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Technological Determinism and  
Feminism in Aldous Huxley's Essays,  
*Brave New World*, and *Island*

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TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND FEMINISM IN ALDOUS HUXLEY'S  
ESSAYS, *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, AND *ISLAND*

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TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND FEMINISM IN ALDOUS HUXLEY'S  
ESSAYS, *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, AND *ISLAND*

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**ABSTRACT**

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SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: PATRICIA A. EVANS

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

This study asserts that Aldous Huxley, a long-presumed misogynist in the minds of past and contemporary feminists, was quite contrarily aligned with present-day standards of feminism, as reflected in his Hindu spirituality, perceivable in his unorthodox views of mainstream culture, and projected into his essays and writings. Thus, the goal of the following thesis is to induct Huxley as a transnational feminist, to credit his works as praiseworthy additions to the growing library of transnational feminist literature, and to add to the history of cooperation between genders in attaining the liberation of the individual. By doing so, Huxley's ideas, namely on technological determinism, have the potential to lead transnational feminism, and, in turn, the interconnected techno-culture, in a completely new and humane direction.

## CHAPTER I

### TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT ON TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

#### Redefining Feminism for the Twenty-First Century Techno-Culture

Historically, interconnecting economic, socio-cultural, and political systems through technologically-driven expansion has been a chief concern of feminists, whose long narrative of change experienced waves of revaluation and reinvention in line with technological advancements. This reaction of feminists is due to the consequential spread of narrow traditionalist preconceptions on the capacities of marginalized groups through 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 filter information and to choose goals and representations.

Feminists are all too familiar with making paradigmatic shifts in practice to modernize alongside technology and globalization, as they have customarily reacted to internationalism by using the very technological developments devised for exploitation to call attention to the movement's farther-reaching concerns. In the case of fifteenth-century writer and analyst Christine de Pizan, the author was involved in "implicitly guaranteeing the overall coherence of each of her major single-author manuscripts...."

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\* Westernization, in this sense, means the pervasive process whereby non-western societies come under the influence of Western culture, particularly in such matters as industry and technology.

[and] self-representation” (Brownlee 339) by appropriating a dominantly male field intended to promote classic patriarchy. As “the first professional writer” (Brownlee 339), she challenged the notion that writing was a man’s pursuit and generated a European-wide readership for her groundbreaking feminist works, including the 1405 work, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, sustaining herself and her family on a writer’s earnings (Hawkesworth 33, Brownlee 339). And as the first “defender of women” (Hawkesworth 33), she revealed in *City of Ladies* that personal issues facing women were shared by the majority 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 for a transnational audience. De Pizan, taking advantage of male-driven advances in globalization, offered a feminist theory that debunked the slanderous misconception of women as valueless social contributors that was spread and internationalized by centuries of male writers and critics:

In fact we have come to vanquish from the world the same error into which you had fallen, so that from now on, ladies and all valiant women may have a refuge and defense against the various assailants, those ladies who have been abandoned for so long, exposed like a field without a surrounding hedge, without finding a champion to afford them an adequate defense, notwithstanding those noble men who are required by order of law to protect them, who by negligence and apathy have allowed them to be mistreated.

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

Feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, taking cues from de Pizan, wrote and published profound feminist texts such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) that crossed into and countered a genre made for and dominated by men, and was widely circulated. Wollstonecraft's deconstructive theory of feminism, however, showed significant evolution from de Pizan's, in that globalization and the means for communication made her aware of a surprising number of sympathetic men whose alignment with feminists broke down the archetype of the unwavering and hardened man. In *A Vindication*, Wollstonecraft appeals to the sensibilities of such men whose sympathy contradicts overriding presumptions that women and men have separate, unconnected roles and agendas:

I then would fain convince reasonable men of the importance of some of my remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenor of my observations. I appeal to their understandings; and, as a fellow-creature, claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts. I entreat them to assist to emancipate their companion....Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers – in a word, better citizens. (35)

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

The globalizing forces behind the Industrial Revolution in the U.K. and in the U.S., which were manifested in the convenient and highly-productive rotary press, as well as newspapers, mass transit systems, assembly lines, and the car (to name a few key developments), provided international communication and support for separate nationalist feminist movements in the two countries (Hawkesworth 37, Krollokke 7-9). Feminist communities in both countries grew exponentially and began to reorganize paradigms in light of the potential for (mis)use of mass production, soaring trade, and standardization. Following de Pizan's example, they reexamined women's progress and their ongoing subjugation, contemporized their goals by including ex-slaves (who were prey to the same social structures as women) in the suffrage movement, and pressed their views (literally and figuratively) in response to increasing awareness of global patriarchal pursuits.

Feminists of the 1960s to late 1980s experienced such a burst of economic, technological, and commercial advancement, as theirs was the era when market-capitalism was carried into the international sphere and international consumerism exploded. Feminists had a host of new challenges that required another paradigmatic shift and a deeper involvement with the extending web of globalization. They created *Ms*

*Magazine*, fought before the Supreme Court for ownership of their bodies with *Roe vs. Wade*, organized consciousness-raising organizations, and formed high-profile rallies and protests that reached an international audience (Baumgardner 13-15). They also developed a surge of feminist manifestos and literary criticisms of incontrovertible worth that contributed to the continued deconstruction of the canon, reevaluation of women's experience, challenges to representations of women and gender, and questioning of mainstream literary interpretations (Barry 134).

But despite their visibility and major achievements that spoke to their desire for full social and economic equality for all people, feminists were still limited and dependent on technological advance and globalization for their cause to reach a transnational level. Baumgardner and Richards explain that in the U.S., their image was skewed in the overruling and manipulative media, which presented feminists as man-haters bent on feminine domination (51-52). Their issues favored middle-class working white woman, and this separatist attitude caused black and lesbian feminist groups to emerge and discouraged involvement from men who were sensitive to the cause, yet were reluctant to become involved in a seemingly "women's only" movement. What was needed was a highly collaborative network that coalesced multicultural and non-gender specific criticism and awareness of issues of inequality and global justice.

The last two decades have marked significant change for feminists, especially in the mode of their interaction, as they have adjusted their activism to keep with rapid technological developments on the cusp of the twenty-first century. As they have established an international community with the help of advanced communication technology, their focus now encompasses transnational issues and problems that hamper

the liberation of the individual. Indeed, they have found support and contributions from the most unlikely and unexpected places, namely in the literature and scholarship of male feminists.

For modern transnational feminists and concurrent with past shifts in the movement, this momentous change in multinational social dynamics demands an equally dramatic adjustment of scope and direction in order for theirs to remain a relevant narrative of change. This push of feminist rethinking is evident in discourse by transnational feminists, whose “vision of transnational feminism builds on global networks of communication, which bring about a ‘shifting of borders’ that allows for the emergence of transnational dialogues between feminists the world over”<sup>\*</sup> (Affinity, par. 1). 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 or man who works for equality within or outside the movement, writes about feminism, or calls her- or himself a feminist in the name of furthering equality...In the most basic sense, feminism is exactly what the dictionary says it is: the movement for social, political, and economic equality for men and women...We prefer to add to that seemingly uncontroversial statement the following: Feminism means

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<sup>\*</sup> “It is in this sense that transnational feminism is also referred to as borderless feminism” (Affinity, par. 1). It is the movement attentive to equal rights for men and women of every race, nationhood, and economic background on a world scale.

that women have the right to enough information to make informed choices about their lives. And because women is an all-encompassing term that includes middle-class white women, rich black lesbians, and working-class straight Asian women, an organic intertwining with movements for racial and economic equality, as well as gay rights, is inherent in the feminist mandate. Some sort of allegiance between women and men is also an important component of equality. After all, equality is a balance between the male and female with the intention of liberating the individual. (54-55)

These carefully worded definitions, which encompass the range of multicultural feminist thinkers, activists, and writers, also reflect the current transversal, non-separatist outlook of global feminism. This idea of transversal\* politics developed by contemporary feminists welcomes listening and participation from people of all nationalities, ethnicities, and religions in feminist discourse, as the diversity of the contributors is indicative of the variety of agendas and issues that make up the unifying concept of modern feminism.

