**Tuck:** If you do not want to hear about alcohol, skip ahead 30 seconds right now… because this week’s episode is sponsored by Reverend Nat’s Hard Cider, who is now offering shipping nearly nationwide to 41 states plus Washington, DC. I pretty much always have Rev Nat’s in my house; they have so many kinds of cider made from so many different fruits; I am particularly partial to their many pineapple ciders. And they are embodying the Trans Day of Snack spirit by offering 20% off your first cider order by using the offer code SNACKS. Learn more and place an order at RevNats.com.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host and resident gender detective, Tuck Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I am very glad to share my chat with singer and songwriter Ezra Furman. I have been talking with Ezra for I think more than a year about getting her on the podcast, and today we are finally doing the thing. In this episode, Ezra and I talk about parenthood, rabbinical school, Lou Reed, trans singing voice feelings, and the parallels between gender and religion.

**Ezra [voice clip]:** I think of being trans as being in a mystical cult.

**Tuck:** But first, I don’t mention this at the top of the show every week anymore, but I feel like I should mention it sometimes. So, it is the end of the year; the giving season, so to speak. We’re not a tax-deductible nonprofit, we are never going to be a nonprofit, but we are very good at giving money to trans people who need it. Most recently we sent funds to the 16 winners of our fall 2021 Trans POC Grant Program—we said there were going to be 10, more people stepped up to donate, and now there are 16 winners! If you would like to support the grant program and the mutual aid program and help us pay Jules and pay me, you can do that by joining us for as little as less than $1 a month at patreon.com/gender, or you can make a one-time donation—there are links in the show notes—at genderpodcast.com/donate. Thank you so much for your support. We literally could not do it without you. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats, plays briefly]

**Tuck:** Well, I hope you’ve been enjoying our news roundups, because we’ve got a lightning round news roundup for you today. Here we go.

[gentle ding]

After four years of debate, New Zealand Parliament unanimously passed a bill allowing people to change their gender marker through self-identification. Previously, New Zealand residents were required to appear before a judge and provide evidence of medical transition before changing the marker on their birth certificates. The new law does not take effect until summer 2023, which according to *Pink News*, quote, “Allows for consultation with the LGBT+ community on how the process should work, how young people can access correct gender markers, and how to be inclusive of nonbinary people in different cultures.”

[gentle ding]

In 2015, a student in Missouri sued his school district because they wouldn’t let him use the boys’ restrooms and locker rooms, despite having legally changed his gender marker on his birth certificate. Last week, a jury in Jackson County found that the school district owes that student more than $4 million in damages for sex discrimination. I have no idea why it took that long to get a ruling on this case. I have to assume that that $4 million barely covers like six or seven years of legal fees. The school district is threatening to appeal, so we’ll let you know if they do, but I hope that this man got to keep some of his money.

[gentle ding]

Earlier this month, lawmakers in Chile legalized same-sex marriage by an overwhelming majority. This makes Chile the 31st country to legally allow homosexuals to say yes to the dress.

[gentle ding]

Surprising absolutely no one, a study by researchers at the Trevor Project which, you know, hardly unbiased, but researchers at the Trevor Project surveyed more than 9,000 trans people between the ages of 13 and 24, and found that trans youth on HRT were happier than trans kids who wanted HRT but couldn’t get it. I, for one, am shocked. They also found that for kids under 18, access to HRT lowered the odds of depression or suicidality by 40%. It’s almost like states shouldn’t keep trying to ban this stuff!

[gentle ding]

Finally, following up on our segment from two weeks ago, Canada has officially passed a law that comprehensively bans conversion therapy. While several countries and 20 US states have banned conversion therapy for minors, Canada also banned it in all cases for adults, and I did a lot of Googling and the only other country I could find who has done that is Malta, which is an island with 400,000 people on it. So, good job Malta, and good job Canada. This law takes effect on January 7, 2022. This has been This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

You may have heard that shopping for sex toys can sometimes feel overwhelming or dysphoric. Maybe you’ve even experienced it. But shopenby.com aims to create a better experience for the queer, trans, and gender nonconforming community by offering a gender-neutral selection of toys, plus packers and dilators and STPs and other trans accoutrements. Plus, 2% of all profits are donated to organizations focused on improving the lives of queer and trans people of color. So visit shopenby.com—that’s SHOPENBY.com—and use the code GenderReveal at checkout to get 10% off your order and support the show.

