

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

HONEY PLUTON

Interviewer: Aviva Silverman

Date of Interview: July 29, 2024

Location of Interview: Ridgewood, Queens

Transcribed by Rosalina Michele
NYC TOHP Interview #235

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Aviva Silverman: Hello, my name is Aviva Silverman, and I will be having a conversation with Honey Pluton for the New York City Trans Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans-identifying people. It's July 29, 2024, and it's being recorded in Ridgewood. Hello.

Honey Pluton: Hey.

Silverman: How's it going?

Pluton: It's going good.

Silverman: Um, could you introduce yourself?

Pluton: My name is Honey Pluton. I'm a stand-up comedian, performer, actor, writer, living in Ridgewood, Queens.

Silverman: How do you relate to the multi--hyphenate role?

Pluton: I relate to it because outside of it being kind of a cheeky meme of ascribing different occupations or artistic disciplines to yourself to see how long it can go, it also, just, is true. It's like, we are all, like, in the multiplicity of all we want to express, so we might as well keep adding dashes to the end of what we say that we are until we run out of things to say. It's like having an infinite amount of maiden names.

Silverman: How do you relate to your name?

Pluton: I—It's so funny, like—okay, I changed my name, um, two years ago. I've been identifying as trans since I was 23, and kept my—and I'm 30 going on 31 now. But I changed my name two years ago because I was giving honey as an offering to a spirit that I'm in relationship with, and was listening to LaRaji, and then I was like, I am the offering to myself as spirit, and then I changed my name to Honey. And then I—I'm in the process of changing it legally now, which is so gay and like, bureaucratic and arduous, and the actual, like, process of changing my first name was funny. I did it through, you, like, do it through TLDF (Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund), Transgender Legal, I—I don't know the acronym, and then they pair you with some lawyer. So the lawyer that I got paired with is this, like, real estate lawyer who represents JFK Airport against its workers. Like she—like she—like she represents the institution, but clearly, like, has enough of a guilty conscience to, like, also change trans people's names, and she's, like, so butch, dyke, egg vibes. I was like, girl, there is a reason why you want to be doing this. But, the—like, yeah, it was just so funny. I was like, oh, like this, like, woman who's this bastion of corporate bureaucracy is allowing me to feel more legitimate when I give a bouncer my ID at a bar. And then she—and then like her clerk, who was the notary, was this, like, twink who was so, um, like, honored to have the role, and after every—every signature I put on the sheet that he

gave me, he would say thank you to me every time I signed my name. It was, like, really, like, proper and pure, and I was like, you're welcome. But then it's like I'm giving the security guard, downstairs of this midtown building, my ID, and he's like, "thank you sir—I mean ma'am" because he, like, sees my old ID. It's like I have to experience all of these, like, awkward transgressions as a part of this feat to get my name to be Honey Pluton, whatever that means. But I think I'll probably change it again. I think I'll have like—I think there's probably two more. I want to change my name in like 20 years to Dante's Inferno because that would be so funny, and it's such a good trans guy name. And then I was kind of teetering with the idea of changing my middle name to Thank You, which is so like Faye, like Honey Thank You Pluton, because I just—I do think, like, that it's my unofficial last name. And then, maybe when I'm, if I were to have a name that's more normal, it would probably be Anthony. And I do also consider Anthony to be an unofficial first name of mine, too.

Silverman: Yeah, it's nice to have, as much as the polyhyphenate, the dashed feature in your last name.

Pluton: Exactly, exactly, to pull from. I'm like, there's infinite rabbits in the hat. But I think that—I think the transgender desire to name ourselves is one of the most pure and exciting parts about being transgender. It's just part of this, like, cycle of autonomy, and obviously I love all trans that have their original names too but that still is a choice. It's like you're still—it's still part of the choicemaking of being transgender. Because I'm so like— even though it's of, um, like—not necessarily zeitgeist, but I guess it's like— you know, "born this way." It's like—it's not a choice, but there is still so much—to me, like, being queer and being trans and being, like, an—being anti-assimilationist is something you do have to choose, especially because society desires that we choose as little for ourselves as possible and, like, remain in this capitalist milieu. It's like you do have to choose.

Silverman: So self-actualization isn't passive?