Another indication of a drastic adaptation to the information age is that twenty-first century feminists have internationalized their community by positively using the main thoroughfare of globalizing forces, the Internet. Indeed, feminism today, with its global online communities, email, ezines, satellite communication, and multitude of awareness issues, is as unrecognizable by the standards of its forebears as the technoculture in which it thrives. Lacking the high-speed technology to which their current

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\* This is a borrowed geometrical term, in which context the transversal line is one that crosses two or more, typically parallel, lines (Page).

successors attribute the success of their transnational movement, the previous movement was restricted by distance and remained mainly on the local and national levels (Baumgardner 21, Hawkesworth 37, Krollokke 8, Trotz 1).

The goal of transnational feminists is to accommodate the wealth of new perspectives and conversation available through “the Internet [which] is...a truly essential organizing tool when it is used correctly, disseminating information... provid[ing] instant networking” (Baumgardner 296). Indeed, today’s feminism is a far cry from the “global sisterhood” anticipated by its forebears; instead, it is a digitalized and gender-unifying model whose success is due to worldwide website communities, email, ezines, satellite communication, and its emphasis on creating connections between anyone who thinks, acts, and writes with a political consciousness.

The transnational community coalesces all the various local and national branches of feminism together under one masthead of transnational feminism, as they collaboratively strive to stake a claim in the skewed digital technoscape. More importantly, with the unified global network, a heterogeneous feminist discourse is emerging from unconventional sources. Arguably the most influential of these unexpected 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 Doing Feminism* (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 a new plateau of consciousness” (Bartky xii). With women and men of all walks uniting in the movement for global justice and equality, feminism remains paramount in

transnational discourse as it fractures and subverts global capitalism from within, and, as transnational feminist Peggy Antrobus concludes:

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

Indeed, twenty-first century feminist men and women *must* forge this interdependent relationship, as the power in question, the globalizing forces of transnational corporations, cuts through race and class and, indeed, through gender as well. Feminist men are not simply compassionate sympathizers to the dilemma of inequality that women and minorities face. They are also active participants in today's model of global feminism because "the imposition of male gender identity can be as painful and as shot through with ambiguity and confusion as the imposition of feminine identity" (Bartky xii). The outpouring of recent feminist scholarship from men offers inarguable evidence of their awareness of their mutual predicament.

For instance, James Sterba, in his essay titled, "Is Feminism Good for Men and Are Men Good for Feminism?" writes that although society favors men, for the most part they have no control over dominant patriarchal views and actions, such as the unwarranted violence against women and their bodies (296). Sterba also points out that men are wrongfully stripped of viable claims in child custody cases, they have greater spending obligations, and, while some men are nurturing, compassionate, and cooperative, they are expected to be independent, decisive, and competitive (296). He

writes that this comparable mistreatment of men and women is resolvable through feminist action: “Feminism is morally good and morally right for men even if accepting its practical requirements necessitates giving up certain advantages that men have over women” (Sterba 298). In other words, adds Patrick D. Hopkins in “How Feminism Made a Man Out of Me,” feminism is not exclusive to women and “women’s experience” per se, but open to anyone who perceives and understands *feminist* interests, or “this set of beliefs, suspicions, politics, actions, and critical views, that seems to be crucial to feminism, not gender identity, not one’s sex” (50). He even dismisses the use of terms such as “genderism,” “anti-genderism,” or “critical gender theory” as alternatives to feminism when men participate in its discourse, because “feminism, it turns out, is something we all can do” (Hopkins 52).

In fact, with this enhanced transnational feminist perspective, feminist men are contributing significantly to feminist discourse by positing that feminism is something that men historically have done, and their research, namely in literature, offers substantial proof to this point. They are instigating a new line in academic study for all feminist scholars that is indicative of the ambiguous nature of modern feminism, as it is always open to new feminist interpretations. Their initial questioning of the mainstream literary canon greatly unsettles the perspective on traditional authors; by retracing a gender cooperative movement, the development of a far more extensive and revolutionary timeline of transnational feminism is underway.

This revised narrative includes works from men like G.H. Mead, whose pragmatist feminist writing is inducted into the tomes of gender-interactive feminist literature in Mitchell Aboulafia’s article, “Was George Herbert Mead a Feminist?” (145-

58). Authoritative writings from Strindberg, Ibsen, Hardy, Yeats, Lawrence, and Joyce are included in the changing history of feminist activism in Declan Kiberd's *Men and Feminism in Modern Literature* (103-105). In his article "Who's Afraid of Men Doing Feminism," Michael Kimmel includes in his history of men who have supported women's equality in the U.S. "Thomas Paine, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, Wendell Phillips, Robert Dale Owen, W.E.B. DuBois, John Dewey, Matthew Vasar, and Rabbi Steven Wise" (66). These critics reveal that men have a long tradition of contributing to feminist discourse, and they highlight and give due credit to those rare individuals who, against established designs, daringly participate in feminist thinking and writing.

For these "gender traitors," the previous lack of communication and technological advance, combined with the overriding chauvinistic representation of men by patriarchal controllers, disrupted their ability to coalesce their ideas and minds with their female counterparts. However, as men are no longer vilified and are open to indoctrination by today's standards of feminism, the addition of their insightful approaches significantly alters the breadth and context of feminist thought throughout its intertwining and internationalized history with techno-globalization.

#### Aldous Huxley's Feminist Perception of Technological Determinism

This de-vilification and indoctrination of feminist men holds true for the canonically Western author, Aldous Huxley, who, in the past, has received backlash from feminists and scholars who charge the writer with being glaringly patriarchal in his literature, namely in the 1932 novel *Brave New World* (Daniels 427, Deery 103, Madden 290, March 53). To these scholars, Huxley was strongly biased by masculine

perceptions. His literature was understood to directly reflect the author's inability to work past the patriarchal constructs that pervade his works. Deanna Madden contends in her article "Women in Dystopia: Misogyny in *Brave New World*, *1984*, and *A Clockwork Orange*," that Huxley was already suspected of having the conviction that females are inferior simply because he lived in a time when this was a popular notion. She adds that he drew from an essentially male tradition of utopian and dystopian literature that rarely presents non-patriarchal societies, and that he wrote in a literary tradition that was both steeped in misogyny and a Christian heritage that devalues women. However, the current study of Huxley as a feminist by today's standards calls into question every one of these accusations by first pointing to the essays of Huxley that debunk the image of the author as a misogynist and then by evaluating his feminist inclinations in works that received backlash for their patriarchal overtones, *Brave New World* and *Island*.