[Gender Reveal theme music excerpt fades in]

**Tuck:** Ezra Furman is a hated and adored songwriter and singer who has been making records and performing with a band for 15 freaking years now. She also wrote a book about Lou Reed’s *Transformer* album for the 33 ⅓ series. She is super obsessed with Judaism and the Torah, which she explores in her amateur podcast with writer Agnes Borinsky, *2 Queers 4 Questions*. Her corporate gig is making music for the Netflix show *Sex Education*, which is frighteningly popular.

[Gender Reveal theme music excerpt fades out]

**Tuck:** The way we always start the show is by asking, in terms of gender, how do you describe yourself?

**Ezra:** I’m a trans woman. And I’m also nonbinary.

**Tuck:** You came out publicly as a trans woman earlier this year, and in the same post, you disclosed you’re also a mom; you have a toddler. Can you talk about why it felt important to reveal both of those things publicly, and also at the same time?

**Ezra:** Yeah, well, the impetus was the parenthood thing. I feel like it’s not the biggest shocker that I’m trans. That wasn’t news. I didn’t think that was a coming out thing. Although that was the first time I was calling myself a woman in public. So to me that was kind of a terminology switch. I don’t know if I’d put it in the category of like, coming out. Most of the components of my womanhood are already visible about me, you know? That’s quite a phrase, “components of my womanhood.” For me, the thing that I had thought through and sort of the purpose of the post, was saying that I’m a mom, and I have a child, and I had not revealed that. I had not told anyone publicly or any press that I was a parent, because I instinctually knew people would just have some dumb shit to say about that and have opinions about it. And I just didn’t want to hear that. I didn’t want my partner to hear that. And I felt like in general, why not just not drag this child into any corner of my little internet spotlight? I just had a nagging feeling for a long time, though, that was like, “I think there are trans people who might benefit a little bit from seeing this.” And like, I was like, “Well, it’s not my job. I don’t have to do that,” you know, but it was sort of like, “It could be nice for some people to see this.” I lamented never having seen a transfeminine parent when I became a parent. I just had never even seen a picture of a trans mom, you know? I’m just more and more convinced over time that like, it’s a very well-known thing, but just, what you have seen is what you can imagine, sort of.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, once you made that post, did you get in touch with other trans moms? Because as you’re saying that I’m thinking of people, I’m like, “Oh, well, there’s this person and this person and this person, and they should be friends.” [Laughs]

**Ezra:** Yeah, sure. I mean, no, I didn’t really because I mean—ah, that’s actually just showing me another fuckin’ consequence of transphobia is that like, I just—all this shit just started dumping onto me online, and I was like, “I’m looking away.”

**Tuck:** Yeah. So you wouldn’t want to read the comments. Totally.

**Ezra:** And I was like, you know, there’s some period of like, “I’m just gonna read the nice ones. So it’s just the nice ones.” You can’t just read the nice ones. That’s not a thing. And I mean, also that was just—I didn’t understand that it was going to be like, widely shared. It became, like, clickbait for some reason; it was on Fox News. You know, like, I’m not Fox News famous, you know, I’m not that level of well known, but I think something just happened where it was like, “Well, you gotta keep making clickbait, like, this person’ll do for five minutes of throwing some meat to the audience.”

