non-separatist outlookof global feminism. This idea of transversal politics developed by contemporaryfeminists welcomes listening and participation from people of all nationalities,ethnicities, and religions in feminist discourse, as the diversity of the contributors isindicative of the variety of agendas and issues that make up the unifying concept ofmodern feminism.

Another indication of a drastic adaptation to the information age is that twenty-firstcentury feminists have internationalized their community by positively using themain thoroughfare of globalizing forces, the Internet. Indeed, feminism today, with itsglobal online communities, email, satellite communication, and multitude ofawareness issues, is as unrecognizable by the standards of its forebears as the techno culture in which it thrives. Lacking the high-speed technology to which their currentsuccessors attribute the success of their transnational movement, theprevious movement was restricted by distance and remained mainly on the local and national levels (8, 21, 37).

The goal of transnational feminists is to accommodate the wealth of newperspectives and conversation available through “the Internet [which] is a trulyessential organizing tool when it is used correctly, disseminating informationprovid[ing] instant networking” (296). Indeed, today’s feminism is a farcry from the “global sisterhood” anticipated by its forebears; instead, it is a digitalizedand gender-unifying model whose success is due to worldwide website communities,email, satellite communication, and its emphasis on creating connections betweenanyone who thinks, acts, and writes with a political consciousness.

The transnational community coalesce all the various local and national branchesof feminism together under one masthead of transnational feminism, as theycollaboratively

strive to stake a claim in the skewed digital technology. Moreimportantly, with the unified global network, a heterogeneous feminist discourse isemerging from unconventional sources. Arguably the most influential of theseunexpected sources and the barometer of the unifying shift in feminist thinking are the"gender traitors," as Sandra Bartky dubs feminist men in her foreword to *Men DoingFeminism* (xii). "And [there are] lots of them," she continues, as together women and men "effect a thoroughgoing reform of our institutions and a wholesale movement to anew plateau of consciousness" (Bartky xii). With women and men of all walks uniting inthe movement for global justice and equality, feminism remains paramount intransnational discourse as it fractures and subverts global capitalism from within, and, astransnational feminist Peggy Antrobus concludes:

> [O]ffers the only politics that can transform the world into a more humanplace and deal with global issues like equality, development, peace,because it asks the right questions about power…because it cuts throughrace and class…[and] implies consciousness of all the sources ofoppression…and it resists them all. (88)

Indeed, twenty-first century feminist men and women *must* forge thisinterdependent relationship, as the power in question, the globalizing forces oftransnational corporations, cuts through race and class and, indeed, through gender aswell. Feminist men are not simply compassionate sympathizers to the dilemma ofinequality that women and minorities face. They are also active participants in today'smodel of global feminism because "the imposition of male gender identity can be aspainful and as shot through with ambiguity and confusion as the imposition of femininеidentity" (Bartky xii). The outpouring of recent feminist scholarship from men offersinarguable evidence of their awareness of their mutual predicament.

For instance, James Sterba, in his essay titled, “Is Feminism Good for Men andAre Men Good for Feminism?” writes that although society favors men, for the most partthey have no control over dominant patriarchal views and actions, such as theunwarranted violence against women and their bodies (296). Sterba also points out thatmen are wrongfully stripped of viable claims in child custody cases, they have greaterspending obligations, and, while some men are nurturing, compassionate, andcooperative, they are expected to be independent, decisive, and competitive (296). Hewrites that this comparable mistreatment of men and women is resolvable throughfeminist action: “Feminism is morally good and morally right for men even if acceptingits practical requirements necessitates giving up certain advantages that men have overwomen” (298). In other words, adds Patrick D. Hopkins in “How Feminism Madea Man Out of Me,” feminism is not exclusive to women and “women’s experience” perse, but open to anyone who perceives and understands *feminist* interests, or “this set ofbeliefs, suspicions, politics, actions, and critical views, that seems to be crucial tofeminism, not gender identity, not one’s sex” (50). He even dismisses the use of termssuch as “genderism,” “anti-genderism,” or “critical gender theory” as alternatives tofeminism when men participate in its discourse, because “feminism, it turns out, issomething we all can do” (52).

In fact, with this enhanced transnational feminist perspective, feminist men are contributing significantly to feminist discourse by positing that feminism is somethingthat men historically have done, and their research, namely in literature, offers substantialproof to this point. They are instigating a new line in academic study for all feministscholars that is indicative of the ambiguous nature of modern feminism, as it is alwaysopen to new feminist interpretations. Their initial questioning of the mainstream literarycanon greatly unsettles the perspective on traditional authors; by retracing a gendercooperative movement, the development of a far more extensive and revolutionarytimeline of transnational feminism is underway.