Pluto: No, it's—no, it's like the most active thing in the entire world, and that's why I—that's, like, to me, like, crossing the threshold into really being transgender is part of that self-actualization process, obviously, which, to me at least, is a chronic constant negotiation with self, society, God, and everybody else who ends up sticking around.

Silverman: Um, so in the beginning—

Pluton: Yes?

Silverman: Uhm, what were some ways that you, sort of, started to relate to the world when you were a child—

Pluton: Mhm.

Silverman: —with where to start there?

Pluton: Totally. I really never wanted to be a child. I thought that was, like, one of the cruelest—um, it was like—I think childhood is so cruel to me and was for me. It's like you don't have any agency. You can't choose what you want to do, what you want to eat, when you want to eat, how you want to dress, what you want to study in school, where you want to go to school, who your friends are. Everything is chosen for you by, at least in my childhood, like, for your parents and by your environment. So, I think a lot—like, in conversation of childhood and gender, I didn't know that I could be anything other than what was being projected onto me by my family, but I really never ever related to myself as a young girl or as a young woman. I was pretty disassociated from my body, my gender, my sexuality, and it was really only in recent years was I able to, like, go back through my life and, like, really realize how true that is. Like I never learned how to swim because, like, the concept and the thought of wearing a bathing suit was, in the way that I would have been—was, like, so violating that I, like, would rather just do anything else than have anybody, like, witness my body in that way. Um—

Silverman: What was your family like growing up?

Pluton: My family growing up—both my parents are French. They're from France and moved to the States in the eighties, and they met in Philly and then had me in Boca Raton, Florida, which is where I was born. And then, they lived in the East Village for two years, and then moved to suburban Illinois—Highland Park, Illinois, suburb of Chicago, and that's where I grew up. My dad was a restaurateur and owned this restaurant in Evanston, Illinois called “Jackie's Bistro”, which was a French bistro. He's a really good cook, and that was a very successful restaurant that got him some Midwestern notoriety—enough where he was then able to get two seasons of a talk show called The Fair—or a cooking show—a cooking travel show called “The Fairway Gourmet”, where he went to different golf courses around the country to be culinarily inspired by the terrain of a golf course, which is the most, like, bad shit Aquarian concept ever, literally because golf courses are, like, ecologically devastating in every way, but it's so, like, quirked up. He's really—he's—he's really quirky, but he's, like, bravado, gusto, half Italian, loud, charismatic, life of the party, entrepreneur, creative. He, like, really exists out loud in a major unignorable way. He's extremely ambitious and, um, extremely capitalist as well. And his success, his sense of self-success exclusively hinged on his ability to make as much money as possible, take up as much space as possible, and grow as quickly as he can. And my mom is more introverted, she's extremely peculiar. I really don't understand her. I understand—I understand myself as my father in a way that is really, like, a sense of strong hereditary lineage that you can't ignore, but, I feel like the ways in which I am my mother are less inherent to a biology that we share and more like a reaction to her as a person that has inherently shaped me. Um, I kind of, like, describe her as a balloon animal where she is, like, the semblance of something that exists, but she herself is not what does. She's really, really strange and everyone that meets her kind of feels that way, but they're divorced now. But, it was just us two and then my younger brother who's four years younger than me, who's normal and straight and very kind and like very good and regular in a way that is fine and nice. Um—but that's what it was. Suburban. Middle class, up until 2008 when the market crashed and his restaurants closed, and I was in eighth grade then. So, after

2008, definitely went to more of, like, a lower-middle class upbringing, where my dad went from having this restaurant in Evanston that was, like, around for eight years, and then it was opened in this other more fine dining restaurant in the city to all of his--and then having this, um, show and having, uh, also a--kind of a Williams Sonoma type store where he sold like cooking ware and then all of that, like completely closing essentially overnight in the matter of months and then him having a complete psychotic break and he moved to Africa, Northern Africa by himself to, um, be a prospector, and--

Silverman: What's a prospector, again?

Pluton: Like to mine gold.

Silverman: Your father?

Pluton: Mhm. He went to complete--

Silverman: What year was this?

