**Tuck:** Shopping for sex toys can sometimes feel overwhelming or dysphoric, but [ShopEnby.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CAppData%5CRoaming%5CMicrosoft%5CWord%5Cshopenby.com) aims to create a better experience for the queer, trans, and gender nonconforming community. I was on [ShopEnby.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CAppData%5CRoaming%5CMicrosoft%5CWord%5Cshopenby.com) the other day picking something out, and not only do they have harnesses and dildos and vibes and plugs and lube and all the other stuff you'd expect, they also have packers and dilators and STPs and other gender things. They have a section called homo goods, which I eventually realized is a joke on “home goods”! Very clever. As you might expect, the whole website is gender-neutral, which rocks! As a Black and trans-owned sex toy company, the cuties at ShopEnby.com are sensualists with a mission. Two percent of all proceeds are donated to orgs focused on improving the lives of queer and trans people of color, and Shop Enby is a carbon-negative company, so every sale funds renewable energy and forest conservation projects. Visit [ShopEnby.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CAppData%5CRoaming%5CMicrosoft%5CWord%5Cshopenby.com), that’s s-h-o-p-e-n-b-y-dot-com. Use the code “Gender Reveal” at checkout to get 10% off, support our show, and bring more pleasure and affirmation into your life.

[*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 hanging in there. Remember last week when I was like, “So sorry, we have a secret mystery episode! You may never hear it, it may never see the light of day.” Well, here it is, baby, a lot sooner than I thought. Today, we are chatting with Tobin Low, who you probably know from being the co-host of the podcast *Nancy*. We recorded this conversation back in June, and I am so glad to finally be releasing it. This conversation was not only just an absolute delight, but also, I think, a key opportunity for both Tobin and me to reflect on our work making queer podcasts.

**Tobin [voice clip]:** That, I think, is the fuckup, or the regret in how *Nancy* was done, and what I would do differently if we got a chance to do it again.

**Tuck:** We also talk about Nancy's cancellation, racism and dating, getting gay married, whether a cis/trans binary is a useful thing, and our evolving opinions of masculinity.

**Tobin [voice clip]:** I don't know, I feel like I'm beating up on masculinity here, but…. [Laughs]

**Tuck:** Before we get to that, just the quickest of quick reminders that we have a ton of new merch at [Bit.ly/GenderMerch](http://bit.ly/gendermerch), and also that you can support the show and sign up for our newsletter at [Patreon.com/Gender.](http://patreon.com/gender) We have a TheyMail message for you this week, and it says:

“The first Seattle Trans Beach Day is coming up on Saturday, August 21. We'll be taking over Seattle's Madison Park Beach and making an awesome trans space where we can be free and make all of the cis people uncomfortable. This is a POC-organized event, and all trans, nonbinary, and non-cis folks are very welcome. We'll have so much free food from vegan tamales to super queer popsicles. More information and updates at [SeattleTransBeachDay.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CAppData%5CRoaming%5CMicrosoft%5CWord%5Cseattletransbeachday.com). Spread the word. Beep boop.”

I, Tuck, will also add that I'm planning to go, so if you go, you may see me there! In which case, feel free to say hi, or beep boop, or whatever. And now it's time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

**Tuck:** So, for a while now I've been toying with this idea of bringing in other trans folks to write This Week in Gender essays for us, particularly when there is a topic in the news that I don't feel like I am the best person to really do that topic justice. You might remember in Episode 88, when Nina Medvedeva came in to talk about the Euphoria suite of apps. Well, recently, this ridiculous letter that Buck Angel and some other people signed has gotten likeautogynephilia back in… I want to say the news, but really it's like, the Twitter trending topics. And I was definitely not the right person to talk about that, so our producer Julia Llinas Goodman reached out to Tobi Hill-Meyer, who is going to be taking over for me today for This Week in Gender. It is a quite a long one, so if you are not up to listen to a discussion of the history of the concept of autogynephilia today, skip about 10 minutes and you'll get to the interview with Tobin. But right now I want to turn it over to Tobi, so:

Tobi Hill-Meyer is an Indigenous, Chicana trans woman. She is editor of the Lambda Literary Finalist anthology *Nerve Endings: The New Trans Erotic.* She is theauthor of children's books *A Princess of Great Daring* and *Super Power Baby Shower*. And she is the director of the award-winning erotic documentary series *Doing it Online*. She is dedicated to community support and fighting for positive change at a local level, is a founder of Gender Justice League, and currently serves on the Washington State LGBTQ Commission. And she lives in Olympia, Washington.

