

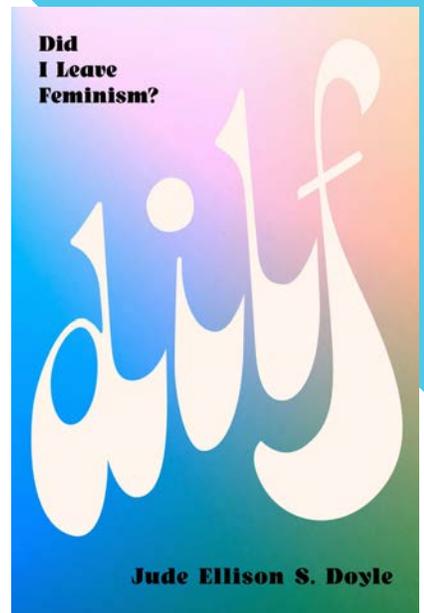
DILF: DID I LEAVE FEMINISM?

A Trans and/or Feminist Manifesto

Jude Ellison S. Doyle

Trade Paperback 9781685892159

eBook 9781685892166



“ . . . [a] formidable polemic . . . an evocative demonstration of how stereotypes about gender and battles for bodily autonomy affect trans and cis people in overlapping ways. [...] a heartening call for feminist solidarity.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

“ Pulling from feminist history, including profiles of influential thinkers and activists, Doyle paints a dark picture of the gender and racial dynamics at work to keep white men in power, calling for a safer world for trans children, for feminism that accounts for transmasculine people, and for seeing trans people not as threats to systems based on exclusion but as examples of what’s possible with the will to change.”
— *Booklist*

INTRODUCTION

DILF: Did I Leave Feminism? is a book full of questions, such that it feels a little odd to be asking you even more questions now. Yet I can’t think of anywhere I’d rather see this book than a classroom. This book is not meant to be a stopping point — it’s a springboard. Build on it, exceed it, debunk it, fight over it, use it to understand your own life — do anything, so long as you keep asking questions about gender and power, because the world needs your answers. Here are a few places you might start. —**Jude Ellison S. Doyle**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Defining Gender.** Part One outlines three different ways of defining the term “gender” — as an identity, a language, and a power structure. What do you mean, when you say “gender,” and how many of these definitions do you use, on a daily basis? Can you think of more definitions that aren’t mentioned here?
- 2. Bodily Autonomy.** Part One also covers two major legislative fights for bodily autonomy — the fight for legal abortion and for access to gender-affirming care. Access to transition and abortion have traditionally been banned or restricted for the same reasons, using the same methods, by the same people. Why do you think these two forms of healthcare are so threatening to many people in power? What other forms of bodily autonomy are restricted in day-to-day life, and by whom, and why?
- 3. Sexual Scripts.** Part Two discusses common sexual scripts and how they’re tied to misogyny: There’s the idea that men are only “real men” if they have sex with women. There’s the idea that the partner who gets penetrated is “feminine,” and therefore lesser, regardless of gender. Where did you learn your sexual scripts? How are they tied to gender? How do other cultural hierarchies or -isms (for example, racism) construct sexual scripts?
- 4. Sex Wars.** Part Two also introduces the extremely polarizing work of Andrea Dworkin, and the historical divide between “queer” and feminist movements that took place during the Sex Wars of the 1980s. What did you know about this conflict before you read *DILF*? How has the divide played out in your own activism, or your own life? What, if anything, do you think should be done to remedy it going forward?

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4. **For the Kids.** A tremendous amount of the current anti-trans backlash focuses on the figure of the “trans kid,” who is said to be doing “irreversible damage” to themselves by pursuing social transition or gender-affirming care. Why is this debate so heavily focused on children? What role do children and children’s rights play in your own queer and/or feminist practice?
5. **All Our Children.** In Part Three, we discuss two models of child care: A communal model, in which we are all responsible for the children in our society, and a capitalist model, in which parents are factory workers and the child is their product, with the goal being to produce the “best,” most successful, highest-earning child. What responsibilities do these two models assume for adults? For parents? How do they conflict? How does capitalism structure the other important relationships in our lives?
6. **Revising History.** Part Four tells the story of how radical feminism became transphobic and trans-exclusive. Were you familiar with any of the figures in this chapter, and if so, what did you know about them? Any history is selective: It chooses which figures to focus on and leaves others out. If you were to construct your own feminist history, what would that look like? Where would it start? Who and what would be included?
7. **Re-Examining “Men.”** This book draws a strong distinction between biological essentialism — the belief that “men” can only ever have one kind of body, and behave in one highly oppressive and patriarchal way, because it’s “in their nature” — and actually holding men accountable for their choice to uphold patriarchy. It also suggests that “male privilege” is not handed out equally to every man. What is your view of “male privilege” and how it intersects with other sources of oppression? Is there any one unifying “male experience” or “male condition,” and if so, what would it be?
8. **Origin Stories.** The book ends with a portrait of Pauli Murray, an early second-wave feminist who laid much of the groundwork for contemporary trans movements, mainstream feminism, and specifically Black feminist theories of intersectionality. Who has been a model for you, in your understanding of gender? What historical figures have given you grounding or inspiration? If you envision yourself as an ancestor for future queer or gender-marginalized people, what legacy do you want to leave?
9. **Zeno’s Gender.** *DILF* suggests that “man” and “woman” are vanishing points on two ends of a spectrum of ideals that no one person can embody. How close are you to embodying your culture’s idea of “man” or “woman?” How do you differ from it? How do you draw power or insight from the ways in which you diverge from the norm?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jude Doyle is an author, columnist, and comic book writer living in upstate New York, known for the books *Trainwreck*, and *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers*, and the comic anthology *MAW* (BOOM! Studio).

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