Pluton: Two thousand and eight. Two thousand and eight to 2011, he lived in Mali, Northern Africa because he somehow got connected to people that were mining gold because he had a entrepreneurial sense that, in the future, all liquid assets would be in bullion--would be in literal golden blocks. He's completely fucking crazy. So in high school it was just me and my mom and my brother and we lived pretty--we just, like, lived off the state and, like, lived off of food stamps, and lived in a family friend's extra house because we lived in a really, um, wealthy suburb where that was something that existed, and we kind of just bopped around until I graduated.

Silverman: How did that affect you as a kid?

Pluton: I was a adult by then--like, I was in high school, so I was like 14, 15 years old, and I think that I was already bursting at the seams enough to be as far away from these people as possible that it felt like an open invitation for me to never be home, to always be with my friends, to be out, to be on drugs, to get by as--get by scholastically with as minimal effort as possible. It was--it was fine. I was like, "this is fine." I was like--I didn't really want to be living in this domestic agreement that I never consented to in the first place. Now as an adult, you look back, and I understand, like, how much pain my mother was in especially and having--how much anguish, embarrassment, and despair my dad was in too, and feeling this, um, immense responsibility to provide for his family in this extremely specific and stringent way that would look a certain way also to whoever was looking back at us. Obviously, none of that was necessary, and all anybody actually needs is, like, care, love, concentration, eye contact and, like, probably not for your dad to be gone for like three years, like, doing something, like, completely bad shit in Northern Africa that's also, like, ethically violent and str--stressful for all economies present. Like, what the fuck are you talking about?

Silverman: Was it lucrative for him?

Pluton: No, that's the thing. It's like—and that's the thing. I'm like—my dad now, like, lives in Brazil with his new wife and just, like, plays the crypto game, but now he's, like, extremely sick and has this heart condition where he is essentially—um, he's disabled now and can't leave his bed and has to take pills every day to—his heart is, like, swollen. I don't fully understand why, but, like, his heart is just filled with fluid, and so, he has an extremely limited and careful existence now, but he will talk on the phone. He's like, “I'm gonna beat this. I'm gonna get through this.” Like—he just is unable to realistically ground his desires for more because his desires for more don't come from a generative or genuine place. They just come for—he just wants capital. He just wants more and more and more.

Silverman: Who did you confide in growing up?

Pluton: I confided in my friends. I am lucky now. Two of my best friends that I still have, I've known since I was 11 and 16, respectively, and we've always kind of lived—we've lived in Highland Park together and Seattle, Washington together and now New York City together with a few—like, in college, we were in different places, and now we're all trans which is so cute too. So I confided in them. I confided in their families. I mean, I've been really lucky that, from moments of crisis, I've had other people in my life desire to help me. I think I have a lot of people in my corner who want to see me win, which I really appreciate and don't take for granted and recognize, but I had—I had friends, thank God.

Silverman: When was the first time you heard about transness?

Pluton: I think probably RuPaul. Like probably RuPaul, maybe that's the right answer? I feel like I knew about RuPaul since I was, like, 13 and knew about him, um, as, like, a—like a pop star—like a singer/drag queen. I knew about drag queens, so I knew about transgender and I was really obsessed. Oh! Oh—no, the people that I—I think I knew about transgender first through YouTube, through, like, vloggers. So, like, T.S. Madison, I was obsessed with her since middle school, and I would watch all of her YouTube videos. I loved Cara Cunningham, formerly known as Chris Crocker, and I knew about her and was obsessed with her. And then, from T.S. Madison, Cara Cunningham, RuPaul, I learned about Amanda Lepore and then that also inspired, like, being really obsessed with New York City from a really young age because I just was obsessed with, like, “Party Monster” and Michael Alig and all the clubs at that time and would just pore over all of that. But I was always like, “being transgender is so cool”, and I was just obsessed with trans from a very young age.

Silverman: And so where did you go from living with your family?

