



Review

Book Review: *The Hesitant Feminist's Guide to the Future* by Ivana Milojević

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Introduction

"The Hesitant Feminist's Guide to the Future" is a fast-paced journey through 20 short sections of 2-5 pages. It builds from a historical vantage point by exploring how language defines feminism and violence typology. The book then asks whether feminism matters, explores gender issues, and pulls the reader towards the conclusion. Interestingly, however, the conclusion is a cleverly disguised test called a reflective checklist, which I took before reading the monograph with the expected results. The moral of the story read *"The Hesitant Feminist's Guide to the Future,"* and you'll have a much better understanding of the reflective checklist.

The following review does not cover all twenty sections but focuses on providing a balanced review of the more powerful and poignant sections.

Historical Introduction sets the Stage

The introduction powerfully set the tone for the remaining monograph, emphasizing that, in many ways, history was repeating the anti-feminist views and critiques of suffragettes who faced similar hostility; they were portrayed as "man-hating" and destructive to the social fabric. The messaging then and now insists that women preferred to focus on home and children and that political engagement would degrade their unique roles. Early 20th-century opposition painted these women as intellectually incapable of political participation, depicting them as dangerous, unnatural, and opposed to the moral and social order.

Critics argue feminism is exclusionary, promoting the views of a narrow group over those who prioritize faith, family, and community. Conservative voices frequently claim feminism is an outdated ideology that fails to recognize the significant advancements in women's rights and the equality that is already, in their view, widely available in society. They argue that modern feminists ignore or disparage traditional roles that many women choose voluntarily encounter stereotypes that frame them as "emasculating (p 14)" and seeking to disrupt social harmony, with critiques relying on images of feminists as rejecting traditional gender norms and family values to discourage engagement with feminist ideas.

The Nature of Feminism

Milojević presents feminism as a resilient and evolving ideological framework that responds dynamically to diverse sociopolitical contexts. Originating as a term in late 19th-century France, feminism has since developed into a robust movement challenging patriarchal structure across global contexts. Throughout, Milojević emphasizes feminism's adaptability, as it continually redefines its priorities to address the specific needs of women in various social and historical settings. This flexibility has led to numerous "adjectival feminisms," such as intersectional, ecofeminist,

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and cyberfeminist perspectives (p 71), each responding to critiques that traditional feminist approaches often marginalize certain groups based on race, class, or sexual orientation.

Milojević introduces the concept of "feminist eutopianism" or "eutopia, (p 84)," a reimagining of society that diverges from utopian ideals by envisioning attainable futures where gender equity and inclusivity prevail. The concept escapes the dualism of utopia or dystopia, where eutopia is a decentered approach of continuous but marginal changes toward the goals of feminism. By grounding these ideals in realistic possibilities, feminist eutopianism offers a model that seeks to reconcile idealism with practicality in social transformation.

Violence and Feminism

The work interestingly incorporates Johan Galtung's theory of violence, which distinguishes and defines direct violence as visible, physical harm; structural violence as systemic inequalities entrenched in social and economic structures; and cultural violence as the social norms that legitimize or normalize oppression. The section is one of the monograph's more powerful and revealing sections. In this section, Milojević presents a powerful argument on the interconnectedness of violence types, emphasizing that epistemological violence (p. 51) is rooted in ideologies, perceptions, and biases, which provides the lens to select and target direct violence. Epistemological violence involves enforcing a dominant worldview that marginalizes other perspectives, while psychological violence includes emotional and mental abuses that reinforce subordinate social roles.

Milojević explains that when we see a person as the "other," we can justify violent action against them. The text clearly explains that Gender-based violence is uniquely tied to one's gender, affecting men and women differently. In war, for instance, women may face sexual violence while men, perceived as inherent soldiers, become targets for killing regardless of their civilian status. Under patriarchy and militarism, the concept of innocence also differs by gender: men's lack of wrongdoing doesn't shield them from violence, while women's "innocence" is often tied to notions of chastity, further emphasizing the systemic biases underlying violence against genders.

What about Men?

The "What About Men? Can They Be Feminists?" section examines men within feminist discourse, challenging traditional gender boundaries that have historically limited feminism's accessibility to women. The section acknowledges that feminism's core values of equality, inclusivity, and justice transcend gender.

The core argument is that feminism's objective is not solely to uplift women but to dismantle harmful hierarchies (p 65) and ensure equitable treatment for all genders, and in this context, there is room for the male feminist. Milojević argues that fostering inclusivity and embracing all genders in feminist discussions ultimately strengthens the movement's goals and reinforces its universality.

Language Shapes Us

Milojević explores the word feminism through the concept of the "definitional power." The authority of the narrative and the naming of an idea control and direct, by extension, societal norms, which play a pivotal role in both social change and resistance. The narrative deftly explores the tension between visionaries advocating for a transformed future and traditionalists clinging to historical norms, showcasing how language is wielded as both a technology and a weapon in these ideological struggles.

The text explores feminist linguistic interventions to unshackle a woman's status as tied to her father or husband. The nuanced shift in language, meant to liberate women from outdated categories, ironically introduces even more layers of categorization, as varied responses reflect complex personal and social identities.

Overall, the passage critiques society's power dynamics while celebrating the resilience of feminist ideology, even as it encounters resistance. This nuanced perspective positions the author as a keen observer of language's transformative potential and limitations. Readers of *The Hesitant Feminist's Guide to the Future* will find this excerpt a thought-provoking entry point for understanding how linguistic battles shape individual identity and societal status.

Conclusion

“*The Hesitant Feminist’s Guide to the Future*” offers a comprehensive examination of feminism as a fluid, context-sensitive ideology with profound implications for both present and future social dynamics. Milojević’s integration of Galtung’s violence typology and the Futures Triangle with feminist theory provides readers with a nuanced understanding of the systemic nature of gender-based oppression and the strategies needed to counteract it.

Throughout this work, Milojević emphasizes that feminism is more than a theoretical framework: it is a call to action, a continually evolving effort to envision and realize a more equitable future. This monograph not only offers critical insights for feminist scholars but also equips readers with a conceptual toolkit for analyzing and addressing the persistent and complex challenges of gender inequality.

Milojević concludes with a reflective call to action, inviting readers to assess their alignment with feminist principles and consider how their choices shape the future. The book’s engaging question-and-answer format makes complex ideas accessible and encourages readers to engage deeply with the material.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The Hesitant Feminist’s Guide to the Future is a valuable contribution to feminist literature and futures studies. Its strength lies in its comprehensive approach, which blends historical analysis, contemporary critique, and future-oriented thinking. Milojević’s writing style is clear and engaging, making the book suitable for a broad audience, from scholars to general readers. Make no mistake: This monograph is a serious advocacy for the better future that feminism affords us. Milojević is in command of her subject and displays the deep understanding that comes from experience and exploration of the topic. There is much more to experience in this monograph than did not make it into the review.

This book is highly recommended for students, educators, researchers, and anyone interested in understanding the evolution of feminist thought and its relevance to shaping a just and sustainable future.

While this monograph is a stand-alone piece, I suggest a quick hop over Milojević’s blog post at Metafuture and read “Feminism, Futures Studies and The Futures of Feminist Research.” Reading them in sequence enriches the experience provided to the readers in this work while laying the groundwork for understanding the hesitancy toward feminism and what a feminist future could look like.

It is a powerful reminder that feminist futures are about creating inclusive, equitable societies where all individuals can thrive.