**Tuck:** Yeah. It was really wild, because you and I had talked about you coming on this show before you made that post and it was wild to see that post going around as if you had come out when you were like, “This didn’t seem like a coming out post to me.” And I was also confused at the headlines because I was like, “She was already trans. Why is *this* the headline?” And so I was thinking, because I was doing research for this interview, obviously, and I was reading these profiles from like, 2018 when you did *Transangelic Exodus*. And they were all using he/him pronouns for you exclusively, which was so confusing to me, because it’s like, you were already genderqueer, gender nonconforming, it’s called *Transangelic Exodus*, the allegory isn’t subtle, but I didn’t see people talking about that. So do you ever feel like you were putting out hints and signals that people just were never picking up until you were like, “I am a trans woman and I have a child”?

**Ezra:** Yeah, it’s complicated. I mean, I just, I spent so much time just being like, “I don’t have to come out to anybody. I don’t feel like telling you what I am. And I want you to just look at me and, like, get it.” And like, I’m very attached to that stance in some ways still. And also I just slowly came to understand that you kind of have to say it. You have to say, “I want you to think of me as this.” I mean, you don’t have to, but if you don’t, I guess I was experiencing the result of not doing that. The result is the tide of cis-centric culture just takes you with it. You know, everyone’s gonna call you what you were assigned at birth. I mean, like, I was always buoyed by my queer friends who like, they were like, “Yeah, Ezra, they don’t know exactly. They’re not trying to label themselves and that’s not really a problem. So we’ll call them they or she or….” Yeah, that’s kind of how I liked it.

But then, yeah, the press would just always say “he,” and I think I was also slowly shedding an attachment to the, “I am unlabeled, amorphous, I’m not one of the things. I’m not labeled.” And I’ve just sort of shed my attachment to that, because I felt after a while just without an anchor, and the tide takes you. It’s true, though. My internal sense of gender is super chaotic, you know, and if I have to re-litigate it every day and rethink about it, it becomes a quite unstable thing. And yeah, I just used to have so many times that I was like, “What am I doing right now? Who am I supposed to be? I’m just going to go back to the original model of ‘I’m a cis man.’” And I slowly started to see that it was damaging. It’s damaging to me. To label yourself is actually a way of anchoring. Like this is where I want to be and the word—saying the words about it, and telling other people that use those words—will anchor me there in a really helpful way.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I love that. I love thinking about gender or identity as aspirational, but not just for trans people. Like cis people also being like, “Well, I’m trying to be this thing, so I’ll use these words to tether myself to that.” Like, I don’t think that’s a trans-exclusive experience. I think that is actually a really universal experience.

**Ezra:** Oh, yeah. It’s kind of how we handle everything that is a little unknown or unstable or chaotic. I mean, I’ve had the same thing about believing in G-d. And, I mean, that’s obviously an impossibly big can of worms, but it is the same kind of thing where you might change your mind about what you think might be the right way to talk about existence and the history of the cosmos. Every time you think about it is a mystery. But people usually choose something to anchor themselves, like, “This is sort of, generally, my take on that clusters around this area. This is the kind of language I want to use for this mysterious problem.” What I’m saying is, gender is as unknowable as the source of existence. It’s that kind of mystery.

**Tuck:** Well, you tweeted somewhat recently, “Have you ever noticed that gender is like a religion?” Do you want to talk more about that?

**Ezra:** [Laughs] Oh, yeah. It’s not really the catty, hot take like Twitter is made for. It’s like, I don’t know. People who are upset that I’m trans, they’re very religious about what gender is; they believe that gender exists. And I’m very religious about what my gender is; I’m just attached to it. And like, it’s just—the parallel is very strong. I mean, the part of that conversation that I liked was that somebody was like, “Yeah, it’s a cult. It’s like this messed up cult.” And just because I had also been thinking about cults recently, when they said that I was like, “I think *we’re* the cult. I think trans people are this mystic offshoot of the mainstream religion, and we’re doing our weird shit that’s not accepted and not canonical.” And [Laughs] but then I realized that that is not actually the main thing people are thinking of when they say cult; they think of something more harmful and coercive. But I was like, “Wait. Hashtag #notallcults.” [Both laugh] Some cults are weird and mystical and just not accepted by the main church, or whatever. So anyway, I think of being trans as being in a mystical cult.