Pluton: I—my parents moved from Highland Park back to Europe when I was 18, and I was supposed to go. I, like, was a theater kid in high school and— but improv was my preference. I

loved doing improv, and I was on an improv team called Playback Theater, where there was seven of us, and you had to audition, and I got in, and the concept of the improv troupe was that audience members would come up and tell a story about their lives, and then cast each of us as members of that story. And then, we would play the story back to them in, like, an improv way. So I loved doing that, and I loved taking acting classes. In my senior year, I got cast in the lead of one of the plays, but I had to end up dropping out because I was arrested too many times for being, like, publicly intoxicated and, like, tackling my vice principal and, like, being on— at school on acid and being fucking crazy. But, I thought I wanted to go to school and study theater, so I, like, auditioned for all these BFA programs and didn't get into any of them, and the only school I got into was University of Oregon in Eugene, which I had never been to and didn't know anything about the Pacific Northwest. I just, like, genuinely wanted to be as far away as humanly possible from my family and in a completely different setting, so I was like, “oh I'll just go there I suppose?” And I still am internet Instagram friends with the girl who was going to be my roommate, but I never ended up going to school there because my parents ended up last minute deciding to move to Switzerland and this is still when—it's funny like looking back and trying to

understand how my dad was able to keep our family economically floating and then you realize that it was all completely on credit. It was just, like, all credit, and my mom was working at a soap store and, like, taking the bus because she—we didn't have a car and then, you know, my dad's like, “I did it! It's economically viable! I went, and I made this investment, and now I'm going to move my family to Switzerland, to Lausanne”, and I was like, “okay, well, maybe I should go to Europe with you, that way I can be a little bit closer.” So I, like, last minute, applied to a bunch of schools in the UK and then got into this college in London which I had also never been to before and went to school in London, and I lived there from 18 to 21 but didn't end up graduating because I had to drop out because my dad had been lying to admissions about paying for my college at all but then, like, wasn't, and I dropped out after two years.

Silverman: Yeah how did that shape you being in London?

Pluton: I loved it, I mean, it was really—it was the first time I lived in a city and—made me love metropolitan life. I loved how independent I was. I didn't really like going to school. I was just studying sociology and didn't really connect with any of my roommates or my classmates, but for my first year there, I had a friend from home who was studying abroad so I had, like, her there for six months which was sweet. And then, after six months being there, I was doing some catering work and met this girl, Schlossi, who I was just, like, immediately, like, psychically drawn to and went up to her and just thought she was, like, so cool looking and beautiful. And we were doing catering work at an art gallery, and I was like, “do you like this painting that you're looking at?” And she has this really thick Romanian accent and she was like, “I hate art. It's all so stupid,” and I was like, “I'm completely obsessed with you.” And I was like, “I'm obsessed with you”, and she was like “same,” and then became, like, best friends really immediately. And she was like, “do you want to move into this warehouse I live in?” And I was like, “yeah, absolutely,” so I went to a party there and it was kind of like a hazing ritual and I stayed up, like, all night doing, like, cocaine and ketamine and, like, being crazy with all of these, like, awesome artists.

And then I moved in—in like two weeks and lived there with, like, 14 people in this warehouse that wasn't a squat but was an illegal place to live. And we all paid, like, really cheap rent owned by some slumlord guy who was this, like, mixed race dude who was, like, super jacked and converted to Judaism to, like, be on the right side with the Hasidic guys who owned all the warehouses, and, like, he took off his shirt to, like, do repairs around the warehouse and he was just covered in Stars of David and he was like so sexy—shady, his name was Jamie, and I learned that one of my roommates, who I'm still kind of in touch with, like, wasn't paying rent because he was so in love with her. He was just, like, so shady and then his lackey was this dude, Sammy, who just came every month to, like, collect the checks, and then Jamie came to, like, do the repairs.

Silverman: Wow. Um, Were you dating at that time?

Pluton No, I wasn't dating. I didn't know—it's like, obviously, I look back, and I was, like, completely in love with, like, every woman in my life and every man in my life. But I wasn't dating. I would go on, like, tinder dates with guys and get, like, really nervous and have to get, like, totally blackout wasted, but I still was, like, extremely shy sexually and romantically—and was really only having sex when I was super drunk with random guys that would come to parties at my house.

Silverman: Yeah.