**Tobi:** Recently, Buck Angel and a few other people released a letter called “Trans Men Fight Back.” It left many shocked and confused. The main argument was that conversion therapy could be beneficial to some trans people, but that trans women—specifically autogynephiles—had taken leadership of the trans movement in order to get conversion therapy banned. The whole thing read like it was written by a TERF who somehow tricked some trans men into signing it. Did they really *want* conversion therapy? And what is an autogynephile?

[Spare, plaintive guitar music plays]

I can’t really answer that first question, but I have some answers for the second one. In his 2003 book *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, J. Michael Bailey presented an argument that all trans women transition for one of two reasons. Supposedly, some trans women are gay men who want to become feminine as a part of their relationships with men. Essentially, these are straight trans women, who he misgenders by calling “homosexual transsexuals.” All other trans women—queer, lesbian, bi, pan, and even asexual—he depicts as straight men who fetishize women so much that the idea of becoming one is a sexual turn-on.

The idea of splitting all trans women into two groups isn’t new. Going back to some of the first Western doctors working with trans patients, there’s always been a two-type model for trans people. First it was the “true transsexual” and “secondary transsexual.” Then it was the “transsexual” and “transvestic fetishism.” In the DSM-V, they changed “gender identity disorder” to “gender dysphoria,” but Bailey’s mentor, Ray Blanchard, snuck in “autogynephilia” as another diagnosis to join it.

In each case, there’s one diagnosis that is seen as more legitimate, more deserving of treatment, and more real. While the other diagnosis weaponizes sexual shame to denigrate and dismiss the trans women they see as undeserving. The first gender clinics turned away a strong majority of the people seeking their help. They were under pressure to prove the legitimacy of their work, and they believed that turning so many away would prove that those they accepted were truly deserving. This two-type diagnosis is how they decided who to accept and who to reject for treatment.

[Guitar music ends]

The main criteria for being deserving or not was always around sexuality. When living as a woman, did you ever get sexually aroused and masturbate, or were you too disgusted by your genitals to consider it? Were you interested in your own sexual pleasure, or mostly interested in sex to be validated as desirable to straight men? After transition, did you plan to blend into society as a straight cis man’s wife, or were you interested in cis women, other trans people, being single, or hanging out with queer or trans people? For decades, they almost universally refused to give medical care to anyone who wasn’t going to appear straight after transition.

At one point, whether or not your doctor was attracted to you was actually an official diagnostic criteria. Because the assumption was that the doctor was a straight man, and if he was attracted to you, you must be sufficiently a woman. If he wasn’t attracted to you or turned off by you, then you were really a man who was just confused. Apparently, the doctor’s libido never lies.

They later removed that unprofessional diagnostic tool, but the desires of male doctors continued to play a role all the way up to Bailey. Doctors were clearly motivated to make trans women into viable sexual partners for “normal” straight men. One of the highest priorities of early vaginoplasty was having “adequate depth” to accommodate the average penis. The patient’s own pleasure was deprioritized, and sometimes not considered at all. Ray Blanchard claims to have invented the idea of the homosexual transsexual and the autogynephile, but mostly, he just renamed the two-type diagnosis and created a more specific definition. Bailey is credited with popularizing it, and Bailey embodies all the worst qualities that have influenced this system over the years.

[Gentle percussion music plays]

While Bailey claims not to discriminate against autogynephiles, on page 206 of his book he lets others make the case that they shouldn’t be allowed surgery. Bailey describes autogynephiles as, quote, “men trapped in men’s bodies,” and more likely to have surgery regrets. On the other hand, he describes “homosexual transsexuals” as, quote, “naturally feminine,” “better looking than autogynephiles,” “more attractive than the average genetic female,” “having male levels of sex drive,” and “well-suited to prostitution.” It reads like a description of his fantasy trans woman more than anything else.