The charge that Huxley was a misogynist based on his drawing from the male tradition of utopian and dystopian literature seems an appropriate place to begin discounting such unfair claims about his principles. After all, literature was dominated by men long before Huxley's time and this command by males remains an issue for feminists to this day. In essence, Madden might just as well suggest that all male authors are, by default, misogynists. Also, she overlooks the subversive nature of the dystopian tradition in which Huxley writes. M. Keith Booker writes,

Briefly, dystopian literature is specifically that literature which situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against the potential negative consequences of arrant utopianism. At the same time, dystopian literature generally also constitutes a critique of existing social conditions

or political systems, either through the critical examination of the utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into different contexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions. (*Theory and Research* 3)

Essentially, dystopian literature shares many of the same goals and perspectives as feminism, and likewise, Huxley, by using this genre, clearly shapes up as more than a mouthpiece for patriarchal ideals and traditions.

Additionally, Huxley held an unorthodox view of beauty and femininity in comparison to the standards based upon a male-driven make-up industry that uses technology and propaganda to promote masculinist ideals of the feminine. In his 1931 essay, “The Beauty Industry,” he states that despite its greatest efforts, the modern cult of beauty, as formulated by advances in the production of make-up and increased propaganda

remains fundamentally a failure. Its operations do not touch the deepest source of beauty – the experiencing soul...All men and women will be beautiful only when the social arrangements give to every one of them an opportunity to live completely and harmoniously, when there is no environmental incentive and no hereditary tendency towards monomaniacal vice. (260)

Huxley understood how such a controlling force demeans women, and also how it affects both genders by the inclusion of men in his statement. Like Sterba, he recognizes that men and women alike find it challenging to escape from or reject domineering principles

founded by a select group of profiteering men and made possible by technology.

Finally, it is understandable that Madden would conclude that Huxley was influenced by Christian ideals as, until the recent work of Dana Sawyer and Nicholas Murray that highlight the eastern religious influences on Huxley, most critics viewed him as a masculinist and a religious traditionalist. The work of these two biographers shed light on his long history with Hinduism, which they trace back to 1920, when Huxley was twenty-six years old (Murray 177, Sawyer 208). The very nature of the Vedanta spiritual tradition that he closely followed is conducive to contemporary feminist ideas, as there is a concern with individual self-realization by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality (or Brahman) (Koller 6). Vedanta, which implies “the end of all knowledge” is not restricted or confined to one book and there is no sole source of Vedantic philosophy (Koller 6). It is arguable that Huxley’s spiritual inclinations favored the transnational feminist standpoint of appreciating, welcoming, and seeking more voices and perspectives 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 he was restricted by the same lack of transnational communication and definitions that prevented an international feminist community in his day, he was highly conscious of both the possibilities of this global community and of its biggest threat, the very technology that brings such a community about. Furthermore, he was not only concerned about making women equal to men, he was also deeply concerned with the effects of technology and globalization on the quality of life for both genders, a fact that justifiably makes Huxley a strong model of a feminist whose prognostications are extremely relevant to twenty-first century feminists.

He saw, even at the onset of massive interconnectivity, that technology was a patriarchal tool of oppression with the threat of an international integration, and he was deeply concerned about the price Western man had to pay for such progress (Huxley, *Revisited* 20). He wrote, “The machine makes men richer and more comfortable; but it also makes them less than men” (Huxley, *America and Europe* 204). To him, the problem of patriarchy extended far beyond human interactions; he worried that globalization through technology determined those interactions. He felt that ours is an increasingly post-human society as the result of unbridled and male-oriented technological determinism that, against the will of even the most privileged humans and even the male engineers of this techno-social construct, directs the world towards an end that is mechanized, alien, and pointless (in both senses – meaningless and unceasing).

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

The development of rapid technological innovation, imposing adjustments on people faster than they can absorb them, breaks choice down. When technological innovations break too rapidly upon man, he can order his technological priorities only in theory; in fact he simply does not have enough time. Our sense that technology is in control rather than man grows out of insufficient time for making choices, deciding values, and ordering priorities. Not only do man’s own power and control seem to be slipping away from him, but also man, unable to make those meaningful choices he senses he should be making, feels even his history slipping

away. He feels he can no longer declare, strengthen, and codify his values into a system to pass on to his heirs. (x-xi)

Huxley lived in the moment when two millennia of male-driven technological advances, that increasingly standardized chauvinistic values and standards of living through efficient commerce and communication technology, paid off by forging patriarchal presumptions of supremacy and inferiority in terms of class, gender, and race to the global sphere. He witnessed this in the emergence and rapid spread of mass transit systems, televisions, satellites, and radios, which were all communication tools whose main function was to infect the increasingly industrialized world with male-determined and -oriented propaganda.\* He saw the introduction of market capitalism on the international stage as transnational corporations like Ford and General Motors took a huge step in the process towards the widespread standardization of Western ideals and technologies – they mastered the assembly line.

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

Mechanization has already affected us profoundly, not only as political beings but also as suffering and enjoying individuals, even as thinkers.

Thus it is to the remorselessly punctual machine...that we owe our

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This was, after all, the golden era of the male/breadwinner and female/homemaker dynamic on mainstream programming.

exacerbated 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 such an excessive value. (Huxley, "Machinery" 218-219)

He warned that humans were relinquishing their own incentive to define, command, and amuse themselves, and that the surrendering of power to limit and instruct technological development caused them to become stagnant and subhuman (Huxley, "Perennial Philosophy" 141).

Indeed, the greater challenges and potential for danger associated with the acceptance of these male-oriented, yet equally oppressive social constructs, are issues of paramount import in his fiction. As aforementioned, the goal of the succeeding chapters in this study of Huxley as a feminist are devoted to investigating the patriarchal system embedded in the uncontrollable machine that determines human existence in two related works, his 1932 dystopian novel, *Brave New World*, and his 1962 response to this work, *Island*. The next chapter pays close attention to *Brave New World*, as it first locates the ultimate authority in the future society of the novel and then discusses the social and cultural consequences of dependency on mechanization to both genders. The third chapter centers on *Island*, and the citizens of Pala who attempt to appropriate technology to better both genders and to balance it with nature. In it, Huxley questions whether men and women can temper technology to be an equally beneficial and empowering tool, or if it is hopeless to redetermine a male-oriented, but technologically driven existence once we are born into it. Seen in this light, his works contribute to the growing history of

feminist men, to transnational feminism, and the history of cooperation between the sexes to make a world that is worth living in for all humans.

## CHAPTER II

### UNBENDING ETHICS OF THE MACHINE IN *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

#### Locating the Controller in *Brave New World*

The ethic of the machine...is an ethic of discipline, of regimentation, of the total sacrifice of individual interests to the interests of the mechanized community. There is no arguing with the machine; either you do not set the thing going, or else, if you do, you adapt yourself to its rhythm and obey 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 parts should fail to function with perfect efficiency. (Huxley, *Machinery* 219)

To Huxley, this was the era that this machine was irretrievably powered on and forevermore out of the control of those that would command the levers and buttons. He saw the fragility of humanity in the face of a highly sophisticated technological master, dutifully created and programmed with the objective of unswervingly stabilizing control, and overwhelming man in the process. Correspondingly, he commences the timeline of his future London in *Brave New World* on the introduction of Henry Ford's Model T to the international market in 1908, which to him marked just this shift in power from male dominance to increasing dependence on machinery for human interaction and sustenance. He writes, "the real horror of the situation in the industrial or administrative

Panopticon...[is that people] find themselves subordinated to machines and constrained to live within the issueless tunnel of arbitrary and inhuman system” (Huxley, “Themes and Variations” 207), and he foregrounds the repercussions of technological progress in *Brave New World* by centralizing power in an unyielding machine.

