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## Hawking Incorporated: Stephen Hawking and the Anthropology of the Knowing Subject

*Hlne Mialet*

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**Hlne Mialet : Hawking Incorporated: Stephen Hawking and the Anthropology of the Knowing Subject** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hawking Incorporated: Stephen Hawking and the Anthropology of the Knowing Subject:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Not your average Hawking bookBy colinphillipsI found this book to

be quite thought-provoking. It highlights the mismatch between the outside view of Hawking-as-pure-genius and the reality in which Hawking depends on a web of people who do almost everything for him. But the most interesting feature of the book is that Helene Mialet does not simply treat this as a study of an odd and unique case. Instead, she emphasizes that Hawking provides a window into how all theoretical science is done. Because in Hawking's case almost everything needs to be carried out by external agents, it lays bare many things that are normally hidden from view. I found this part very interesting. What held me back from giving the book 5 stars was the overwrought prose in some places: I skipped a number of passages and a couple of chapters because they were taking a lot of space to say very little.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Amazing and Thought Provoking  
By Marina Freeman  
"Hawking Incorporated" is an incredibly profound and thought provoking book, for it questions the ever so appealing idea of the Solitary Genius. In true ethnographic fashion, Helen Mialet unveils the collaborative effort involved in supporting one brilliant mind, as she examines the individuals, technology, and media that allow Stephen Hawking to be the genius physicist that he is. Hawking, the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics is not as solitary as with think. Because of Hawking's extended network, he is in a way, transparent to the public, therefore making the murky and obscure process of scientific thought and discovery tangible and clear. If you have any interest in Anthropology, Science Studies, or Disability Studies, I highly recommend reading "Hawking Incorporated", for Mialet has succeeded in connecting these fields of study in a riveting way. I guarantee this book will leave you with many probing questions, one of them being: "What defines genius?"

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.  
Hawking Incorporated by Helene Mialet  
By Michel Mends France  
Hawking Incorporated  
Helene Mialet's book Hawking Incorporated is extremely original and enjoyable. She examines the way Stephen Hawking is able, because he is technologically enabled, to function as the brilliant physicist he is, producing exciting new ideas, lecturing, writing, giving interviews (notably to Helene Mialet for this work) etc. He manages all this despite the fact that, because of his handicap, he is both locked within his body and locked out of the world of ordinary communication enjoyed by all his fellow scientists. His physical condition is so dramatic his achievements force admiration yet leave us incredulous. Thanks to the extensive investigations, interviews and careful analysis of her findings and observations Helene Mialet prods us into reappraising our perception of who Stephen Hawking actually is. The man in the flesh or the biotic creature made of steel, wires and batteries? She brings us to realize that this question, as naive as it may seem, goes way beyond the Hawking case. Humanity is being swept into a new age by the technological revolution. Life, as they say, will never be the same again. As a mathematician I have witnessed the impact information technology and computers on my discipline. In the past certain mathematical problems resisted solution for want of time and limited by the speed of calculation, I think of the four colour problem which remained tantalizingly unprovable for well over a hundred years until the advent of the computer to do the donkey work. Helene Mialet's multifaceted approach to understanding Stephen Hawking demonstrates just how "natural" it is becoming that man's destiny and identity is inextricably bound to his mastery and appropriate use of the technological forces he has unleashed.

These days, the idea of the cyborg is less the stuff of science fiction and more a reality, as we are all, in one way or another, constantly connected, extended, wired, and dispersed in and through technology. One wonders where the individual, the person, the human, and the body are, alternatively, where they stop. These are the kinds of questions Helene Mialet explores in this fascinating volume, as she focuses on a man who is permanently attached to assemblages of machines, devices, and collectivities of people: Stephen Hawking. Drawing on an extensive and in-depth series of interviews with Hawking, his assistants and colleagues, physicists, engineers, writers, journalists, archivists, and artists, Mialet reconstructs the human, material, and machine-based networks that enable Hawking to live and work. She reveals how Hawking who is often portrayed as the most singular, individual, rational, and bodiless of all is in fact not only incorporated, materialized, and distributed in a complex nexus of machines and human beings like everyone else, but even more so. Each chapter focuses on a description of the functioning and coordination of different elements or media that create his presence, agency, identity, and competencies. Attentive to Hawking's daily activities, including his lecturing and scientific writing, Mialet's ethnographic analysis powerfully reassesses the notion of scientific genius and its associations with human singularity. This book will fascinate anyone interested in Stephen Hawking or an extraordinary life in science.