**Tuck:** I love this. I love this for you. Well, other than our trans cult, religion’s obviously a big part of your life. I heard you’re in rabbinical school now? How’s that going?

**Ezra:** Ugh. It’s a little rocky. I kind of already dropped out. It just started; I’m just taking one class, is how it turns out, instead of all the classes. And I think I’m not on track to become a rabbi. And that’s okay. I really didn’t know if I was gonna even intend to finish. I’m just obsessed with Judaism, I’m obsessed with it, and wanted to be around those people and learning that stuff and I’m doing it in the way that I can. But yeah, it’s actually quite a huge time commitment, and I’m a parent of a toddler, and also have a whole other career that I am not quite ready to step away from. So I knew it was gonna be a stretch. It was a little too ambitious; it was more of a stretch than I realized. And I had a brief panic attack, and dropped out. And it was fine. I dunno. Really, the impulse to go to rabbinical school is that I want to learn to talk about spirituality. I feel like I’ve learned to express a lot of things that I thought could never be talked about or expressed, including via music, and being out about gender, and just being queer, and just a lot of things about being a human being. I used to be so fuckin’ repressed. And I’m way less repressed now. And I’ve learned to take a swing at the unsayable through music. But the thing in my inner life that I still haven’t learned to quite talk about is spirituality, religion, that kind of register remains really tough for me. I’m actively taking bricks out of that wall that stops me from speaking about my being haunted by G-d. Working on it.

**Tuck:** So, I have no idea if this is a universal experience or just sort of random for me, but I feel like a disproportionately high number of queer and trans people I know are Jewish. Like, I feel like if I talk to five trans people, one of them will invite me to Shabbat, which I love. I’m curious if that’s your experience, and if you feel like there’s a reason that those two identities go well together, or if you even do feel like they do.

**Ezra:** That’s a really interesting question that I haven’t probably thought about to really answer. Let me think about that. I mean, the first thing that comes to mind is that like, Judaism’s thing, sort of, has always been being a minority group in a larger culture that is always going to be in conversation with that mainstream culture, but is trying to transcend it, sort of. The Bible is sort of obsessed with kindness to the outsider, you know? Trans people are outsiders, and I can see how affinity could develop for that reason. The Jewish people is one of the longest running widely known reject subgroups. In a way I think that’s what the Hebrew Bible came to teach, to show the world a minority group and show it being totally itself and not compromising, but also always being in conversation with its host cultures, you know? That’s like what queer people, we’re all doing that. Yeah. So maybe in some scenes Judaism opens up that kind of thinking in some way, or the possibility of, “Maybe I’m really quite different from most of the people around me, and maybe that’s a holy thing. Maybe that’s a thing to love about myself and hold sacred.” I don’t know. I just think Jews are like, the mainstream is our enemy in some way. It always is. We just distrust the empire.

**Tuck:** So I want to circle back to parenting. We’ve had parents on the show before, and I’m always really interested in what the experience is for trans people to have a child who they’re then expected to assign a gender to. So yeah, I’m just curious if being a parent brought up any particular gender feelings or complications for you in that way.

**Ezra:** Well, my partner was pregnant and gave birth. And I was like—this is—I hesitate to talk about this because it’s so weird and personal. I was just like, “I’m pregnant, too.” I didn’t think that this was true. I didn’t—I wasn’t like saying it all the time. I wasn’t, like, harping on it. But I was like, looking up this phrase, “sympathetic pregnancy.” And I started writing. And I don’t write a lot of fiction anymore; I used to. I started writing this story about a trans woman whose partner is pregnant, and then she’s like, “I’m pregnant.” And then in the story, she goes to the doctor, and she’s like, “I’m pregnant, maybe. Can you check if I’m pregnant?” And the doctor’s like, “You’re not pregnant. What are you even talking about? Like, you don’t have a uterus; you’re not pregnant.” And she’s like, “*Just check*.” Because she’s, like, throwing up and stuff, and she’s like, “I feel like there’s something growing in me.” She’s like, “Just do an ultrasound,” you know? And then they find that there’s a second heart. She’s just growing a second heart in her stomach. And that’s the end of the story. Not a baby, just a heart. Complicated psychological stuff going on with me. And that like… [Laughs] and that was just, like, I don’t know.