Huxley sets *Brave New World* in 2540 AD in order to present a globally interconnected society that has developed under the control of technology. Humans have relinquished the ability to determine the quality and direction of their existences by becoming irreversibly dependent on the machine. In effect, they are self-determining creatures no longer; instead, they are automata with prescribed social roles. They are stratified into classes by the machine, but unbeknownst to everyone, they are all subject to equal oppression as the machine simply molds them into its cogs. The true hierarchy at play places all humans second to machinery, which benefits in this supremacy by exploiting human labor in order that it remain constant and always more powerful and efficient. In all matters, people are subjugated by the machine; machinery manipulates their daily lives as it builds the framework for society, determining everything from human reproduction to politics. With the development of psychotropic drugs, which renders humans into malleable, mindless robots, the machine is to them the government and God.

Initially, it seems that the social system is not technologically determined, and that men command the controls of their patriarchal techno-society. The author no doubt intentionally presents the appearance of control for men. For millennia, technology was used to normalize patriarchal constructs, and this was done with an air of normality in order that patriarchal practices were accepted as simply natural, as the status quo. It is no

wonder, then, that man's machine, programmed to make exact replicas, provides for humans a society that appears to be just the same male-dominated construct that it historically has been. For the machine is doing its job of ensuring its parts run at the optimal level by maintaining an ordinary framework in which people work smoothly, or if you will, in which they are well-oiled to perform most effectively.

Accordingly, technological developments relinquish men from sexual and reproductive accountability, as they casually brag about the potency and enhancing benefits of their manufactured sex-hormone chewing gum (Huxley, *Brave New World* 104-05). By contrast, women are solely responsible for correctly administering their male-devised Malthusian birth control drills, "You know, by numbers. One, two, three, four, always" (Huxley, *Brave New World* 80), yet they do not have the slightest idea of just how these drills impact their health. Indeed, critics point out that female characters lack interiority altogether, and that they are stripped not only of their inner reproductive capabilities 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 the maintenance of their outward appearances, as they are preoccupied with masculine ideals of beauty and femininity that places value on women by their sex appeal.

Additionally, the esteemed Alpha strata lacks female members, as evident by men's use of the private "Alpha Changing Room" which is exclusive to men, whereas women crowd into the indiscreet "Girl's Dressing Room." Also, the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre's new crop of Alpha students introduced and repeatedly referred to in the first pages of the novel consists of distinguishably male pupils, and the foremost scientists at the Centre are notably male as well. Madden adds that "the typical boss is a

male and his secretary a female....A male in charge patronizingly “pats” a female underling who in turn gives him a ‘deferential’ smile” (“Women in Dystopia” 290).

The Centre itself, with its purpose in creating sustainable and utilitarian human life, is synonymous to the female form that has been appropriated by men, and the introduction of the building as “a squat grey building of only thirty-four stories” in the first line of the novel immediately suggests that men are overtly supreme to women. The building is analogous to a matronly woman’s body that has repeatedly withstood childbearing. The use of the term *only* is indicative of her limitations and the towering phallic buildings around her contribute to the idea that this symbol of womanhood is dominated literally by male constructs.

Not only do they seem to dominate her from without, men have the ability and power to control the functionality of this building, and therefore women’s bodies from within. As the Director leads a tour of the Centre, it becomes apparent that men have her reproductive system mapped out from the ground level Fertilizing Room to the dark basement of her system, the Embryo Store. Particularly in this womb-like storeroom, men manipulate the process of childbirth and crystallize their dominance over women by changing this into a site for “the much more interesting world of human invention” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 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 that this site is “the foundation on which everything else is built...the gyroscope that stabilizes the rocket plane of state on its unswerving course” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 150), and where their control is unmistakable. Man’s ability to recreate and fashion woman’s body, and thus command her existence and ensure the prevalence of his own, is

easily construed as the foremost criterion for the technologically constructed and maintained society.

Due to this overt favoring of men in *Brave New World*, it is not surprising, therefore, that June Deery, in her article “Technology and Gender in Aldous Huxley’s Alternative(?) Worlds,” remonstrates Huxley for being an author “who in theory advocates[s] equal opportunity for women [but doesn’t] appear to take the issue seriously enough to follow through and portray this in practice” (115). However, upon closer reading of the work, the smugness and obvious control of men becomes suspect, as contradictions arise in their vindications of technology through omissions, frequently vague and confused speech, and through conflicting narratorial remarks. These instances of indeterminacy are indicative of more complex issues at hand than those simply of women’s subjugation to men. Huxley presents holes and conflicts in assumed power that show that men are not in command and are unwittingly subject to equivocally automated and techno-socially determined fates. Yes, technology offers them a slightly more comfortable position as compared to women, but again, this is craftily done in order that everyone behave in a fashion conducive to the stability of the machine. In this future London, the only benefiting entity is the machine, which mercilessly fixes humans as instruments to ensure that it never ceases to perform as the streamlined and punctual machine that it is.

While the following excerpt appears to introduce an authoritative person in Director Tomakin of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, there is a distinctive indicator that his supremacy is calculatedly controlled by technology, and that he foolishly and blindly believes in his power:

A troop of newly arrived students, very young, pink, callow, followed nervously, rather abjectly, at the Director's heels. Each of them carried a notebook, in which, whenever the great man spoke, he desperately scribbled. Straight from the horse's mouth... 'I shall begin at the beginning,' said the D.H.C. and the more zealous students recorded his intention in their notebooks: *Begin at the beginning*. 'These,' he waved his hand, 'are the incubators.'" (Huxley, *Brave New World* 1-2)

It is notable and telltale that the "beginning" presented by the Director to outline the process of fertilization fails to retrace the natural process of egg production in the female form. He offers no information as to how women produce the vast supply of ovum that he directs the students' attention to, downplaying women's integral part to this system and simultaneously causing doubt as to whether or not he possesses this information at all. 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 technology to determine life from its earliest phases. As a fully functioning cog fashioned by the machine, the Director shares his programming with the next generation of less than human men.

On further reading of his explanation of "the beginning," the surrounding text clarifies Tomakin's lack of knowledge and ignorant acquiescence to technological command:

"Just to give you a general idea," he would explain to them. For of course some sort of general idea they must have, if they were to do their work

intelligently – though as little of one, if they were to be good and happy members of society, as possible. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 2)

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

The text subtly moves into the second sentence without making any clarifications that the Director, himself, is not included in the "they" that gain only a superficial idea of the inner workings of the societal make-up. Indeed, this lack of specification *should* be the case because the text also fails to differentiate a single man in the highest caste is anything but an Alpha-plus male. Alphas include Helmholtz Watson who is every bit the virile Alpha-plus (Huxley, *Brave New World* 44), and Bernard Marx, whose deficiencies would seem to deposit him in the beta strata, but whose Alpha-plus standing is confirmed by his lover (Huxley, *Brave New World* 30). Therefore, Tomakin and his students all share a limited idea in order to operate as gears within the machine. Huxley introduces other 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, it is 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 Alpha male on the tour of the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, become interchangeable in a scene that affirms their equivocal conditioning and subjugation:

“The Predestinators 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.” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 6)

Their scripted and robotic exchange belies the Director’s authority, the ambiguity of the spokesperson levels the implied strata that the characters uphold, and the telling absence of specifying pronouns and adjectives suggests that the two characters are meant to fuse and reveal the absence of hierarchy. Their enthused speech reflects Huxley’s misgivings that although man’s organic life is non-progressive, and that “because technology advances, we fancy that we are making corresponding progress all along the line; because we have considerable power over inanimate nature, we are convinced that we are the self-sufficient masters of our fate and captains of our souls” (Huxley, “Perennial Philosophy” 142). To Huxley, the Alpha males, “in spite of evidence to the contrary” that they are non-progressing organic parts for a supra-machine, believe that they are “yet cleverer in a yet more systematic way” (Huxley, “Perennial Philosophy” 142), and this is just the way the machine wants them to think.