This revised narrative includes works from men like G.H. Mead, whosepragmatist feminist writing is inducted into the tomes of gender-interactive feministliterature in Mitchell Aboulafia's article, "Was George Herbert Mead a Feminist?" (145-58). Authoritative writings from Strindberg, Ibsen, Hardy, Yeats, Lawrence, and Joyceare included in the changing history of feminist activism in Declan Kiberd's*Men andFeminism in Modern Literature* (103-105). In his article "Who's Afraid of Men DoingFeminism," Michael Kimmel includes in his history of men who have supported women'sequality in the U.S. "Thomas Paine, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, WaltWhitman, Wendell Phillips, Robert Dale Owen, W.E.B. DuBois, John Dewey, MatthewVasar, and Rabbi Steven Wise" (66). These critics reveal that men have a long traditionof contributing to feminist discourse, and they highlight and give due credit to those rareindividuals who, against established designs, daringly participate in feminist thinking andwriting.

For these "gender traitors," the previous lack of communication and technologicaladvance, combined with the overriding chauvinistic representation of men by patriarchalcontrollers, disrupted their ability to coalesce their ideas and minds with their femalecounterparts. However, as men are no longer vilified and are open to indoctrination bytoday's standards of feminism, the addition of their insightful approaches significantlyalters the breadth and context of feminist thought throughout its intertwining andinternationalized history with techno-globalization.

Aldous Huxley's Feminist Perception of Technological Determinism

This doctrination of feminist men holds true for thecanonically Western author, Aldous Huxley, who, in the past, has received backlash fromfeminists and scholars who charge the writer with being glaringly patriarchal in hisliterature, namely in the 1932 novel *Brave New World* (53, 103, 290, 427). To these scholars, Huxley was strongly biased by

masculineperceptions. His literature was understood to directly reflect the author's inability towork past the patriarchal constructs that pervade his works. Deanna Madden contends inher article "Women in Dystopia: Misogyny in *Brave New World, 1984,* and *A ClockworkOrange*," that Huxley was already suspected of having the conviction that females areinferior simply because he lived in a time when this was a popular notion. She adds thathe drew from an essentially male tradition of utopian and dystopian literature that rarelypresents non-patriarchal societies, and that he wrote in a literary tradition that was bothsteeped in misogyny and a Christian heritage that devalues women. However, the currentstudy of Huxley as a feminist by today's standards calls into question every one of theseaccusations by first pointing to the essays of Huxley that debunk the image of the authoras a misogynist and then by evaluating his feminist inclinations in works that receivedbacklash for their patriarchal overtones in*Island*.

The charge that Huxley was a misogynist based on his drawing from the maletradition of utopian and dystopian literature seems an appropriate place to begindiscounting such unfair claims about his principles. After all, literature was dominatedby men long before Huxley's time and this command by males remains an issue forfeminists to this day. In essence, Madden might just as well suggest that all male authorsare, by default, misogynists. Also, she overlooks the subversive nature of the dystopiantradition in which Huxley writes. M. Keith Booker writes,Briefly, dystopian literature is specifically that literature which situatesitself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against the potentialnegative consequences of arrant utopianism. At the same time, dystopianliterature generally also constitutes a critique of existing social conditionsor political systems, either through the critical examination of the utopianpremises upon which those conditions and systems are based or throughthe imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into differentcontexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions.Essentially, dystopian literature shares many of

the same goals and perspectivesas feminism, and likewise, Huxley, by using this genre, clearly shapes up as more than amouthpiece for patriarchal ideals and traditions.Additionally, Huxley held an unorthodox view of beauty and femininity incomparison to the standards based upon a male-driven make-up industry that usestechnology and propaganda to promote masculinist ideals of the feminine. In his 1931essay, “The Beauty Industry,” he states that despite its greatest efforts, the modern cult ofbeauty, as formulated by advances in the production of make-up and increasedpropagandaremains fundamentally a failure. Its operations do not touch the deepestsource of beauty – the experiencing soul…All men and women will bebeautiful only when the social arrangements give to every one of them anopportunity to live completely and harmoniously, when there is noenvironmental incentive and no hereditary tendency towardsmonomaniacal vice. (260)

Huxley understood how such a controlling force demeans women, and also how it affectsboth genders by the inclusion of men in his statement. Like Sterba, he recognizes thatmen and women alike find it challenging to escape from or reject domineering principlesfounded by a select group of profiteering men and made possible by technology.

Finally, it is understandable that Madden would conclude that Huxley wasinfluenced by Christian ideals as, until the recent work of Dana Sawyer and NicholasMurray that highlight the eastern religious influences on Huxley, most critics viewed himas a masculinist and a religious traditionalist. The work of these two biographers shedlight on his long history with Hinduism, which they trace back to 1920, when Huxley wastwenty-six years old. The very nature of the Vedanta spiritualtradition that he closely followed is conducive to contemporary feminist ideas, as there isa concern with individual self-realization by which one understands the ultimate nature ofreality (or Brahman) (6). Vedanta, which implies “the end of all knowledge” isnot restricted or confined to one book and there is no sole source of Vedantic philosophy(6). It is arguable that Huxley’s spiritual inclinations favored the

transnationalfeminist standpoint of appreciating, welcoming, and seeking more voices andperspectives in order to find that place where self-realization and liberation are attained.