It would be difficult to hide this stark belief from his psychotherapy patients. And since he would have the ability to grant or deny medical access, it’s likely many of his patients attempted to conform to his ideas about the deserving trans woman. That’s why I was not surprised when, just after his book came out, he was caught having sex with his patients and publishing their experiences without permission. It already appeared as if he was exploiting his patients. Apparently, he wasn’t opposed to sexually exploiting them as well.

He bases most of his theory on his own patients, but were they even telling the truth? Even Bailey recognized some patients were telling him what he wanted to hear in order to get access to surgery. But he just concludes that autogynephiles commonly lie to hide being an autogynephile. Conveniently, this also sets up a perfect defense to his ideology: if any trans woman disagrees with his theory or claims that neither of the two models apply to her, then she must just be an autogynephile trying to deny it. This is a classic fallacy of being non-falsifiable. Then there’s the circular logic where he forces everyone into these two types based on his diagnostic criteria, then points to the fact they match his criteria as proof that it is a natural distinction. The stories of these two types might ring true for a few trans people out there, but the idea that all of us can only exist within these two stories would be laughable, if it wasn’t so harmful.

When a guy declares that there are two types of women in the world, attractive subservient women who are available for sex with men, and the pitiable ugly bitches who disagree with him, most of us would assume he was a pickup artist or an incel. In the end, this theory put together by Bailey and the doctors before him is little more than the sexual fantasy of abusive men exploiting trans women’s own shame and vulnerability to force them to present the kind of womanhood that they find most desirable. Hypothetically, some trans men could be autoandrophiles, but that’s never discussed and not stigmatized. It’s one of the great ironies of this letter that Buck Angel fits the autoandrophile definition perfectly, yet he can claim to be one of the good ones while pointing to the undeserving trans women, because being a man interested in sex is just “normal.”

So when TERFs or the trans men who wrote that letter decry trans women in positions of leadership, they are just grasping at the same tired old misogyny in order to tear down women they are threatened by. And as weird as their argument sounds, when you understand the full context, it just becomes all the more ridiculous.

[Background music ends]

**Tuck:** This has been This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Tobin Low is an editor at *This American Life*, and the co-creator of the queer podcast *Nancy*.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

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

**Tobin:** Well… I guess I'll start by saying my pronouns are he/him, which feels like, base level. Uh… I don't know. This is a tough question, that I know people who are gender nonconforming have to answer all the time! And here I am a boring cis person trying to answer it.

**Tuck:** That's the whole thing.

**Tobin:** Yeah, I feel like if I had to define my gender, it's like a very unconsidered absence of kind of thing, that I think cis people don't, like, stop to think about that often. So maybe there's like a blank space there in terms of just how much I've wrestled with like, my actual gender. In terms of gender performance, I feel like I've done more thought about that. But even that I’m like, “Sometimes I paint my nails,” or you know, whatever, like level one. Let's say I'm level one on that kind of stuff.

**Tuck:** Yeah. You know some people, a lot of people, have said that their gender performance changed in quarantine because they weren't performing for other people, they were just like, being themselves. Did the way that you perform gender, or think about yourself, change at all during quarantine?

**Tobin:** Not particularly, because the stuff that I was wrestling with, I was doing before. And I feel like there is something about, how you feel, out in the world, is part of it. So I feel like the work that I have done on that was more like pre-quarantine, and the stuff I did in quarantine was more like, boring cis gay stuff. Like, I bleached my hair when there was trauma, you know? [Tuck laughs] That kind of stuff.

**Tuck:** The universal experience for all genders. [Laughs]

**Tobin:** Yeah, that's true, not limited to just gay cis guys. But, yeah.

**Tuck:** Amazing. Well, [sighs] there are obviously troubling tropes about Asian masculinity, and you did this story for *Nancy* about someone who is known as the first Asian top. And when I was confirming that, I just Googled like, “first Asian top,” and it immediately popped up like, “Tobin Low, colon,” and like the Nancy transcript. [Both chuckling] I'm curious how you feel race affects the way that either you engage with your gender, or just the way that other people engage with your gender? Because like you said, it's so much like, the way that you're interacting with other people.