When juxtaposed with “his fordship, Mustapha Mond,” the Resident Controller of Western Europe and one of the ten World Controllers, Director Tomakin’s equivocal standing to this top tier engineer stands out. Huxley offers in the pairing of these men

that without fail, all men are subordinate to technology that controls them by gratifying their desire to dominate. The Controller is seemingly privy to privileged information as he offers to give the Director and his students a history lesson: “The D.H.C. looked at him nervously. There were those strange rumours of old forbidden books hidden in a safe 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’” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 23).

However, it is prudent to note that despite the overtones of authority, the books are 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, no one and no act is excluded from conditioning, a fact confirmed by Mond when he resolutely states, “As if one believed anything by instinct! One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 159).

Appropriately, the narrative Mond shares that is enhanced by the literary examples from forbidden books serves to retain from history and literature only the information that is relevant 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 Controllershship program, 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 the study of Mond, perhaps the strongest proof that he is a powerless entity is provided when he mistakenly and unknowingly refers to his own subservient capacity. When attempting to 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. Mond declares, “We make them hate solitude; and we arrange our lives so that it’s almost impossible for them ever to have it” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 160). In the first part of the statement, “we” and “them” are two separate entities; however, they become indistinguishable in the latter part. The second “we” is in a royal sense and includes the Controllers and the plebeians, thus clouding the line between the two.

Also, the first phrase does not seem problematic until one wonders just who Mond includes in this dominant “we.” After all, the superiority of the only other distinguished person introduced in the novel, Tomakin, is already in question as the text asserts that he is aptly placed in the category with “they,” or the presumed subordinates. In fact, when Tomakin uses this authoritative “we,” he completely discounts any tie to power by disclosing that Mond is incontrovertibly a socially preconditioned being:

“We decant our babies as socialized human beings, as Alphas and Epsilons, as future sewage workers or future...” He was going to say “future World Controllers,” but correcting himself, said “future Directors of Hatcheries,” instead. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 8)

Although Tomakin stops short of telling his students that they potentially can be Controllers, it is a fact that babies are decanted to be Controllers. The possibility is presented and reminds us that Mond is simply an Alpha male and that any of the students are potentially Controller material, for what little that amounts to in a technologically determined world.

In “Machinery, Psychology, and Politics,” Huxley writes, “For the purposes of the 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 in *Brave New World*, as Huxley presents a society in which men believe they are in control of technology and their destinies, when, in reality, they are rendered powerless by that same technology.

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

#### Consequences of Over-Organized Mechanization to Transnational Feminism

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

Bernard and Pertti J. Peltto confirm in *Technology and Social Change* that Huxley's warnings are feared overdue, as they write:

Throughout history technological developments have led men to pursue new kinds of constructions and destructions. Indeed, in recent years we have become fearful that 'our technology is overwhelming us' – that the machines are becoming the masters of our destinies and the man-created system of gadgets, engines, devices, and structures is ruining us through pollution 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 relinquishing power to the machine. In fact, the writer would not be at all surprised at the quickness with which technological globalization occurred, as in his 1946 foreword to *Brave New World*, he writes, "All things considered it looks as though Utopia were far closer to us than anyone, only fifteen years ago, could have imagined. Then, I projected it six hundred years into the future. Today, it seems quite possible that the horror may be upon us within a single century" (xiv). He again remarks on the speed with which humanity has increasingly succumbed to technology in the 1958 publication, *Brave New World Revisited*, in which he writes, "Twenty-seven years later, in this third quarter of the twentieth century A.D., and long before the end of the first century A.F., I feel a good deal less optimistic than I did when I was writing *Brave New World*. The prophecies made in 1931 are coming true much sooner than I thought they would....The nightmare of total organization...is now awaiting us, just around the next corner" (2).

At present, those prophecies and that nightmare have come to fruition for feminists in the new millennium. Through globalization, the array of feminist issues that Huxley's prognostications involve, including sexual liberation, open access to abortion and alternative reproductive methods, exploitation and indoctrination of native peoples and third world cultures, and especially mass communication, have rapidly developed in ways closely related to his foretelling. As such, it is perhaps wise to return to *Brave New World* to investigate just how our devil's bargain with technology has panned out, and to discover what hope, if any, the author sees for humanity.

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

Most notably, the concept of parenthood for the citizens of Huxley's future society is greatly skewed by the availability of contraception and the resultant "promiscuous banality" that can detach humans from intimacy and prevent meaningful relationships (Huxley, "Literature and Modern Life" 338). Huxley warns that "sex made easy, sex without tears, sex within the reach of everybody" is an open window for technology to manipulate us into the dehumanization process. Technologically provided means to sexual liberation offers the illusion of control as people feel free to take sexual

partners without guilt or the attached responsibility to procreate (Huxley, "Literature and Modern Life" 338). He details this devaluing of parenthood and relays to feminists the message to consider carefully the backlash to sexual liberation achieved through technological innovation as they strive to claim control over their bodies.

For Linda, a Beta-Minus who is helplessly marooned on the primitive New Mexican reservation of Malpais during the early stages of her pregnancy, motherhood brings 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 the obscenity like a challenge into the outraged silence; then, suddenly breaking away...ashamed, ashamed, covered her face with her hands, sobbing" (Huxley, *Brave New World* 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 women that makes them reliant on manufactured drugs to prevent pregnancy. While contemporary feminists need not worry yet about such a stranglehold, they too are dependent on technology to provide the methods for sexual liberation.

The extravagant price for sexual liberation is just as steep for men. Naturally born children are, by definition, unengineered refuse in this pristine and sterile world, and Tomakin's contribution to such a person's creation (John the Savage) makes him a public anathema:

The word (for "father" was not so much obscene as – with its connotation of something at one remove from the loathsomeness and moral obliquity of child-bearing – merely gross, a scatological rather than a pornographic

impropriety); the comically smutty word relieved what had become a quite intolerable tension. Laughter broke out, enormous, almost hysterical, peal after peal, as though it would never stop. My father—and it was the Director! My father! Oh Ford, oh Ford! (Huxley, *Brave New World* 102)

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

This type of unforeseen consequence also emerges as abortion becomes widely available, the author foretells. Abortion is a viable and readily available option in *Brave New 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 abortion accessible to women regardless of class, race, or economic background. However, they find there are new problems that arise from the achievement of this objective.

Baumgardner and Richards offer the testimony of a woman whose abortion procedure was “more reminiscent of M\*A\*S\*H\*,” as she woke up on a gurney in a room filled with other women in various states of drug-induced disorientation (25). Her “factory experience is not what feminists meant when they fought for the right to a safe and legal abortion...But many of the independent clinics have turned into time-crunched, impersonal ‘abortion service centers’” (Baumgardner 25).

Huxley envisioned just such a revolving door treatment center that paradoxically provides a sense of control and a complete reliance on the machine. In *Brave New World*, this dependency is apparent as Linda speaks about abortions and uncovers just how commonplace the procedure is for women. She states, ““Of course, there is nothing like the Abortion Centre here. Is it still down in Chelsea, by the way?” Lenina nodded. ‘And still floodlighted on Tuesdays and Fridays?’ Lenina nodded again. ‘That lovely pink glass tower!’” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 80). Huxley’s work, presented here as 80-year-old predictions on transnational feminism, would benefit the movement as resources to thriving in the technological social construct, since participants can take into account their present attitudes towards sexual liberation and abortion in light of his misgivings to ensure they do not meet the same fate as Huxley’s citizens.