This kid, our son, was born in December 2018. And the trans me was sort of being born in a way. I’d only been calling myself trans in public, like, that year. The answer is yes, I had gender feelings. [Both laugh] If you’re asking more about gendering our kid, I think me and my partner just had this same kind of instinct about it, which was like, just like, hold it very loosely. We didn’t feel a need to be like, “We should treat our kid as nonbinary,” because when you’re bringing up a child, you just shouldn’t gender them. Like there shouldn’t be that much to gendering them except pronouns. You know what I mean? There’s just like—he wears dresses sometimes. Like we’re not like—we were never in danger of being like, “always wear blue,” or whatever people do. I don’t even know, I’m so out of touch with cis culture. I couldn’t tell you what they’re doing to their children.

**Tuck:** Same.

**Ezra:** But yeah, we’re just like, okay, he/him. Just because that in itself, there’s no harm to that. I just feel like that’s not what gender oppression is. It’s other stuff. And he’s in a transphobic world, you know? Less transphobic perhaps than we were raised up in, but it’s not going to save him from transphobia to not use he/him pronouns for him, I guess. Then again, yeah, I do see what it does to do that. And I kind of—I’m like, “Respect,” you know? I get that. I think it probably brings its own little challenges, but they’re probably fine, you know? It’s so weird to have a kid, because you just make their world and they consent to nothing. They’re not able to consent to anything. You just make their world for them because you have to, and then they’ll probably resent it. They’ll resent some part of it, probably, if not most of it. And it’s kind of the job description, you know? Make a resentable world.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Which is why I think parenting is really brave. I’m like, do I want to make a resentable world? [squeamish noises] But you’re doing it.

**Ezra:** Yeah. You kind of have to own it.

**Tuck:** Well, I’m really curious to hear about your relationship to your voice as a singer and as a trans woman.

**Ezra:** Oh my g-d.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Because I have the opposite experience, right? Where when I transitioned in a specific way, my whole voice changed and I had to grapple with that, and you’re in the opposite experience where you’re hearing your voice all the time, and maybe your gender feelings are changing, but your voice isn’t changing, or maybe your voice is changing. I don’t know. I don’t want to speak for you. But I’m curious how that feels. Because you know, both of us have to listen to our voice all the time, professionally, which can be hard as trans people.

**Ezra:** I know. Tuck, I’m in the thick of it! Of course, like I always am. But this year, certain things that I always was like, “I don’t care about that. I don’t want to change that,” I’m now like, “I want to change that.” And my voice is one of them. And I think I’ve been speaking a little bit differently. Somebody recommended me some videos about how to change your voice. They give lessons and give voice training and therapy for trans people. She’s a trans woman. And just watching like, “Here’s a basic couple of five-minute introductory videos to these concepts and like, different qualities of voice and how you can hold your throat differently to change them,” I was like, “*Wow*. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow, I could do that.” So I’ve been thinking about that a lot. I don’t know when—it’s probably been a while since I started, every once in a while, I’m listening to NPR and just alone in the car, and I’m just like, “What if I talked just like the person on the radio?” I get butterflies in my stomach, just doing it right now, even with that little bit, you know? And it just makes me feel great.