Pluton: Yeah. Essentially. But, I loved living in London. It's really cool there. I loved my neighborhood. I, at that point, was not in college, like 19/20, and was working at bars full time because you can because once you're 18, you can drink—and I was bartending—and I did have, like, a—a tryst, like, a little affair with this, like, 40 something year old guy named Dave, who was a regular at the bar that I worked at. Um—I worked at this pub called, “The Princess of Shoreditch”, that was, like, super busy, and I was making, like, pretty good money bartending because, like, the drinking culture there is, like—once it's 5:00 p.m, like, all the pubs are, like, flooded and all the businessmen are, like, having their pints, and I don't know—they loved me because I was just some, like, cute young girl essentially, and I loved it too. I loved the attention. I loved my coworkers. I was completely in love with one of my coworkers. Phoebe, who I sometimes still talk to on Instagram, like, lives in New Zealand now and has a baby, but she was just, like, so cool, and bisexual, and gorgeous, and precious. And we, like, really had a sweet friendship, um, but I kind of—and she was, like, sometimes sleeping with this dude, Dave's friend, whose name I'm forgetting, but he was just so— cockney guy, old, looks like Russell Crowe, like, short, serious, Scorpio, woodworker, very transgender honestly. And I was just, like, really enamored with him, but, like, also kind of scared, like, I don't know. Like I felt so much insecurity in myself as a dynamic sexual being because I hadn't even, like, named that I was queer, but we had, like, a little tryst and we would send emails to each other. And he was like, “I want us to move to an island off the coast of Costa Rica,” and I was like, “okay, haha, never,” but we were obsessed with each other.

Silverman: So, that sounds formative in some ways. Um—and so, where did you go from there?

Pluton: And then, from there, I moved to Seattle, and that's definitely where I became a gay person. I, like, came out there. I moved when I was 22. I followed my best friend, Dylan, who went to acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine school to get his master's, and I was like—I just had—I just knew—I, like, woke up and I was like, “it's time for me to go back to America.” I wasn't doing stand-up yet in London, but I was doing poetry—I was, like, writing poems, like funny poems and I would go to poetry readings and read those out loud. That was essentially just stand-up, but it was a way for me to, like, structure it. The first time I ever did stand-up was an open mic in London, and I chose to do a kind of, like, game show open mic where people in the audience had gongs, and as you were doing your material they would hit the gong, and if you got to three gong hits you had to get off stage. And then, I got to, like, two, and then I, like, got off stage before they could even do the third one because I was just, like, so overwhelmed and mortified, and I was like, “I'm not doing this yet.” But I just, like, really really knew that I wanted to do stand-up, and I just, like, knew that I wanted to start performing. A lot of my friends in London that I'd lived with were in art school or artists themselves, and I just, like, felt a calling to perform in some way that, for some sort of god reason, I knew I had to leave where I was to go. So I moved to Seattle, and I was able to save up like \$500 by sharing a room in the warehouse with my friend, Karis, only to then never get my deposit back from the slumlord because it was being kept as collateral because Karis wasn't paying rent because the landlord was in love with her. So he just took my deposit as that. I was like fml (fuck my life), not moving to New York with no—or moving to Seattle with no money. But I spent two weeks in New York on my way to Seattle because I was always obsessed with it here and basically blew all my money, and I got to Seattle and was like, “okay, I don't have any money for rent, Dylan. Can I just stay with you?” And obviously, that was fine, and I went from there and then him, and I lived in a garage together in South Seattle for a year so that I could pay as little rent as possible. And I worked at a pizza place, and I became gay, and then I met all my gay friends, and then that was when I was, like, officially enmeshed in being a gay person.

Silverman: When you say, “became gay”, what—what did that look like?

Pluton: I think that looks like—all my friends are gay. Most of my friends—my friends are gay. I'm gay dating. I'm dating gay people. I'm having gay sex. I'm relating to the world as a gay, and I think that's how I define it.

Silverman: Yeah, totally.

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: Um—and so, what else were you up to at that time?

Pluton: I was starting to do stand-up, so I was going to open mics and I was so nervous and had to take Dylan's dog's beta blockers to, like, steady my heart because I wanted to, like, fucking