What makes Huxley a particularly interesting subject as a feminist is that while hewas restricted by the same lack of transnational communication and definitions thatprevented an international feminist community in his day, he was highly conscious ofboth the possibilities of this global community and of its biggest threat, the verytechnology that brings such a community about. Furthermore, he was not only concernedabout making women equal to men, he was also deeply concerned with the effects oftechnology and globalization on the quality of life for both genders, a fact that justifiablymakes Huxley a strong model of a feminist whose prognostications are extremelyrelevant to twenty-first century feminists.He saw, even at the onset of massive interconnectivity, that technology was apatriarchal tool of oppression with the threat of an international integration, and he wasdeeply concerned about the price Western man had to pay for such progress (20). He wrote, “The machine makes men richer and more comfortable; but italso makes them less than men” (204). To him, theproblem of patriarchy extended far beyond human interactions; he worried thatglobalization through technology determined those interactions. He felt that ours is anincreasingly post-human society as the result of unbridled and male-orientedtechnological determinism that, against the will of even the most privileged humans andeven the male engineers of this techno-social construct, directs the world towards an endthat is mechanized, alien, and pointless in both senses – meaningless and unceasing.

This idea of technological determinism that Huxley feared is briefly summed upin the following passage from George Bugliarello’s*The History of Philosophy ofTechnology*:

> The development of rapid technological innovation, imposing adjustmentson people faster than they can absorb them, breaks choice

> down. Whentechnological innovations break too rapidly upon man, he can order histechnological priorities only in theory; in fact he simply does not haveenough time. Our sense that technology is in control rather than mangrows out of insufficient time for making choices, deciding values, andordering priorities. Not only do man's own power and control seem to beslipping away from him, but also man, unable to make those meaningfulchoices he senses he should be making, feels even his history slippingaway. He feels he can no longer declare, strengthen, and codify his valuesinto a system to pass on to his heirs. (x-xi)

He saw the introduction of market capitalism on theinternational stage as transnational corporations like Ford and General Motors took ahuge step in the process towards the widespread standardization of Western ideals andtechnologies – they mastered the assembly line.

In light of these monumental occurrences, Huxley genuinely believed that he wasexperiencing the shift of control from man to machine and that society in the mid-twentiethcentury lived dangerously close to the threshold between human control anddependence on an uncompassionate technological autopilot. His misgivings over thepotential for human automation as a consequence of dependence on technology areevident in this 1930 quotation:

> Mechanization has already affected us profoundly, not only as politicalbeings but also as suffering and enjoying individuals, even as thinkers. Thus it is to the remorselessly punctual machine…that we owe ourexacerbated sense of time. Time is money, therefore time is God. Belief in progress is only possible in an age that sets an excessive value upon time;

> and it is only in an age of mechanization that time can acquire suchan excessive value. (218-219)

He warned that humans were relinquishing their own incentive to define, command, andamuse themselves, and that the surrendering of power to limit and instruct technologicaldevelopment caused them to become stagnant and subhuman (141).Indeed, the greater challenges and potential for danger associated with theacceptance of these male-oriented, yet equally oppressive social constructs, are issues ofparamount import in his fiction. As aforementioned, the goal of this study of Huxley as a feminist is devoted to investigating the patriarchal systemembedded in the uncontrollable machine that determines human existence in the novel,*Island*. In the*Island*, the citizens of Pala attempt to appropriate technologyto better both genders and to balance it with nature. In it, Huxley questions whether menand women can temper technology to be an equally beneficial and empowering tool, or ifit is hopeless to re-determine a male-oriented, but technologically driven existence oncewe are born into it. Seen in this light, his works contribute to the growing history offeminist men, to transnational feminism, and the history of cooperation between the sexesto make a world that is worth living in for all humans.

III. Feminist Overtones in *Island*

Female Perspectives in *Island*

The ethic of the machine is an ethic of discipline, of regimentation, ofthe total sacrifice of individual interests to the interests of the mechanizedcommunity. There is no arguing with the machine; either you do not setthe thing going, or else, if you do, you adapt yourself to its rhythm andobey the literally iron laws which it imposes. No compromise is possible.It is the nature of the machine to be unable to tolerate that any of its partsshould fail to function with perfect efficiency. (219)

Initially, it seems that the social system is not technologically determined, andthat men command the controls of their patriarchal techno-society. The author no doubtintentionally presents the appearance of control for men. For millennia, technology wasused to normalize patriarchal constructs, and this was done with an air of normality inorder that patriarchal practices were accepted as simply natural, as the status quo. It is nowonder, then, that man's machine, programmed to make exact replicas, provides forhumans a society that appears to be just the same male-dominated construct that ithistorically has been. For the machine is doing its job of ensuring its parts run at theoptimal level by maintaining an ordinary framework in which people work smoothly, orif you will, in which they are well-oiled to perform most effectively.