It seems like Trans 101, but I feel like I’m just realizing that one of the best things, and the reason sometimes you feel so good about some changes you make in your gender, is just taking control. You just assumed you had no control of this thing about you forever. And you’re like, “I feel like changing this, and I can.” It’s almost like its own subcategory of gender euphoria, just like, “I could fucking do… I could do whatever. I could change this stuff.” Yeah. [Laughs] I don’t know. I’ve been singing a little differently. I think I’ve been writing, recently—you know, these songs are not out—I think I’ve been writing different types of songs, because of, partly to do with things of how I want my voice to be. So you know, I haven’t been screaming as much as I am accustomed to.

A weird thing about it is I have this other thing that’s parallel to gender voice dysphoria or something, which is that I’ve spent so long just listening to Cat Power’s voice and being like, “Why is that not my voice?” Or even in non-gendered ways, you know, like Harry Nilsson. I’m just like, “I wish I could do what you’re doing,” and I really can’t. And then that led me to sort of start trying to do my version of it, or something more like that. So just being a singer and being like, “Well, my voice is my voice. I can work on it. I can get a little better. There are also things that I can’t change about it.” I’m half comfortable with my voice and half, “What if I could change it more than I thought I could?”

**Tuck:** I was thinking about it because I always wrote songs at the bottom of my range, because it made me feel weird and dysphoric to sing higher, even before I could name what dysphoria was. And now that I currently can’t access any of my higher range, I can’t decide if I miss it or not. Because it has felt extremely, extremely good for me to be able to sing the low range of most songs written by men, but now I can’t sing the high parts of most songs written by men because my voice is fucked up. It’s changing very fast. And I’m like, “Well, I didn’t want this. I still—what?” And I know that it will get better once things smooth out, but it’s weird to be like, “Do I miss this thing that has felt bad previously? Or is this good actually? I’m unclear.”

**Ezra:** Yeah, I mean, to have a body is to have longing and yearning, right? You know? And if you change your body, you’re gonna have different longings and yearnings. I’ve been thinking about this a lot. I just actually made an appointment to talk to a real-life doctor about hormone replacement therapy, which I have not done at all, and I really barely considered until really, quite recently. And I still don’t know if I’m going to do it. But I guess I’ve just been learning a lot more about it. And I mean, I understand that you can try it. I feel so silly about it, but I think a lot of people think about it in this way of, it’s almost like stepping off a cliff, you know? Rather than just like, what it is, like you’re doing a hormonal adjustment. And if you don’t like it, you can stop.

**Tuck:** That’s exciting. I’m excited for you. I think that you’re completely right that it feels so much either, “I won’t go on HRT and I’ll be this way forever,” or, “I’ll go on HRT and I’ll be a totally different person forever.” And it’s extremely not like that. It goes so slowly, especially estrogen. You can really hop off at any moment. I think that it’s really exciting to get to see people just fuckin’ try it, because we’re taught as trans people that we should only be doing this if it’s our last possible resort and we’ll die if we don’t and we’re 100% sure, and the reality is we can just kind of do it whenever because it feels like a fun thing to try, you know?

**Ezra:** Mm-hmm! Yeah, I know! The more I learn and kind of wake up about these things, the more it seems like there’s just so many friggin’ ways to see something as not being possible or to see the control as not in your hands when so much of it is. I had these hang-ups about it for so long, that I knew they were trans clichés, but I was like, “HRT is for the real ones and I’m not one of the real ones.” And that’s what I thought of every step of the way. I was like, “People to whom this is really important, and I’m not that.” Like, I’m not one of these people who knows so deep in my bones since I was five years old that this is the way to go. And obviously, that’s a fairly common way to feel about it too, but that’s not a realer thing; that’s not more real than just being like, “It feels better if I do this. It feels better if I do this. I’m gradually making my life much more my own.” And changes I was making for years, I didn’t even—it took a long time to dawn on me that that’s what I was doing, like taking control of something. I just feel like the slowest trans person ever. I feel so slow.

**Tuck:** [Laughs] I mean, I feel like so many people’s transition is like, “I just figured out I’m trans and I’m starting HRT today and I have a top surgery consult for tomorrow and here’s my new names and here’s my pronouns.” And I’m like, “Every six months I take one step sideways towards my gender for the past five years, and I’m going to keep doing that, like until I die or figure out my gender.” Like just one little step to the left, every so often.