**Tobin:** Yeah. I mean the way I've thought about this has evolved so much over time, because I think a lot of Asian guys go through this thing. Like the journey seems to be when you're younger, there's a real clinging to the idea of masculinity, and that being the goal and what you want to be perceived as. Then the feeling that Asian men aren't perceived that way is an insult, and it's a problem that you're not seen that way. And certainly, if that's what you want your gender performance to be seen and accepted as, as the sort of like, more masculine side of things, it is a *huge* issue that the default is to see Asian men as somehow... I don't know if “docile” is the right word, or whatever, et cetera, et cetera.

But the way my thinking has evolved now, is like, fuck masculinity, or fuck this toxic idea that you have to be strong or that strongness or machismo is owned by being perceived as masculine or male in that very traditional sense. I feel honestly, Bowen Yang on SNL has done a lot for thinking about like, you know, he's up there, presenting all kinds of queerness and performance of gender that might be coded as more effeminate in some ways. I know people call him out as like, “Oh, this is affirming like, a negative stereotype of Asian men,” or whatever. I’m just like, fuck that! He's up there being just as funny, just as strong as anyone else. I want to rethink, I have been rethinking, like what are the qualities that we cling to, in this idea of what makes a man strong. Or, I don't know, am I being clear about this? I don't know.

**Tuck:** You are being extremely clear, and I want to hear more about what you're saying. I also just hadn't heard that critique of Bowen, and I’m just like, “How *fucking dare they?”* Who are these people? [Laughs]

**Tobin:** Oh yeah. [Laughs] I listen to his podcast a bunch, and he talked about people critiquing him or coming at him specifically for him and his performance as a queer man. I just... it's so boring, like that kind of critique is so boring. I like, I think it's done a lot for me to see him up there and be powerful in that way. And sort of performing Asian masculinity in this different kind of way.

**Tuck:** Yeah, but yeah, talk to me more about that, because I am thinking about this as someone who is more and more considering themselves to be a transmasculine person. Where for a long time, like, that is not a word that I used to describe me, because I did not want to participate in thinking about like, what masculinity… meant? And now, I feel like it is a convenient enough shorthand for what I'm trying to do, and be, that I will *use* it. But if someone was like, “Okay, tell me what the things that you're doing are that are masculine,” I would be like, “Well… I realized that in order to pass I needed to be less... nice?” [Both laugh] So, and I realized that you don't have to be nice if you're, you know, it's just such bullshit. So tell me more about what you've been thinking about with regards to manhood and masculinity and sort of the intersections and non-intersections of that.

**Tobin:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, I feel I'm getting at stuff that people have talked about in much more articulate ways than I am doing right now. But it's that thing where I do think that there are real qualities that maybe we associate with masculinity or femininity, that we can view as sort of a useful categorization, maybe we associate more with one or the other. But I'm very interested in the people who are talking about divorcing those qualities from words like “strong” or “docile,” or, you know, that sort of added judgment that adds qualitative value to it. I'm interested in the ways that stuff that is coded as feminine can also be strong and can also be powerful, and it's not reserved purely for how much lack of emotion you have. I don't know, I feel like I'm beating up on masculinity here but I just…. [Laughs]

**Tuck:** I think it's okay. I think that beating up on masculinity is punching up, and it's all right. [Both laugh] It like runs our whole society.

**Tobin:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** So, way back in 2017, which I think was 100 years ago, You did this interview for INTO where you said like, “The thing I think about all the time is how racist we are as a community”—nice—“and how bad we are at talking about that racism. I would like to see more honest conversations about that aspect of dating.” Do you feel like in the last… 400 years… we have improved in that at all as sort of like a queer community, or do you feel like we're still just as stuck as we were with regards to talking about racism in dating?