throw up. But, I was, like, defining myself as a creative person. I was defining myself as a public figure in a small way. I was throwing house parties—house shows where I lived, in Georgetown—in South Seattle with all of my friends that were comedians and inviting people into this little world that I was building for myself for the first time. I was kind of, like, carving a little niche for myself in this community. I was having crushes. I was partying. I mean, at that time in Seattle, there were a lot of really cool DIY spaces: the cockpit, the nut hole, office space. I mean, these were spots where people were living where they weren't supposed to—like abandoned office buildings, um, giant loft spaces, and underneath coffee shops—like parties, um, underneath I-5 highways and tunnels, breaking into Rainier Brewery Beer Factory and having shows there. It was like punk, DIY, go to the show, throw a comedy show in those spaces, try to merge my desire for anti-assimilationist, anarchist, um, music scene with performance, with comedy, and also, you know, doing door at the comedy club in Pioneer Square. Like—I've always, like—you know—trying to take from one to bring to the other to take from one to bring to the other in that affinity of, like, what's institutionally legitimate and what is as purposefully de-legitimate as possible because your legitimacy means nothing to me. A psychic once told me that I'm always—that my tension of self comes from trying to seek validation from systems I want to destroy. So that process was definitely beginning then.

Silverman: My therapist said, today, around the same sentence.

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: We just have limited options sometimes.

Pluton: Yeah

Silverman: Like, we actually have to obviously operate—

Pluton: Yeah, it's hard.

Silverman: Um—cool, and so, just in a larger sense, how—who was influencing you in comedy? How are you kind of gathering your foundational—

Pluton: Totally. At that time, there was a really cool scene that, after COVID, kind of, like, completely dissolved because I think that people just grow out of what's available to them, or they get burnt out from how little is available to them that they just move or they drop out or things shift. But I was definitely, um, coming up in a scene there of people, maybe eight or ten years older than me, who had been there for a long time and were kind of, like, touring the West Coast—who they themselves were queer or trans. There was a Tuesday show I would do every Tuesday called “The Comedy Nests” that was, like, prioritizing, like, women and queer people, and people were, like, really, actually funny and the audience was, like, really full. It was, like, a pre-existing show that was able to bring in cool supportive audiences for people who were just beginning and gave me a lot of confidence that people wanted to hear what I had to

say. So there's this comedian, El Sanchez, who I really looked up to and is so funny—and doesn't really do stand-up anymore and now has a baby and lives in Olympia, Washington. But they were really funny. My best friend still, Dewa Dorje—we started comedy at the exact same time, but she's, like, 15 years older than me and is a mom of two, single mom, and she, just, is hilarious and we had each other and we produced shows together and we would, like, do them in Seattle and do them in Portland and go to Vancouver and we were able to, like, kind of hit all these different pockets, and it felt, like, so affirming and really cool. My partner, at the time, was also a comedian, and they were part of this touring improv group that was very in the vein of, like, “Sister Spit”, called “Deep Lez”. That was, like, a sketch group that toured so—and there was this other theater there called “Gay City”, that would put on, like, local plays that I was also really drawn to and inspired by. There really, like genuinely, was, at that time, a super cool scrappy scene where you were able to climb enough of an ascension of full-time working artists that were

present to help you hone crafts and have something to be inspired by that, after 2019, like, kind of completely dissolved. It doesn't exist anymore for all the reasons that those things do, and then, a lot of people, around 2020, moved to LA or moved to New York.

Silverman: Is that when your exodus was?

Pluton: I moved here in 2022—so I mean—I was—I wanted to leave New York—to move to New York maybe even earlier, but I could never afford it until—I was working at the Central Co-op grocery store at the time, during COVID, when everyone was making, like, bank getting like \$600 a week plus, and I was like, “fuck, I'm working. I'm an essential worker. This is gay,” but they—this Co-op Union was able to bargain that, if you wanted to be laid off, so that you could get unemployment, you could. So then, around January 2022, I got laid off, and then I was able to, that year, not work and just get unemployment and be able to save money for the first time in my life. So then, I moved here in October 2022, and then that paired with moving with my current girlfriend. She got some money from a lawsuit, and then that was able to help her and I both move here. Yes—because moving here is fucking crazy. It's so expensive. I mean, living here is also unbearable and so expensive and so challenging that having that little pocket allowed both of us to be able to move here with some ease which was nice.

Silverman: And how have you spent your time since you've been here?