**Ezra:** Yeah, I feel very committed to asking all of the trans people and the different kinds of trans people to not judge each other, you know? I mean, I call myself slow. But only I can say that. You know what I mean? Do not *ever* fuckin’ condescend to me about how this process has gone for me and my hesitant steps, you know?

**Tuck:** Yeah, of course.

**Ezra:** I will be so mad.

**Tuck:** Yeah, of course! [Both laugh]

**Ezra:** It’s also, I mean, it’s weirdly an issue of access, or it’s like, complicated kinds of access to knowledge and conversations about it. I didn’t hear the idea of people being trans until I was like, 21, I think. And then, still, I was like, 25, and I didn’t understand anything about it. I feel like there’s a lot of luck in who you find that knows about it and can talk to about it. Maybe that was more true 10 years ago. When I was *25*, Tuck.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, I wanted to ask while we’re here, I know you’re a big Lou Reed fan. You wrote a book about Lou Reed’s *Transformer* for the 33 ⅓ series. I’m assuming that a lot of people mostly know Lou Reed from “Walk on the Wild Side,” and they heard the first verse and they formed a feeling about Lou Reed’s trans politics and never thought about it again. I would love to hear what you think about how we as non-Lou-Reed-heads should think and what we should know about Lou Reed, and his relationship to queerness and gender, because I feel like that’s had an influence on you.

**Ezra:** Oh my g-d, yeah. Well, I feel compelled to say that Lou Reed is not my role model. And has never been, I guess, except when, in the sense that I heard the Velvet Underground and I was like, “I *will* be in a rock and roll band. I can do it!” As I think I say in the book, my fandom of Lou Reed is actually more like, half fandom and half morbid fascination, sort of? Or just like, “What is going on with you?” And there’s a certain kind of artist that won’t resolve into a coherent public narrative that, I just can’t look away from that. I’m just like, “That is fascinating.” It first looked to me like freedom with Lou Reed, but it’s not. It wasn’t really freedom. It was like a refusal to give anyone a coherent story about himself. And I think especially when I wrote that book, in like 2015, 16, 17, I wanted that. I wanted to refuse. I just wanted to shapeshift. I mean, I think a lot of trans people will know this feeling of like, “I hate hearing a person who doesn’t get it talk about me,” and it’s not always even what they say or that they’re saying the wrong words. It’s like, “I just feel your fucking normative gaze on me. It’s like the way it comes out of your mouth; the way you talk about me.”

Yeah, so that’s what I see Lou Reed pushing against constantly. And in weirdly, confusingly different directions, you know? Sometimes that looks like him doing an American Express ad in 1983 or whenever that was. It just feels like he partly did that because he knows there’s this whole world of people who are like, “Lou Reed would never do something like that.” And yeah, he has this uncomfortable song in the early ’80s called “Women,” where he’s like, “I love women.” The whole song is like, “I love women”; there’s no nuance, and you’re like, “You’re just too complicated a person to just be saying that, and that’s the song.” You know what I mean? Like, you were the famous gay for so long. He has this sort of righteous refusal thing to be pinned down, but it’s really not always righteous. And he’s truly a bad guy a lot of the time, and also opened a world of queerness to so many people and supported so many other artists, and like, it’s like…

**Tuck:** It’s almost like people are complicated and have nuance, and multiple facets.

**Ezra:** Right.

**Tuck:** Well, this is the part of the show where I ask what else you want to talk about that we haven’t talked about yet?