**Tobin:** I do think it's gotten better. Like, I see people doing the work to question, like, what does preference even mean? I guess when I talked about that in the past, one of the things I'm pointing at a lot is this idea that sometimes people hide behind their preferences as a way of not dealing with racism. And I feel like I've seen more people be better about calling that out. But I still think there's a stumbling block that I see happen, which is when a person who feels like they've done the work to be at peace with themselves and their sexuality—let's say in this case, their sexual preferences for their partners—then when you try and talk about the race element that makes that complicated in their preferences, it's like, “Well, *how dare,”* you know like, “I've done the work to figure out what I like, and also to not have people tell me what I can and can't like,” you know? And so like that, that sort of thing that's hard to get somebody who has that attitude to push past, I still think that's real.

**Tuck:** Well, speaking of dating, you are gay engaged to be gay married? Or you’re already gay married?

**Tobin:** Oh, we're one of those couples that were engaged pre-pandemic and then maybe had some thoughts about a wedding, and then pandemic happened and everything is on pause. So we'll probably go to a courthouse at some point, sometime soon.

**Tuck:** Cool cool cool. Well, congrats on being gay engaged, really really exciting. Gays getting married can be seen as both upholding and challenging a heteronormative institution, right? I'd love to hear how you think about marriage and its value for queer people.

**Tobin:** Um, honestly insurance. [Laughs]

**Tuck:** Mmhm.

**Tobin:** Like, I just think that for me and my partner, if I was to speak for us, I don't think that the institution of marriage holds that much meaning for the two of us. I don't want to, obviously, I don't want to step on the people who fought hard for it and for whom it does mean a whole lot to them. I think for me personally, it doesn't mean a whole lot for my relationship. It's not gonna change that much. I think I like the idea of being married from the perspective of, if I think about my little universe, I do think it means something in my family that my parents are still married, which is amazing, and my older brother and older sister are both married. I do think I would feel a kind of way if I was outside of this little thing that means something within my family. So I feel like that is where I draw the meaning from. Weddings I could give a fuck about, like weddings I do not care.

**Tuck:** Let's see. Oh, I wrote in my notes, “Tobin probably can't say this but it's literally homophobic that *Nancy* was canceled.” So, um, uh, let's go over here! [Laughs]

**Tobin:** I mean you said it, I did not. Also, do you remember what month it was canceled in?

**Tuck:** Yes! Oh my god, no, I forgot, but now I remember. Sorry, I screamed in your ear. Oh my god, I forgot. [Tobin laughs] Jesus Christ. Okay, I want to talk about *Nancy*, homophobic that it was canceled. Do you feel like making *Nancy* changed the way that you thought about gender or queerness in any way?

**Tobin:** Yeah, it absolutely did. Kathy [Tu] and I have talked about this before, but I think when we first started the show, we felt like if we were going to make a queer podcast, and especially one on such a big platform, that we should have all the answers—that we should have everything figured out. I certainly think there was a *huge* responsibility to be informed, and to not promote misinformation, especially about things that people fuck up so often. But I do think one of the things we learned, hugely, it’s like, things are changing all the time, and the best thing you can do is to just ask questions, and be informed, in a respectful way. Like don't go asking… don't be wild people, like don't be asking invasive questions. But curiosity can be a generous thing, and to say like, “I don't know, and I'm gonna go find out,” or “I'm gonna, like, educate myself,” is a generous act. And so, I think a lot more about my queerness as something that is constantly being informed and constantly evolving, as opposed to this thing that I needed to arrive at and understand immediately as soon as I came out as queer, let's say. It's much more this thing that will continue to morph, as I understand more and get to know more people.

**Tuck:** Yeah, absolutely. It's, I think, tricky to have that balance of like, I want to be informed as a host, and also I want to make sure that I'm learning all of the time, and, yeah. [Sighs] Well, this sucks and I want to talk to you about it. So, I remember being frustrated at a couple points in *Nancy* because there were more straight people working at *Nancy* than they were trans people. To be clear, some of those straight people are good friends of mine who I love, so it's not them specifically. But like, I know that you all weren't in charge of hiring as hosts. Is that a conversation that you had internally about who the show was for, and whether you were trying to include trans people? I'm just curious what your thoughts were about that.