Accordingly, technological developments relinquish men from sexual andreproductive accountability, as they casually brag about the potency and enhancingbenefits of their manufactured sex-hormone chewing gum (104-05). By contrast, women are solely responsible for correctly administering theirmale-devised Malthusian birth control drills, "You know, by numbers. One, two, three,four, always" (80), yet they do not have the slightest idea ofjust how these drills impact their health. Indeed, critics point out that female characterslack interiority altogether, and that they are stripped not only of their

inner reproductivecapabilities but also of their ability as conscientious thinkers (Deery 108, Madden 291).Any adverse reactions of birth control on their bodies, therefore, is secondary to themaintenance of their outward appearances, as they are preoccupied with masculine idealsof beauty and femininity that places value on women by their sex appeal.

Additionally, the esteemed Alpha strata lacks female members, as evident bymen's use of the private "Alpha Changing Room" which is exclusive to men, whereaswomen crowd into the indiscreet "Girl's Dressing Room." Also, the Hatchery andConditioning Centre's new crop of Alpha students introduced and repeatedly referred toin the first pages of the novel consists of distinguishably male pupils, and the foremostscientists at the Centre are notably male as well. Madden adds that "the typical boss is amale and his secretary a female. A male in charge patronizingly "pats" a femaleunderling who in turn gives him a 'deferential' smile" (290).

The Centre itself, with its purpose in creating sustainable and utilitarian humanlife, is synonymous to the female form that has been appropriated by men, and theintroduction of the building as "a squat grey building of only thirty-four stories" in thefirst line of the novel immediately suggests that men are overtly supreme to women. Thebuilding is analogous to a matronly woman's body that has repeatedly withstoodchildbearing. The use of the term *only* is indicative of her limitations and the toweringphallic buildings around her contribute to the idea that this symbol of womanhood isdominated literally by male constructs.

Not only do they seem to dominate her from without, men have the ability andpower to control the functionality of this building, and therefore women's bodies fromwithin. As the Director leads a tour of the Centre, it becomes apparent that men have herreproductive system mapped out from the ground level Fertilizing Room to the darkbasement of her system, the Embryo Store. Particularly in this womb-like storeroom,men manipulate the process of childbirth and crystallize their dominance over

women bychanging this into a site for “the much more interesting world of human invention”(8). This is where they have license to improve upon nature by stretching the power to make life as well as to manipulate it. Indeed, they boast thatthis site is “the foundation on which everything else is built…the gyroscope thatstabilizes the rocket plane of state on its unswerving course” (150), and where their control is unmistakable. Man’s ability to recreate and fashionwoman’s body, and thus command her existence and ensure the prevalence of his own, iseasily construed as the foremost criterion for the technologically constructed andmaintained society.

It is not surprising to favoring of men,therefore, that June Deery, in her article “Technology and Gender in Aldous Huxley’sAlternative(?) Worlds,” remonstrates Huxley for being an author “who in theoryadvocates[s] equal opportunity for women [but doesn’t] appear to take the issue seriouslyenough to follow through and portray this in practice” (115). However, upon closerreading of the work, the smugness and obvious control of men becomes suspect, ascontradictions arise in their vindications of technology through omissions, frequentlyvague and confused speech, and through conflicting narratorial remarks. These instancesof indeterminacy are indicative of more complex issues at hand than those simply ofwomen’s subjugation to men. Huxley presents holes and conflicts in assumed power thatshow that men are not in command and are unwittingly subject to equivocally automatedand techno-socially determined fates. Yes, technology offers them a slightly morecomfortable position as compared to women, but again, this is craftily done in order thateveryone behave in a fashion conducive to the stability of the machine. In this futureLondon, the only benefiting entity is the machine, whichmercilessly fixes humans asinstruments to ensure that it never ceases to perform as the streamlined and punctualmachine that it is.

While the following excerpt appears to introduce an authoritative person inDirector Tomakin of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, there is a distinctiveindicator that his

supremacy is calculatedly controlled by technology, and that hefoolishly and blindly believes in his power.

It is notable and telltale that the "beginning" presented by the Director to outline theprocess of fertilization fails to retrace the natural process of egg production in the femaleform. He offers no information as to how women produce the vast supply of ovum thathe directs the students' attention to, downplaying women's integral part to this systemand simultaneously causing doubt as to whether or not he possesses this information atall. He focuses instead on the technological process in which humans are produced,which reveals that men have lost their tie to humanity, as they too depend on technologyto determine life from its earliest phases. As a fully functioning cog fashioned by themachine, the Director shares his programming with the next generation of less thanhuman men.On further reading of his explanation of "the beginning," the surrounding textclarifies Tomakin's lack of knowledge and ignorant acquiescence to technologicalcommand:

> "Just to give you a general idea," he would explain to them. For of coursesome sort of general idea they must have, if they were to do their workintelligently – though as little of one, if they were to be good and happymembers of society, as possible. (2)

As the dialogue between characters is sparse by design (they are conditioned toappreciate company, but not conversation), the adjoining text habitually specifies whenthe character is continuing a thought after his or her spoken dialogue. For instance, whenLenina ponders Bernard Marx's strange quirks, the book reads, "Odd, odd, *odd*, wasLenina's verdict" (58). Also, when asked to imagine a factoryfull of Alphas, the text follows, "The Savage tried to imagine it" (151). If not specifying who is thinking, the text offers sweeping commentaries ofsociety as a whole by neglecting to issue a specifying pronoun, such as in the excerptabove.