Pluton: I mean, I really hit the ground running. I was like—I've been waiting my entire life to live in New York City, which is this place that I've been obsessed with energetically since I even understood it as a concept. I was like, “this is where dreams come true. This is where you go to believe. Like, this is where you go to be inspired by nothing more than the fact that anything can bring you inspiration.” I was like, “I want to be up all night. I want to be out. I want to hit the ground running, and I really feel like I did.” I was like, “I'm 27 years old (the time I moved here). I'm gonna make up for lost time.” Like, you know, you can feel so ancient so quickly, which is, like, obviously, so false, but I hit the ground running. I already had, like, an established sense of myself as a performer. I had material. I have been doing stand-up for, now it's been—it'll be nine

years on my 31st birthday. I kind of count my birthday as when I started, and I started when I was 22. So I was like, I'm already funny. I already know all of that, so I started having a show at "Come On, Everybody," and I did that every other week for like a year and a half. And then, I started meeting people right away, and then I started building my hours—just has been like this—like this—like grappling that's just—like me with my grappling hooks, like, every day. I'm like, okay, I'll just, like, launch a little bit further, and then I'll like go up my rope and then I'll go a little bit further. Then, I'll go up my rope. Only now, like literally, within maybe this season, do I feel both enough faith in myself as a performer and realistic enough to know that I need to prioritize things outside of my own ambition to try to redefine the base of my life so that I'm not constantly existing in these cycles of, like, energetic and psychic and physical burnout.

Silverman: What are some of the other things outside of that?

Pluton: It's like, I need to make sure that I—I know—I never know what time I'm supposed to go to work, so this year, I'm like, "oh, I'll find jobs." I'm working from, like, 12 to 7. It's like—I'll do 12 to 7, but then I want to, like, go to the gym before, so I'm, like, waking up at 8 and then I'm going to work 12 to 7. Then, I have shows. Then, it's like, so I have shows from 7 to 9, so I'm out from, like, 8 to 9. I'm like—I don't really know if this is working anymore, so, like, maybe now I actually have to work, like, 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. and then, like, have just, like, two full days. Like I'm—my entire life is—I'm like, I actually don't know when I am supposed to go to work and how that is going to align because really, it's like, I need to hang out with my friends. I need to party. I need to go dancing. I need to be, like, present in the circadian rhythm of the city, which is why I want to also be here in the first place. It's like—I'm always trying to, like, adjust to the left and adjust to the right, but I think that, holistically, I'm realizing more and more that I need to schedule everything else around my relationships both to myself and both to the actual people in my life that, like, energized me and make me want to continue.

Silverman: And what communities are you a part of?

Pluton: I'm a part of the comedy community, for sure. There's so many really cool gay and trans stand-ups here that I really love so much, and I feel really grateful that I get to be collaborators with them—conspirators. It feels cool. I didn't really have—I didn't really feel as, um—I didn't really have that as much in Seattle. It's nice that I have, like, real peers here which feels cool. Maybe I'm a part of, like, certain nightlife communities in a sense perhaps, but I think that's mostly just where a lot of my friends work.

Silverman: Are there certain establishments you can name, since it's helpful for us?

Pluton: Totally. I mean, I know—I have friends that work at Nowies. Shout out, Nowies! We love going to Nowadays. I like that now I can—they, like, have non-stop, every weekend, so it's cool that I could, like, go at 10 in the morning on Sunday, like, sleep and, like, wake up and go and, like, dance and like, meet people in the morning—and that's fun I love to do that. I would say that's the establishment I'm going to the most, Nowadays. I had to say that twice 'cause that is

the name of the place, but I have spent a lot of this summer and this year inside. I've been drinking a lot less. I've been going out a lot less as I've just been needing to, like, have some mental clarity, but I need to nap a little bit because I'm going fucking crazy.

Silverman: How do you think trans community has changed over the years? I mean, I know that it's perhaps been truncated, but if you've sensed a shift, at all, in ways people come together and how they collectivize?

Pluton: I think that something—I think, like, a fragmentation that I witnessed that I think can be curious is sexual orientation within trans sexuality so—and I think that can create some cliques where, it's like, there's the transbians (trans lesbians)—where it's like, that's going to be—you know—but I don't know why it sometimes—it can feel like they're polar. I think there's a transbian, and then there's, like, the straight trans people who are only, like, boy/girl t4t (trans for trans). And then, sometimes there can be, like, awkward animosity or just—different people, based on who they're trying to fuck, just inherently go to different places, you know what I mean? Which I don't like. Like, I think that's actually really boring, and I wish that sometimes trans sexuality, like, could just be a little more, like, plural, you know? And it's like—I don't—I think that things can—that spaces—parties are defined by who you're trying to have sex with there, and I think that then defines the transgender landscape. But, I think it should be more that we're all here, less outside of, like, our aesthetic sexualities, and more just because—and not even because we're all trans, but because we all want to share some sort of cultural experience outside of just who we want to have sex with.