**Tobin:** Yeah. I mean it is something that I, especially in retrospect, think a lot about. Well, okay, so let me address the first part of your question, which is like, just, we had a lot of straight people work—not a *lot*, but more than, let's say, the queer or especially trans people working on the show. Like, there is the reality of just, basically we were given who the station had to offer to make the first part of the show. Then, when we had some hiring power, we got to hire a little bit, but it was still within sort of some confines of what the station could offer.

That being said, I think one of the things that we tried to fix with that was, like, working with trans contributors. But do I think we did as good of a job as we could have on that? Absolutely not, and that's where I think the real fuckup was, just not acknowledging it. I recognize that I did stories on trans people, and we didn't have a trans editor or somebody touch it along the way. In retrospect, like, that's where I think the real fuckup is. We needed to push harder, to just be like, “Even if we don't have somebody on staff, that is essential to get this right, to run it by somebody in this way.” That, I think, is the fuckup, or the regret in how *Nancy* was done, and what I would do differently if we got a chance to do it again.

**Tuck:** So, something else that I thought about, that I've talked to you about, is that I think that it was really fucking unfair that y'all were like the one queer show, before we went back to having the no queer shows, that was like, member supported. Because then there was this expectation, I think, of, or if I were you, I would put this expectation on myself, of trying to be this thing for everyone. Because you're like, “Well, I'm the only LGBTQ show, so somehow I have to like, represent all of this.” I guess I'm also just curious how you thought about that, and whether there was a specific demographic of people or specific envisioned audience, rather than like every single queer and trans person that has ever existed? Because I think that's unrealistic.

**Tobin:** Yeah, I mean, I think the mandate that we had set out for ourselves, which we thought was narrow in some way, and now I laugh at, we were like, “We want to make a show for mostly queer people of color.” And already, I'll just say, when we pitched that in certain rooms, there was a pushback of like, “Well that's really niche.” And I think we continued to try to make the show that we wanted to, even with that feedback from various folks. But if I were to sit with myself now and think about that, even *that* is a huge mandate. The people you're trying to serve when you say queer people of color is still a huge audience with very varied stories and needs and wants.

So, I think the way that we started was like, trying to do as much as we could, to cover as wide a scope as we could. I think the episodes that we were actually happier with, or felt more sort of like, we did something, was when we owned that it was more just from Kathy [Tu] and my perspective, within sort of our universe, and own the narrowness of that even. Then it feels like it's coming from a person, for a person, as opposed to this, like, we're trying to hit this wide map of whatever. I think if we had accepted some of that limitation, it probably could have led to more conversations about like, “Well, then if we're owning that we as hosts have this narrow point of view, we need to push even harder for contributors, outside of our lane.” As opposed to we, as the hosts, are trying to cover it all, we're trying to do it all, you know? I think that that's part of how we evolved in thinking about the audience a little bit.

**Tuck:** You know, you saying that makes me think about the way that I framed my show as well, which is also a show where I have a mandate for myself where it's never going to be a majority-white show. Because I think that is boring, and we don't need to make it. But at the same time, that doesn't mean that I'm doing a good job at getting guests that represent the full spectrum of being a trans person of color. I can have a mandate to make sure that, you know, we're bringing a lot of Black and Indigenous people, Asian and Latinx people, and still be falling into like this same general demographic of experience. Which, I do do that, because I reach out to people that I am aware of as a person, and that's going to be within a specific bubble.

And so, yeah, I think that that's, like, a really important thing to recognize and I just have been thinking a lot about how it shows up on this show, so I'm glad that you gave me an opportunity to just say that! Like yeah, sometimes we just fail at that, because it's really hard to be aware that you're in a bubble and then be like, “How do I get out of this bubble?” And you like try to get out, and you're like, “Oh no I'm still in it! Like, I’m still in the bubble. I’m still here!” [Laughs]

**Tobin:** Yeah, yeah. Can I just say, also… I think it was Shereen Marisol Meraji. Years before *Nancy* was even a thing, I heard her talk at a thing about *Code Switch*. She was saying, if you're going to do this work of covering underrepresented communities, you have to accept that it's hard, and that you will fuck up, and that you have to own those fuckups, and that's just part of the process. I think that both things can be true—that I'm so proud of the work we did, and like so proud of the representation we did have, while also owning, like, we absolutely fucked up some things.