Mass communication is probably the most significant of Huxley’s prophecies as it affects multiple issues facing feminism today, and is the cornerstone of the international feminist community. In *Brave New World*, international lines of communication are open even in the remotest areas of the world, as evidenced by Bernard Marx’s call to Mustapha Mond from the distant and secluded New Mexican reservation. But the price for having the accessibility of communication is that people no longer make worthwhile and intellectual conversation, and their attempts to do so are futile as they cannot begin to put into words their feelings and thoughts. Booker explains that “the populace are simply exposed to an endless barrage of content- and emotion-free language that gradually makes them unable to conceive of any other kind” (“Dystopian Impulse” 59). Indeed, Marx and Mond only speak of business in their short and strained phone conversation, the only one in the book, and there is no reason to believe that phones have any other use.

This seems apparent when Bernard attempts to converse with Lenina; not even he knows exactly what he wants to discuss. And it is obvious that she is uncomfortable with talk for the sake of talk:

“But Bernard, we shall be alone all night.”

Bernard blushed and looked away. “I meant alone for talking,” he mumbled.

“Talking? But what about?”...That seemed a very odd way of spending the afternoon. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 59)

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

These are well-founded questions, as feminists realize that the Internet, which opened 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 chauvinist propaganda that weakens the internationally held image of men and women (Baumgardner 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 provides a limitless arena for diverse thoughts, new writers, quirky takes, and random hostility. So far, publications on-line have been more sexist, racist, homophobic, and generally hostile than those in the off-line world. (Baumgardner 107)

The images of exploited women and minorities are doubly misleading as they suggest that ours is a post-feminist world in which women and the underprivileged are either liberated by the availability of information and alternatives, or are the degraded humans depicted on-line. Regardless of which interpretation is accepted, the twenty-first century machine prevents men from disengaging from the images of conqueror and misogynist, and prevents all others from discarding preconceived notions widely spread by technology.\*

Huxley was also concerned with the physical superficiality that accompanies the standardization of masculine ideals of beauty by way of massively organized technology. In *Brave New World*, Lenina Crowne, a nurse at the Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, and Bernard Marx, a conditioning expert for the Psychology Bureau at the same establishment, both are acutely aware of the anomalies in their outward appearances. The former is of uncommon beauty for a Beta-Plus and the latter has a freakishly underdeveloped body for an Alpha-Plus male. Both feel exposed and conflicted by their respective excesses, but only in so much as they are physically incapable of meeting the specific standards prescribed for their statuses and genders. Lenina Crowne's situation is somewhat peculiar, in that her incomparable "pneumatic" qualities are so intensely

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\* As Jon Swartz of *USA TODAY* writes, "Online pornographers have been among the first to exploit new technology for more than a decade – from video-streaming and fee-based subscriptions to pop-up ads and electronic billing. Their bold experimentation has helped make porn one of the most profitable online industries, and their ideas are staples at *Fortune* 500 companies." *Reuters* reports in an article, "Porn Still Dominates Online Traffic Categories," "Porn remains the most trafficked online destination, accounting for almost one in five visits, according to Hitwise. The imbalance – with about 19 percent of traffic headed to porn and only about 14 percent headed to search engines – would appear even greater if the percentage of searches for porn were taken out of the search category." For a breakdown of pornography statistics see <[http://www.familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html](http://www.familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html)>.

desired and pursued that she resists this elevated status as “the top of admiration, worth what’s dearest to the world...of every creature’s best,” as the Savage so ably puts it, by decreasing her sexual activity and availability and by gravitating towards the lowliest of the Alpha male caste, Bernard Marx (Huxley, *Brave New World* 128). What makes Lenina superficial is that her constant and sole concern is her appearance and her acceptance as normal.

Marx, by contrast, shrewdly demands the respect his position deserves (which is initially the reason that he boosts his ego by physically claiming Crowne) and he laments his unfortunate physical appearance:

Bernard's physique was hardly better than that of the average Gamma. He stood eight centimetres short of the standard Alpha height and was slender in proportion. Contact with members of the lower castes always reminded him painfully of this physical inadequacy. “I am I, and wish I wasn’t”; his self-consciousness was acute and stressing. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 43)

In essence, Marx and Crowne are simply aligning themselves to best fit their predefined roles. To Huxley, their desire to balance beauty and identity is a surface-level concern contrived so that they spend their time “complaining about the discomforts of their present state and straining every nerve to exchange it for another,” and they waste money and energy on a meaningless pursuit of belonging (Huxley, “The Reality of Progress” 340). Today’s women and men are in search of this superficial sense of belonging in much the same places and ways. Magazines, television, and the Internet present to them

standards that are unreasonable and their self-images are always in a state of flux as they try to keep up with insignificant and worthless trends in fashion and appearance.

Huxley was concerned about the effects of standardization on travel as well. He writes in "The Outlook for American Culture," "One can anticipate a future in which men will be able to travel round the world without finding an idea or a custom different from those with which they are familiar at home" (189). Lenina does not want to see the Reservation, to visit with the people, or to discover a new culture. In fact, she makes it quite clear that she visits exotic locales to take in the hotel accommodations rather than the local people and customs. She prefers to have the benefit of boasting about the far-off places in which she has had luxurious soma vacations; in fact, her discomfort when she leaves the hotel is indicative of her lack of appreciation for the cultural benefits of travel.

We gain a sense of Huxley's distress over the twofold loss; for one, travelers remain uncultured, and for another, the culture they visit is exploited simply for its resources, namely its human labor. For contemporary transnational feminists, this cheapening of experience and consequential devaluing of cultures and native people by globalization is a reality, as indigenous people serve up the resources exclusive to their regions and of which they are increasingly deprived. As industrialized countries strip them of their resources, their economy suffers, and the end result is that "the 'Global Billionaires Club' (with some 450 members) has a total Worldwide wealth well in excess of the combined GDP of the group of low income countries with 56 percent of the world's population" (Chossudovsky 302).

Indeed, the indoctrination of the Savage is analogous to the engulfing of third world countries and indigenous people into Western society. When John the Savage enters the London scene super-charged with emotion, which is equated to the untouched ideals 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 experiences through 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 there is room for everyone to be happy. As devices of the machine, Lenina with her body and Mond with his reasoning, they are tools to ensnare the Savage. Mond makes a sound case 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 that you can't help doing what you ought to do. And what you ought to do is on the whole so pleasant, so many of the natural impulses are allowed free play, that there really aren't any temptations to resist. And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why, there's always *soma* to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always *soma* to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 161-62)

And although John refuses the offer to acquiesce quietly to the machine and boldly claims 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 was lured by Marx and Crowne into London, as he admits, “I ate civilization...It poisoned me; I was defiled. And then...I ate my own wickedness” (Huxley, *Brave New World* 164). But in a final stance to claim his unhappiness, he attempts to stake a claim in his own self by leaving the city for a nearby lighthouse in order to atone and to evoke genuine emotion and feeling once again. Ultimately, however, the machine reveals that there is no “self” to begin with, as being born into the world in an age of technology means that by some measure he is born a child of that technology. The machine proves this point by demonstrating to the Savage just how suitable soma is as a synthetic substitute for sensation. As an army of automata converges on his lighthouse, one of them being Lenina Crowne, the emotion sparked by his destructive love for her is transferred into the baseless and senseless, yet blissful outpouring of sensation that accompanies manufactured emotion. The Savage is irrevocably damaged by this realization:

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 he awoke. He lay for a moment, blinking in owlish incomprehension at the light; then suddenly remembered – everything. (Huxley, *Brave New World* 176)

After the Savage has been broken by the machine, his suicide validates its supremacy and unquestionable ability to create and destroy as it sees fit. In this day and age, third world countries, if they are not already in the process of industrialization, are nevertheless entangled in the Western technological movement. Like the Savage, they have few

options and whichever one they take will irretrievably set into motion their subjugation and diminished native culture.