**Ezra:** You know what? I just keep having this thought and wanting to say it out loud. I just never know quite how to say it. But we’re in a golden age of being able to give money to people who need money, and consider doing that with your extra money. I feel like it’s a hard thing to talk about. And everyone’s very quiet about charity or donating to organizations that are doing important things. I’m trying to practice saying it all the time: choose some portion of your paycheck to put in places where it’s needed. You could actually kind of save a bunch of lives with incredibly little money, or support a thing that might—that wouldn’t survive without monetary help. We’re in a golden age of it. I’m just saying. That’s the thing that came to mind when you asked me that.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I feel so lucky that Gender Reveal as a community, and also people just that randomly follow me on the internet, have been so generous that we can do a $14,000 mutual aid round in three days, or we can do our grant program twice a year or whatever. It’s just really, really amazing the amount of times when I’m just like, “Hey, you want to give some money to some transsexuals?” and someone just Venmos me $200 immediately, you know? It’s really actually extremely heartening to see that happen. And then whenever I’ve been able to get other people involved in the distribution, which was mostly Trans Day of Snack, everyone in every step of the process was so hype. The people sending in the money was hype, the people distributing the money was hype, the people getting the money was hype. And it’s just… it’s like a thing you can do to spread joy around regardless of what part of the process you’re in. And obviously not just joy, also survival but—both.

**Ezra:** Yeah, no, but also parallel to getting people just resources for survival, it’s also just so fun to be a fan of a thing and participate in it. And it’s a special cultural time in a way, because you can just fund art you like; it’s so easy to do that, you know, and it’s, I always thought, very enjoyable. Like it’s very fun to be a fan in that way, in that contributing way.

**Tuck:** Well, as you know, the way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Ezra:** Oh! The future of gender. I think that it should—and will—just get quite specific. And maybe even like, it could get kind of weird and beautiful in that specificity. I feel like it’s gonna be like, saying what your gender is and saying, “I’m a trans woman, cis woman,” that would be like being like, “What kind of music do you play?” and you’d be like, “Rock.” And you’re like, you know, “Okay, *that’s* your answer? But what’s your real answer?” You know? So there’d be like, yeah, all kinds of subgenders, you know what I’m saying? It could be like, “submissive orchid vandal” would be one, you know? Or like, masc-fem Billy Joel. And then yeah, there could be whole scenes of genders that are like, “Our genders are all different Billy Joel lyrics.” My gender is, “JFK, blown away. What else do I have to say?” [Laughs]

**Tuck:** Which, I think this is perfect because your music is often gender…. Gender-defying—see? Your music is often gender-defying, *and* genre-defying. And so I think this makes perfect sense.

**Ezra:** Yeah. And also you can do, you can have multiples, you know. You can have multiple genders.

**Tuck:** You can mix it up over time.

**Ezra:** You can have a collection of genders. They’ll be like pogs, really. [Tuck laughs] And you can kind of get together with other people and show them off. And then maybe you can win them from each other.

**Tuck:** Yeah, you can trade them.

**Ezra:** Like, “Oh, you wanted to keep that gender of yours? You shouldn’t have gone up against the master!” [Tuck laughs] I’ve got a very expansive vision here.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or learned something, please share this episode with other folks who might also appreciate it. You can find Ezra Furman at ezrafurman.com, where she’s got records for sale. She has several extremely cool t-shirts that I recommend checking out, plus dates for her 2022 tour. That’s all at ezrafurman.com. We are at genderpodcast.com and on social media @gendereveal, and you can support the work we do here on this show and sign up for bonus content at patreon.com/gender. Our online community is at bit.ly/genderslack2, which is also where I sourced some of the news for our This Week in Gender segment this week, so I just want to thank everyone who contributes there.

This episode was produced and edited by Julia Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh; our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Ezra:** Oh my g-d, what’s my status on the Gender Reveal Patreon? Am I still on it? I think my year ran out. I gotta re-up.

**Tuck:** I have no idea, but thank you! [Laughs] If you get our annoying newsletter, it means you’re still in it, and if not, it means you’re not.

**Ezra:** I haven’t seen it! Ugh. I gotta—I’m redoing it. Rejoining!

**Tuck:** No presh, no presh!

**Ezra:** Hear that, listeners? [Tuck laughs]