There were limitations there, but that's part of the work. If you want to cover these communities you accept that you are constantly in some way getting it wrong. I would like to think that if we had had the opportunity to continue, we could have corrected and corrected and corrected, which is part of this work, you know? It's accepting that some days you will get it wrong, in some way. And that you'll do better. Does that make sense?

**Tuck:** Yes, it does. And I also think that it's easier to do that when you have other shows that you're in community with, that you can sort of like grow with and push each other. I also think it's easier if you have resources. So, there are just a lot of things that I would love to turn back time and be like, [Both laugh] what if instead of no *Nancy* we actually had five *Nancy*? [Laughs] Then there would be more space for everyone to be represented, and everyone to play in the space. Yeah it just… I don't have to tell you, but it's a frustrating situation. Especially now in June, when they're like, “Oh, but now we need queer podcasts! What if we put *Nancy* in the playlist for 2021 Pride?”

**Tobin:** Oh my god, the amount of LGBT podcast lists we've been put on this month. Folks, we've been gone for over a year. That is frustrating. Like, I mean, I'm happy people are still talking about the show, but I also just think... One of the things that always came up for us whenever we were interviewed about it was like, people would ask us, like, “How does it feel to be the first queer storytelling podcast?” Or, “the only.” You know, something that alluded to like, “You guys are *it*.” We would try so hard to just be like, “That's not true.” Also, it's this weird, like, one-seat-at-the-table mentality, that people only have space in their head for one queer podcast at a time or whatever.

**Tuck:** Yeah, because famously queer people only need to listen to one podcast, and then they're done for the week, and they just shut down. Then they wait for the next episode. [Laughs]

**Tobin:** Mmhm, mmhm. One square meal a day, one podcast.

**Tuck:** God, was it last year or the year before, when Apple had in its pride collection more RuPaul’s Drag Race recap podcasts than they had trans podcasts? And I was like, “Buddies. It's not LGB-RuPaul’s Drag Race.” [Both laughing]

**Tobin:** LGB… RPDR.

**Tuck:** Yes…. Uh, well, I have been offering cis guests an opportunity, if you have any questions for me, a trans person, about gender.

**Tobin:** Oh my god! [Laughs] Okay, I have a question. I have been interested in... I feel like I've seen Alok Vaid-Menon, for example, talk about the barriers between like, trans is over here, and cis is over here, is like… dumb, and it would be better if we sort of thought of it all as a spectrum. So I wonder if for trans folks, if the ideal end goal one day is in some way to get rid of the idea of transness, as another separate thing? Or does it feel useful, and it's just like the stigma and misinformation around it?

**Tuck:** Yeah.... It's a good question, and I think it will not surprise you to hear that trans people are not a monolith.

**Tobin:** Yes, [laughs] right.

**Tuck:** And there are some people who are very much like, “Yes, in this ideal world, we stop assigning genders at birth, and thus the word cis no longer exists, because cis is based on the gender assigned at birth.” And then there are other people for whom they're like, “No, trans people will still exist, and cis people will still exist, it will just be that being trans doesn't cause you undue hardship and misery for all of these like gatekeeping systems and, like, systemic oppression.”

I think that one of the ways that I actually see that reflected is actually in the way that different trans people gender, or don't gender, their kids. Because there are trans people who will have babies and will be like “It's a girl!”, and I'm always like, “You're trans! [Tobin laughs] Why are you so confident that this is a girl?” And they're like, “Well, statistically, you know, it's likely that it's a girl.” I’m like, “[skeptical noise], I guess.” You know, there are other trans people who are like, “I'm trans, and so I'm going to use they/them pronouns for my kid until they can tell me their gender,” and there are trans people who are like, “I'm going to use gendered pronouns for my kid because it is easier on them, but it is not something that I'm attached to. I find it to be very flexible, and also it's vaguely uncomfortable to do so.”