The text subtly moves into the second sentence without making any clarificationsthat the Director, himself, is not included in the “they” that gain only a superficial idea ofthe inner workings of the societal make-up. Indeed, this lack of specification *should* bethe case because the text also fails to differentiate a single man in the highest caste isanything but an Alpha-plus male. Alphas include Helmholtz Watson who is every bit thevirile Alpha-plus (44), and Bernard Marx, whose deficiencieswould seem to deposit him in the beta strata, but whose Alpha-plus standing is confirmedby his lover (30).Therefore, Tomakin and his students allshare a limited idea in order to operate as gears within the machine. Huxley introducesother male characters to heighten this sense that men are submissive to technology.

As it has been deduced that the Director is on equal standing with his students, itis observable that he is also indistinguishable from the lowliest to most prominent members in the Alpha class. To illustrate, he and Henry Foster, an accompanying Alphamale on the tour of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, become interchangeable in ascene that affirms their equivocal conditioning and subjugation:

> “The Pre-destinators send in their figures to the Fertilizers.”
>
> “Who give them the embryos they ask for.”
>
> “And the bottles come in here to be predestined in detail.”
>
> “After which they are sent down to the Embryo Store.”
>
> “Where we now proceed ourselves.” (6)

Their scripted and robotic exchange belies the Director’s authority, the ambiguity of thespokesperson levels the implied strata that the characters uphold, and the telling absenceof specifying pronouns and adjectives suggests that the two characters are meant to fuseand reveal the absence of hierarchy. Their enthused speech reflects Huxley’s

misgivingsthat although man's organic life is non-progressive, and that "because technologyadvances, we fancy that we are making corresponding progress all along the line; becausewe have considerable power over inanimate nature, we are convinced that we are the self-sufficientmasters of our fate and captains of our souls" (142). To Huxley, the Alpha males, "in spite of evidence to the contrary" that they arenon-progressing organic parts for a supra-machine, believe that they are "yet cleverer in ayet more systematic way" (142), and this is just the waythe machine wants them to think.

When juxtaposed with "his fordship, Mustapha Mond," the Resident Controller ofWestern Europe and one of the ten World Controllers, Director Tomakin's equivocalstanding to this top tier engineer stands out. Huxley offers in the pairing of these menthat without fail, all men are subordinate to technology that controls them by gratifyingtheir desire to dominate. The Controller is seemingly privy to privileged information ashe offers to give the Director and his students a history lesson: "The D.H.C. looked athim nervously. There were those strange rumors of old forbidden books hidden in asafe in the Controller's study. Bibles, poetry – Ford knew what 'It's alright, Director,'he said in a tone of faint derision, 'I won't corrupt them'" (23).

However, it is prudent to note that despite the overtones of authority, the booksare not specifically Mustapha Mond's possessions so much as the current Controller's,and that the pieces of literature that he has access to are indubitably conditioning devices from which he gathers no more than the general ideas referred to by the text. In fact, noone and no act is excluded from conditioning, a fact confirmed by Mond when heresolutely states, "As if one believed anything by instinct! One believes things becauseone has been conditioned to believe them" (159).

Appropriately, the narrative Mond shares that is enhanced by the literary examples fromforbidden books serves to retain from history and literature only the information that

isrelevant to man's ties to technological progress. His alluding to these banned works is,therefore, a conditioned act used to attract other Alpha males into the Controllershipprogram, and, as he suggests, he does not corrupt them with this propaganda.

To continue with the analysis of man's servile position to technology with thestudy of Mond, perhaps the strongest proof that he is a powerless entity is provided whenhe mistakenly and unknowingly refers to his own subservient capacity. When attemptingto differentiate himself from other castes, he verbally makes mistakes with pronouns,which results in a diminishing of the power he so fervently claims to possess. Monddeclares, "We make them hate solitude; and we arrange our lives so that it's almostimpossible for them ever to have it" (160). In the first part ofthe statement, "we" and "them" are two separate entities; however, they becomeindistinguishable in the latter part. The second "we" is in a royal sense and includes thecontrollers and the plebeians, thus clouding the line between the two.Also, the first phrase does not seem problematic until one wonders just who Mondincludes in this dominant "we." After all, the superiority of the only other distinguishedperson introduced in the novel, Tomakin, is already in question as the text asserts that heis aptly placed in the category with "they," or the presumed subordinates. In fact, whenTomakin uses this authoritative "we," he completely discounts any tie to power bydisclosing that Mond is incontrovertibly a socially preconditioned being:

> "We decant our babies as socialized human beings, as Alphas andEpsilons, as future sewage workers or future…" He was going to say"future World Controllers," but correcting himself, said "future Directorsof Hatcheries," instead. (8)

Although Tomakin stops short of telling his students that they potentially can beControllers, it is a fact that babies are decanted to be Controllers. The possibility ispresented and reminds us that Mond is simply an Alpha male and that any of the

studentsare potentially Controller material, for what little that amounts to in a technologicallydetermined world.