In the 1958 foreword to *Brave New World*, Huxley discussed the near hopelessness for humanity in a world that is technologically determined:

Unless we choose to decentralize and use applied science, not as the end to which human beings are to be made the means, but as the means to producing a race of free individuals, we have only two alternatives to choose from: either a number of national, militarized totalitarianisms...or else one supra-national totalitarianism, called into existence by the social chaos resulting from rapid technological progress in general... You pays your money and you takes your choice. (xiv)

Between these options, he places his bet on the latter, and certainly, his premonitions were quickly verified by short but fast moving technological development. However, regardless of the disheartening story of human submission and the potentially poor outlook for the future, he felt there was still a chance for survival, as “meanwhile there is still some freedom left in the world. Perhaps the forces that now menace freedom are too strong to be resisted for very long. It is still our duty to do whatever we can to resist them” (Huxley, *Revisited* 143). The next chapter posits that Huxley never ceased in resisting the technological forces that threaten individual freedom, as revealed in his essays and in the fact that he spent his final days creating what this study considers a transnational feminist treatise. In *Island*, Huxley took the opportunity to present a work that systematically exposes his principles that align with contemporary feminists’, and he attempted to make the most impact with his final offering by providing a cross-genre

work, incorporating formal essay, prose, poetry, and drama, to send his message to all types of readers.

## CHAPTER III

### HUXLEY AS A LIFELONG FEMINIST: OFFERINGS IN *ISLAND*

#### The Unitive Society of *Island*: Huxley's Alternative to a Brave New World

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 underlying principles....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. (Huxley, *Island* 34)

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. Yet, 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. In rereading *Island* as 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 (Murray). 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 T.V. as a necessity for leisure and news with 90% of U.S. households owning at least one television (Bellis, "1926-1950," Bellis, "1951-1975"). He observed:

That we are being propelled in the direction of *Brave New World* is obvious. But no less obvious is the fact that we can, if we so desire, refuse to co-operate with the blind forces that are propelling us. For the moment,

however, the wish to resist does not seem to be very strong or very widespread. (*Revisited* 27)

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 the same hold over the world as it does in *Brave New 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 the novel, 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. Rereading 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. Indeed, he describes the basic tenets for his utopian society in the 1946 foreword to *Brave New World*, as he ruminates on what changes he would make if he were to rewrite the book, centering his imaginings on the type of remote place between the primitive reservation and the over-organized city where the Savage might have found the option of sanity (viii). Features of this society include: a decentralist and cooperative economy; use of science and technology *for* men and women, not, "as at present and still more so in the *Brave New World*," to subjugate them; religion that intelligently pursues the unitive knowledge of man's Final End; and lastly, a philosophy of life that "would be a kind of Higher Utilitarianism, in which the Greatest Happiness principle would be secondary to the Final End principle" (Foreword ix). 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. For instance, Nicholas Murray claims "it lacks the imaginative *brio*, the vigour – even the occasional rough crudity of humour and bizarre invention – of *Brave New World*. Readers will differ in the extent to which they can take their Utopianising raw, without the compensations of fictional inventiveness" (Murray 445). He continues his critique by adding the remarks of another critic, Frank Kermode, who describes *Island* as "one of the worst novels ever written" due to the overwhelming and tedious verbosity of the *Notes on What's What* (Murray 445). However, these critics fail to see that what makes *Island* unique is that 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" (Murray 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" (Huxley, *Island* 34), or a grand total of sixty-seven years, and tellingly, Huxley was sixty-seven years old in 1961, the year he completed *Island* (Murray 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 (Huxley, *Island* 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. As Brian Appleyard writes in *Brave New Worlds: Staying Human in the Genetic Future*, "whichever future we choose, we are likely to be wrong" (9), and

unfortunately for the Palanese, they are an example of just how wrong human choices can be when technology is involved.

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 (Huxley, *Island* 34). The doctor explains to Will Farnaby, the British shipwrecked intruder/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. (Huxley, *Island* 149)

His speech is an elaboration of the ideals set forth by Huxley in his foreword to *Brave New World* and in the *Notes on What's What*, and because these successes do not seem dependent on technology, the Palanese appear to be truly self-defining and balanced in regard 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” and self-realization (Huxley, *Island* 35), 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” (Huxley, *Island* 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” (Huxley, *Island* 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” (Huxley, *Island* 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. In contrast to the women in *Brave New World*, 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.” (Huxley, *Island* 33)

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" (Huxley, *Island* 35), as Susila teaches him the practice of self-determination, or "Destiny Control" (Huxley, *Island* 95). 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." (Huxley, *Island* 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. (Huxley, *Island* 88)

Because the man who embodies Westernization, and who, like the restless and insatiable machine, “won’t take yes for an answer” (Huxley, *Island* 15), 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. And 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.

### Seduced by Technology – The Fate of Utopia

Although P.N. Furbank's following remarks about the Palanese were made as a negative comment on the quality of the book, he is on target when he states that the Palanese are "priggish and arch, sententious, censorious and smug. They are some of the most disagreeable Utopians I have met" (qtd in Murray 445). This is a symptom of their flaw. Like the men of authority in *Brave New World*, the doctor and his counterparts too proudly relate the ways they believe their culture has appropriated technology. Each time they do, it becomes strikingly obvious how little they control.

"Where as *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." (Huxley, *Island* 143)

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, to seek out and bring back with him a skillful surgeon from the West. The rewards would be princely. Princely, he insisted. There and then Dr. Andrew accepted the invitation. Partly, of course, for the money; but mostly because he was bored, because he needed a change, needed a taste

of adventure. A trip to the Forbidden Island – the lure was irresistible.

(Huxley, *Island* 122)

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, which, incidentally, are introduced in much the same way as they are in *Brave New World*, 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” (Huxley, *Island* 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 obviously 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.” (Huxley, *Island* 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 (Huxley, *Island* 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” (Huxley, *Island* 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 that are found in *Brave New World*, despite their motives: “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 AI. 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” (Huxley, *Island* 192-93). Everything about this procedure conflicts with the Old Raja’s notion of self-determination, especially in that, like the developments in *Brave New World*, it favors masculinity and treats the woman’s body as a storage for “superior stocks” of children (Huxley, *Island* 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 Annalee Newitz, 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. Their censoriousness prevents them from foreseeing the total oppression as presented in *Brave New World* since they scoff at science fiction. 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. (Huxley, *Island* 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

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\* For example, the Rani proclaims, “‘Providence is *always* on our side.’ And when Will raised a questioning eyebrow, ‘I mean,’ she elaborated, ‘in our eyes of those who Truly Understand’ (capital T, capital U).” (Huxley, *Island* 47). And again, “Even while [Joe Aldehyde is] at work, he feels the constant Pull from Above...for him, the only thing that Really Matters is the Immorality of the Soul” (Huxley, *Island* 57).

sinister snigger and wagged his beautiful, odious head. “A big mistake,” he repeated. (Huxley, *Island* 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” (Huxley, *Island* 109). Murugan echoes, “Top priority: get this place modernized. Look at what Rendang has been able to do because of its oil royalties” (Huxley, *Island* 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 (Huxley, *Island* 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. (Huxley, *Island* 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" (Huxley, *Island* 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" (Huxley, *Island* 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 Southeast Asia Petroleum Company, he was Imperial and Foreign Copper Limited" (Huxley, *Island* 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" (Huxley, *Island* 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.