I think that in that way, we can sort of see the way that different people, and not just trans people, but different people, are sort of envisioning what the evolution of that would look like. I also think, while I'm on my soapbox, that's something I try to talk to people about, is that in order to be considered sort of medically “trans enough,” trans people, and especially trans youth, are expected to consistently, insistently, persistently identify with their gender. If I was like, “Hey Tobin. Do you consistently, insistently, persistently identify as male?”

**Tobin:** I don't, I feel like I wouldn't even know what that means, you know what I mean?

**Tuck:** Right, yeah! So it's completely ridiculous. I think that if there was as much gatekeeping around being cis as there was around being trans, we would have so many fewer cis people. Because most of the cis people I talk to are like, “I'm just vibing, like, I don't think about it at all.” In some ways, that's because you don't have to, but in other ways, maybe if you thought about it more, you wouldn't feel as attached to it.

Which means that there's this huge middle space, right, to just all the people that are like, “I don't know.” And I think that's where a lot of people are, that's where *most* people are, just like, “I don't know, I'm whatever.” And so I think that a cis-trans binary is not useful, just like almost no binaries that I can possibly think of are useful. I cannot think of one, but I want to leave there space to be some good binary, but I don't know what it is. So does that… help at *all*? Was that anything?

**Tobin:** Yeah, it absolutely is. I mean, I think at the end of the day, I was asking more like, “How do you feel about it?”, and I think you absolutely answered it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean I would love if gender was just *not*. But I understand that a lot of people are very attached to it. I don't want to take that away from people who are attached to it. I just would rather we didn't think about it as a thing that had to have words. I think that also, a lot of things that trans people do, cis people could also do and feel better about themselves. Like, anyone is allowed to change their name!

**Tobin:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** [Laughs] It's not just trans people. You know, so just like that kind of thing. Think about it, what do you want? Do you still want your baby gender? Do you still want your baby name? You can keep them if you want. You know, very like, Obama voice, “If you like your baby name, you can keep your baby name!” [Tobin laughs] But like, you don't *have* to.

**Tobin:** Mmhm, mmhm.

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

**Tobin:** Um, I’m gonna steal from you, and say more people just vibing, and allowed to just vibe. And less of a pressure to answer, like, “What are you?” in a way that feels like it puts all of these constraints on you. So, I like the idea of people just vibing.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Tuck:** That's gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or you learned something, please share this episode with folks in your community. If you’re new here, please subscribe and listen to some of our episodes with actual trans people. You can find Tobin at [@TobinLow](https://twitter.com/tobinlow). We are on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/gendereveal) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/gendereveal/) at @Gendereveal and at [GenderPodcast.com](genderpodcast.com), where we have transcripts of the show and other useful resources. Stay informed of all of our hot goss and potential tour updates and more all via our newsletter, which is available for just $1/month at [Patreon.com/Gender](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CDesktop%5Cpatreon.com%5Cgender). We also have a bunch of sick new August merch at [Bit.ly/GenderMerch](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cjelg9%5CDesktop%5Cbit.ly%5Cgendermerch).

This episode was produced and edited by Julia Llinas Goodman, and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Special thanks this week to Tobin and to Ira Glass… he knows why! He’ll also *literally* never hear this. Logo by Ira M. Leigh. Theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back real soon with more feelings about gender.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

**Tuck:** I’ve been watching a lot of *Fast and Furious* lately, and Vin Diesel claims to be a good actor, but the only feelings he is allowed to express in *Fast and Furious* are like, horny, angry, and cars. So it’s impossible to know if he is a good actor, because he’s not allowed to have an emotion, because he is in masculinity box. And just like….

**Tobin:** Wait what did you… horny, angry, cars?

**Tuck:** Horny, angry, and cars. Yes.

**Tobin:** I think you just came up with the name for the next *Fast and the Furious* movie, cause they’re going to run out....

**Tuck:** [Laughs] No I have it. It’s number 10 and it’s Fas-TEN your seatbelts. And if they don’t use it, I’m going to be so goddamn mad.

**Tobin:** [Laughs] That’s so good!

**Tuck:** Thank you.

**Tobin:** You need to go claim that website URL right now, so they have to buy it from you for a ton of money. [Tuck laughs]