In “Machinery, Psychology, and Politics,” Huxley writes, “For the purposes ofthe machine, the men who serve it are as much parts of itself as crank and cog wheel;once the machine has been started they must function not as they like, but as it likes”(219). This reduction of humanity by the machine is acutely perceivable as Huxley presents a society in which men believe they are in control oftechnology and their destinies, when, in reality, they are rendered powerless by that sametechnology.

By locating the true Controller in the machine that unbendingly shapes mankindand society, the novel serves as a landscape for playing out the significant social andcultural implications that the loss of human control has on transnational feminism.Because Huxley keenly centralizes technological determinism as the main threat in hiswork, the novel proves invaluable for transnational feminists, whose concerns abouttechnology do not match the author’s, yet whose community’s lifeline are tellinglytechnologically derived (the Internet and mass communication tools). They, too, face thedaunting task of trying to sway perceptions of gender and equality from inside the matrixof patriarchal misinformation, and they are also unaware of the degree of danger and thepotential futility in using technology to redirect our unswerving path.

Consequences of Over-Organized Mechanization to Transnational Feminist Views

Unfortunately for feminists in his day, Huxley’s work was overlooked as acautionary tale for feminist thinkers who sought equality and individual self-realization;furthermore, the lack of international communication and activism hampered the spreadof his warnings at the scale that he intended them to be offered and received. But hiswarnings about the social and cultural consequences are now available to feminists in thenew millennium, although they may be received too late. Anthropologists H. RussellBernard and Pertti J. Pelto

confirm in *Technology and Social Change* that Huxley'swarnings are feared overdue, as they write:

> Throughout history technological developments have led men to pursuenew kinds of constructions and destructions. Indeed, in recent years wehave become fearful that 'our technology is overwhelming us' – that themachines are becoming the masters of our destinies and the man-createdsystem of gadgets, engines, devices, and structures is ruining us thoughpollution of the environment and disorganization of our social, cultural,and political institutions. (318)

Huxley worried about the relinquishing of control to technology nearly eighty years ago,and transnational feminists are undoubtedly faced with the lasting effects of relinquishingpower to the machine.

Take, for instance, the sexually liberated citizens in our modern brave new worldwho live without the sexual double standard that defines sexually active men as hunksand women as sluts. This is a foremost issue for current feminists like Baumgardner andRichards, who write that the double standard can only be changed with better sexeducation, free contraception, and the elimination of shame and embarrassment thataccompanies the consequences of sexual liberation (30). However, Huxleydeduces that there can be a steep price to be paid for this liberation and he plays out thissituation in his cautionary tale.

Most notably, the concept of parenthood for the citizens of Huxley's futuresociety is greatly skewed by the availability of contraception and the resultant"promiscuous banality" that can detach humans from intimacy and prevent meaningfulrelationships (338). Huxley warns that "sex madeeasy, sex without tears, sex within the reach of everybody" is an open window fortechnology to manipulate us into the dehumanization process. Technologically providedmeans to sexual liberation offers the illusion of control as people feel free to take

sexualpartners without guilt or the attached responsibility to procreate (338). He details this devaluing of parenthood and relays to feminists themessage to consider carefully the backlash to sexual liberation achieved throughtechnological innovation as they strive to claim control over their bodies.

For Linda, a Beta-Minus who is helplessly marooned on the primitive NewMexican reservation of Malpais during the early stages of her pregnancy, motherhoodbrings shame and sorrow. When she is reintroduced to society and to her child's father,Director Tomakin, she admits, "'Yes, a baby–and I was its mother.' She flung theobscenity like a challenge into the outraged silence; then, suddenly breakingaway…ashamed, ashamed, covered her face with her hands, sobbing" (101). While the use of contraception seems to give her control of her body,her humiliation is indicative that the availability of contraception can be both a measure to silence the demands of feminists and to strengthen the technological hold over womenthat makes them reliant on manufactured drugs to prevent pregnancy. Whilecontemporary feminists need not worry yet about such a stranglehold, they too aredependent on technology to provide the methods for sexual liberation.

The extravagant price for sexual liberation is just as steep for men. Naturallyborn children are, by definition, un-engineered refuse in this pristine and sterile world, andTomakin's contribution to such a person's creation (John the Savage) makes him a publicanathema:

> The word (for "father" was not so much obscene as – with its connotationof something at one remove from the loathsomeness and moral obliquityof child-bearing – merely gross, a scatological rather than a pornographicimpropriety); the comically smutty word relieved what had become a quiteintolerable tension. Laughter broke out, enormous, almost hysterical, pealafter peal, as though it would never stop. My father–and it was theDirector! My father! Oh Ford, oh Ford! (102)

He and Linda are both hastily removed from the public realm as the penalty for their riftfrom technologically defined norms. While the book only details Linda's predictabledescent into a drug-induced existence (this is the primary source for escapism) and intoher death, Tomakin's disappearance is indicative of an equivocal fate. In short, Huxleyposits that a potentially unexpected type of marginalization is possible with theattainment of sexual liberation through technology, and warns of the dangers ofattempting to use the same tools of oppression for liberation.