## CHAPTER IV

### ALDOUS HUXLEY AND THE CORE OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

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 the direction it is taking us. He wrote, “universal leisure and variety of impressions make possible a rich universal culture. Machinery has set up a tendency towards the realization of fuller life” (Huxley, “The Outlook” 186-87), 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.

His message is catching on, as in the last few decades of rapid technological development there has been a flurry of scholarship and discourse on the author’s prophetic literature, namely in the field of biotechnology and cultural transformation. Critics in the fields of science and biotechnological engineering give due credit to Huxley for his foresight and insist that the author was irrefutably correct when he suggested that

uncontrolled technology would hamper the positive potential of machinery and humans (Appleyard 1998, Fukuyama 2002, Hartouni 1993). Valerie Hartouni writes in “*Brave New World* in the Discourses of Reproductive and Genetic Technologies,”

Whether proffered as illustration, prophecy, or specter, invocations of Huxley’s tale[s] clearly function as a kind of shorthand for a host of issues having to do generally with the organization, application, and regulation of these new technologies. They also mark in abbreviated fashion an equally broad range of issues generated by the use or anticipated use of these technologies having to do with formulations and configurations of freedom and power as well as human nature and identity. (Hartouni 87)

In addition, Francis Fukuyama writes in *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, “Huxley was right, that the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a “posthuman” stage of history” (7). These critics understand that Huxley was simultaneously in states of awe and agitation with technology, and that his ideas are highly relevant to the present, unpredictable nature of biotechnology. While there is no surprise that Huxley’s work is so highly relevant in the realm of genetics, as this is one of many areas that he predicted technological determinism would affect, there is a noticeable lack of application of his prognostications in feminist studies. However, as feminist concerns encompass human reproduction, international activism and communication, healthcare, information accessibility, and a bevy of other issues, theirs should be the area with an emphasis on Aldous Huxley and his warnings, since at the core of all transnational feminist concerns is technological determinism.

As a thinker whose ideas correspond to feminist concerns, Huxley saw the globalizing force of technology as a greater threat to humanity than any man or groups of men and more formidable a force than feminists of both genders imagine. Denise Thompson comments below reflect the obliviousness of contemporary feminists to the dangers of technology proposed by Huxley, as she states,

To insist on the reality of male domination does not mean that individuals are nothing but inert entities moved hither and yon by forces outside their control....Male domination is not some kind of monolithic and homogenous system within which individuals are inserted without their knowledge and with no possibility of non-compliance. Any such assertion would be empirically false. It is not the case that individuals have no choice but to comply with dominant norms and with norms of domination. No regime can turn human beings into automata or reduce people's choices to absolute zero. (Thompson 9)

However, Huxley's worry goes beyond male domination, and the mechanized type of supremacy he perceives does, in fact, unmercifully and totally dominate. His ideas demand that contemporary feminists refocus their ideas, that they prioritize technological determinism as their main point of concern, and that they think about what force really compels their current foci on accessing technology (including communication or medical technology). Alongside scientists and engineers, they too must ask themselves if they are in control and working technology to their advantage, or if they are driven to action because, as automata, they are synchronizing with the other parts of the machine.

By aligning their thoughts with Huxley's and centralizing their movement on regaining control of technology, feminists would find that theirs would become an even more potent and revolutionary narrative of change, as the emphasis on technological determinism would bring the world together, in essence, revealing that *everyone* is subject to domination by the machine. Indeed, there is no better time than the present for feminists to refocus their attention. For one thing, through the works of Huxley, they have at their disposal guidebooks for perceiving the dangers and possible benefits of technology.\* Also, by welcoming him into the feminist fold, they are simultaneously displaying the bond between men and women and confirming that a cooperative movement is necessary to feminist activism, and especially to the fight against a technological oppressor.

Furthermore, they have in Huxley the model of a transnational feminist, a person who embodies everything feminism currently stands for. As Patrick Hopkins writes, twenty-first century feminism "should be about gender and the structures of sexism and oppression that arise from hierarchical evaluations of gender...[it] should be characterized by adherence to a basic set of beliefs and political positions – which are aptly, if not uncomplicatedly captured by most typical minimalist claims of eliminating gender-based power" (Hopkins 51-52). This is precisely the notion shared by Huxley, his feminist predecessor, who saw beyond gender to the individual and who attempted to relate his knowledge on the global scale to effect a transnational movement.

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\* Incidentally, this makes Huxley the Old Raja of feminism.

In her book, *Globalization and Feminist Activism*, Mary Hawkesworth describes just the sort of global activism Huxley had in mind as she discusses the modern movement of feminism:

Internationalism involves “a commitment to reach out to colleagues from other nations, to attempt to forge understandings of differences and commonalities, to build consensus on projects and priorities, to work across national borders to attain goals,” and often, to use international resources to bring pressure to bear on governments of individual nations.

(Hawkesworth 37)

Decades earlier, Huxley professed the same belief in the international community along with its uses and dangers. For contemporary feminists, who desire to “trac[e] a longer trajectory of feminist activism...to learn more about changes in social, economic, and political life that have triggered feminist efforts to forge transnational alliances as a means to produce social change” (Hawkesworth 30), they can find in Huxley a kind of “father to transnational feminism.”

Huxley wrote that “science (or at least scientism) can all too easily become a mere tool of oppression” (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 48-49), but he also believed that “man can overcome almost any obstacle by force of will power” (Birnbaum 33). By considering Huxley’s works from a feminist perspective, feminists will be asking the same questions that compel the scientists and engineers on whom he insists they keep a watchful 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* do without deeply affecting certain basic views and tenets of society? How does the

problem pose itself in different times and in different societies?” (Bugliarello viii). By doing so, they will find that “we clearly need a methodology and viewpoint for answering questions such as these. We need them as much as we need the answers themselves” (Bugliarello viii).

Those in the field of science are already coming up with solutions based on Huxley’s warnings about technological determinism, meaning they are already a step ahead of feminists, which is dangerous. They suggest, “The answer is obvious: *We should use the power of the state to regulate it...* on an international basis. We need to start thinking concretely now about how to build institutions that can discriminate between good and bad uses of technology, and effectively enforce these rules both nationally and internationally” (Fukuyama 10). While they are absolutely on the right track, it is the duty of feminists to take part in this decision-making process, as technological determinism influences all areas, not just science. Even if technology is put back in check by scientists and engineers, the problem of control will still be an issue. As Appleyard reminds us:

There is a danger that people will sleep through this moment, only to wake and find themselves in a brave new genetic world. They will sleep because they feel excluded from the realm of science. They will feel they have nothing to say about what scientists do and how they change the world. Thus they will slip into that most risky of modern habits – leaving science to the scientists. (Appleyard 3)

With the guidance of Aldous Huxley and his writings, transnational feminism and humanity have a greater chance to make a change, to prevent the “standardiz[ation] [of]

the human product...to refrain from blowing ourselves to smithereens...and to produc[e]  
a race of free individuals” (Huxley, *Foreword* xiii-xiv).

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