This type of unforeseen consequence also emerges as abortion becomes widelyavailable, the author foretells. Abortion is a viable and readily available option in the World, but it is twisted into a controlling apparatus for the machine. On this topic,Huxley was directly on target, as modern transnational feminists would see abortionaccessible to women regardless of class, race, or economic background. However, theyfind there are new problems that arise from the achievement of this objective.

Contemporary feminists certainly feel this swallowing of feminist articulations by masscommunication and widespread propaganda and are forced to ask the questions, "Isfeminism dead? Has society changed so much that the idea of feminism is obsolete?"(3).

These are well-founded questions, as feminists realize that the Internet, whichopened up communication on a level not even anticipated by Huxley, has succumbed,however, to his predicted fate. It is a site of suppression overrun by chauvinistpropaganda that weakens the internationally held image of men and women(107). Baumgardner and Richards discuss this downside to the Internet,especially the overwhelming amount of traditionalist subject matter on-line:

> The big issue facing the brave new world of the Internet is that it providesa limitless arena for diverse thoughts, new writers, quirky takes, andrandom hostility. So far,

publications on-line have been more sexist,racist, homophobic, and generally hostile than those in the off-line world.(107)

The images of exploited women and minorities are doubly misleading as they suggestthat ours is a post-feminist world in which women and the underprivileged are eitherliberated by the availability of information and alternatives, or are the degraded humansdepicted on-line. Regardless of which interpretation is accepted, the twenty-first centurymachine prevents men from disengaging from the images of conqueror and misogynist,and prevents all others from discarding preconceived notions widely spread bytechnology.

Huxley was also concerned with the physical superficiality that accompanies thestandardization of masculine ideals of beauty by way of massively organized technology.

Huxley was concerned about the effects of standardization on travel as well. Hewrites in “The Outlook for American Culture,” “One can anticipate a future in which menwill be able to travel round the world without finding an idea or a custom different fromthose with which they are familiar at home” (189). Lenina does not want to see theReservation, to visit with the people, or to discover a new culture. In fact, she makes itquite clear that she visits exotic locales to take in the hotel accommodations rather thanthe local people and customs. She prefers to have the benefit of boasting about the far offplaces in which she has had luxurious soma vacations; in fact, herdiscomfort whenshe leaves the hotel is indicative of her lack of appreciation for the cultural benefits oftravel.

We gain a sense of Huxley’s distress over the twofold loss; for one, travelersremain uncultured, and for another, the culture they visit is exploited simply for itsresources, namely its human labor. For contemporary transnational feminists, thischeapening of experience and consequential devaluing of cultures and native people byglobalization is a reality, as indigenous people serve up the resources exclusive to theirregions and of which

they are increasingly deprived. As industrialized countries stripthem of their resources, their economy suffers, and the end result is that “the ‘GlobalBillionaires Club’ (with some 450 members) has a total Worldwide wealth well in excessof the combined GDP of the group of low income countries with 56 percent of theworld’s population” (302).

Indeed, the indoctrination of the Savage is analogous to the engulfing of thirdworld countries and indigenous people into Western society. When John the Savageenters the London scene super-charged with emotion, which is equated to the untouchedideals of his culture, the machine is ready to take him into its insensitive, unresponsive,and hardened arms and mold him into the mainstream replica of man. His experiencesthrough Lenina’s purely carnal and mechanical expressions heighten the pointlessness of his affections (or culture), and he learns through Mond that in their techno-society thereis room for everyone to be happy. As devices of the machine, Lenina with her body andMond with his reasoning, they are tools to ensnare the Savage. Mond makes a soundcase for the Savage to surrender his emotion and to be welcomed into the world society:

> The greatest care is taken to prevent you from loving any one too much.
>
> There’s no such thing as a divided allegiance; you’re so conditioned thatyou can’t help doing what you ought to do. And what you ought to do ison the whole so pleasant, so many of the natural impulses are allowed freeplay, that there really aren’t any temptations to resist. And if ever, bysome unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why,there’s always *soma* to give you a holiday from the facts. And there’salways *soma* to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, tomake you patient and long-suffering. (161-62)

And although John refuses the offer to acquiesce quietly to the machine and boldlyclaims his “right to be unhappy,” the Controller releases him, knowing that ultimately,the Savage will buckle under the pressure of the machine.

In hindsight, the Savage gathers that his situation was hopeless the minute he waslured by Marx and Crowne into London, as he admits, “I ate civilization…It poisonedme; I was defiled. And then…I ate my own wickedness” (164). But in a final stance to claim his unhappiness, he attempts to stake a claim in hisown self by leaving the city for a nearby lighthouse in order to atone and to evokegenuine emotion and feeling once again. Ultimately, however, the machine reveals thatthere is no “self” to begin with, as being born into the world in an age of technologymeans that by some measure he is born a child of that technology. The machine provesthis point by demonstrating to the Savage just how suitable soma is as a syntheticsubstitute for sensation. As an army of automata converges on his lighthouse, one ofthem being LeninaCrowne, the emotion sparked by his destructive love for her istransferred into the baseless and senseless, yet blissful outpouring of sensation thataccompanies manufactured emotion. The Savage is irrevocably damaged by thisrealization:

> Stupefied by soma, and exhausted by a long-drawn frenzy of sensuality,the Savage lay sleeping in the heather. The sun was already high when heawoke. He lay for a moment, blinking in owlish incomprehension at thelight; then suddenly remembered – everything. (176)

After the Savage has been broken by the machine, his suicide validates its supremacy andunquestionable ability to create and destroy as it sees fit. In this day and age, third worldcountries, if they are not already in the process of industrialization, are neverthelessentangled in the Western technological movement. Like the Savage, they have fewoptions and whichever one they take will irretrievably set into motion their subjugationand diminished native culture.

In *Island*, Huxley took the opportunity to present a workthat systematically exposes his principles that align with contemporary feminists’, and heattempted to make the most

impact with his final offering by providing a cross-genrework, incorporating formal essay, prose, poetry, and drama, to send his message to alltypes of readers.

IV. Conclusion

Call for Equal Opportunity to Women and Men

A final point that must be made about Huxley is that he by no means was anti-technology;his primary concern was simply technology uncontrolled by humankind andthe effects of technological determinism on the transnational social situation. He wasboth a defender and a critic of technology, and invested his energy and time to making,sharing, and inspiring discourse on these issues. He advocated for a rich universal culture. Machinery hasset up a tendency towards the realization of fuller life,but he realized that these possibilities and tendencies are unattainable as long as peopleare cogs instead of operators of the machine. He knew all too well that at the core ofhuman interactions, developments, and sustenance was a mechanized master thatdetermined the nature and type of relationships, the direction and speed of their growth,and the quality of their lives.

Due to the rapid technological development in the last few decades, there has been a flurry of scholarship and discourse on the author'sprophetic literature, namely in the field of biotechnology and cultural transformation.Critics in the fields of science and biotechnological engineering havegiven due credit to Huxleyfor his foresight and insist that the author was irrefutably correct when he suggested thatuncontrolled technology would hamper the positive potential of machinery and humans.

Huxleywas simultaneously in states of awe and agitation with technology, and that his ideas arehighly relevant to the present, unpredictable nature of biotechnology. While there is nosurprise that Huxley's work is so highly relevant in the realm of genetics, as this is one ofmany areas that he predicted technological determinism would affect, there is anoticeable lack of application of his prognostications in feminist studies. However, asfeminist concerns encompass human reproduction, international activism andcommunication, healthcare, information accessibility, and a bevy of other issues, theirsshould be the area with an

emphasis on Aldous Huxley and his warnings, since at thecore of all transnational feminist concerns is technological determinism.

Huxley saw theglobalizing force of technology as a greater threat to humanity than any man or groups ofmen and more formidable a force than feminists of both genders imagine. However, Huxley's worries about male domination, and the mechanized type ofsupremacy which unmercifully and totally dominate the society of Pala. His ideasdemand that contemporary feminists refocus their ideas, that they prioritize technologicaldeterminism as their main point of concern, and that they think about what force reallycompels their current focus on accessing technology including communication and medicaltechnology. The scientists and engineers must ask themselves if they arein control and working technology to their advantage, or if they are driven to actionbecause, as automata, they are synchronizing with the other parts of the machine.

The notion shared in the *Island* is Twenty-first century feminism should be about gender and the structures of sexism andoppression that arise from hierarchical evaluations of gender it should becharacterized by adherence to a basic set of beliefs and political positions which areaptly, if notuncomplicatedly captured by most typical minimalist claims of eliminatinggender-based power.

Internationalism involves a commitment to reach out to colleagues fromother nations, to attempt to find understandings of differences andcommonalities, to build consensus on projects and priorities, to workacross national borders to attain goals, and often, to use internationalresources to bring pressure to bear on governments of individual nations.

Advancementin Science and Technology can easily become tool of oppression, but man can overcome almost any obstacle by force of will power. Reading*Island*from a feminist perspective, feminists will be asking thesame questions that compel the scientists and

engineers on whom Huxley insists they keep awatchful eye. They would ask, What conditions favor the development of technology?What can we do with technology to enhance our society? And what can we not dowithout deeply affecting certain basic views and tenets of society? How does theproblem pose itself in different times and in different societies? Bydoing so, they will find the methodology and viewpoint for answeringsuch questions.

Weshould use the power of the state to regulate the existing rules and regulations concerned with Women's issues based on an international basis. We need tostart thinking concretely now about how to build institutions that can discriminatebetween good and bad uses of technology, and effectively enforce these rules bothnationally and internationally. While they are absolutely on the righttrack, it is the duty of feminists to take part in this decision-making process, astechnological determinism influences all areas, not just science. Even if technology isput back in check by scientists and engineers, the problem of control will still be an issue in technological determinism.

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