Silverman: That makes a lot of sense.

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: I know I didn't ask before, but how would you describe your gender?

Pluton: Yeah. I'd describe my gender as a trans man—not even necessarily trans masculine, but I do think that I am male. But, I also think I'm pretty—I think there's, like, non-binary elements to myself as well that I know are currently more latent than I have time to discover.

Silverman: Yeah.

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: Um—and what's your experience with HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy)?

Pluton: I love testosterone so much. Like, I literally love testosterone. I love the way it's changed every part about me. The only thing that I really miss is crying. I used to cry all the time, and

now I do cry but it's way more rare. It's, like, four times a year versus like four times a month, but I love the way testosterone has changed how I desire. There's such, like, an alignment with how I feel erotically that I think allows me to exist in a more bisexual way that is authentic. The way that I feel on HRT is so good and clear that, even at my most—at the times in which I feel so—um, so much internalized transphobia because my parents still don't understand me as trans, even though I've told them. My mom just—it doesn't—it doesn't apply to her. Like—I'll be like, "I'm trans", and she's like, "okay, like, whatever you say," but—like, won't use my pronouns or my name at all. She just was, like, completely—in a way that is like genuine disinterest, and then my dad. We've had, like, one more breakthrough conversation around it, but we—but then it kind of just, like—the lid went back on, and we kind of just moved past it. And they were, growing up, extremely pejorative about my body—my weight. Ways in which they wanted me to have a body were very specific, you know? I was like, "I wanna go to theater camp." They're like, "you need to play sports. You need to be thin. You need to be athletic." It's like, any—any activity that I expressed interest in that diverted from athleticism, leanness, or a push to make oneself thinner were, like, totally rejected and actively suppressed, so my relationship with my body—so I, like, have always been so, like, disassociated from my body—and it's like—I'm at the top. I'm like, "whatever's happening underneath my neck is none of my business," and I think it's also why I, like, defaulted—even in queerness—a more binaried and, like, almost reflexive heterosexuality. Before I was on HRT, I was dating someone that was butch, and I was like, "okay, well, you'll be the top, and I'll be the bottom." But, it's only because I, like, was existing in this default because I was without this agency in that relationship in a lot of ways too, but now it's like—you have this agency that—you have this choice. And, I feel so grateful that HRT allows me this choice, but I also always want to speak to, like, regret. It's so—it's like—regret is okay, and like, fear is okay. I'm like, doubt is okay and even sometimes, in my transsexual life, like, even on HRT, like, even—you know it's like—it's okay to be, like— it's like we—I'm extremely—I can be susceptible to regret and to doubt because that's just my coding and what I received from my family and I want to make everybody happy, but it's okay to be like, "is this the right idea?" And, still do it anyway, and then be like, "oh, this is the right idea." Like that's—I don't know—I just want to say that 'cause sometimes I feel like this, like, detransitioner rhetoric is, like, you're—you're—"you're gonna regret it," but it's okay to have regrets, and like, it's also okay to have doubt. And, you can hold all those things simultaneously with a calling that's bigger to you to walk through this threshold and take the pill, pop the moan, inject the liquid, get the surgery, etc. It's like—it's okay and like—it also is okay if you're like, "I do change my mind, and I do want to go off this, and I want to have a different chemical relationship to my mind, to my body, to my soul." Like—it's fine. I regret so much. I regret my tattoos—like, whatever it's like—life is about regret sometimes. It's like—how are we going to integrate outside of thinking that you always were supposed to know exactly what you were supposed to do, but then you can kind of, like, exist in this cycle of inaction. I'm also so impulsive, and I would always rather jump off the cliff and have the broken leg than wonder about never jumping off but that's me.

Silverman: What other impulsive things have you done that are memorable.

Pluton: Every move. Moving is always impulsive. Most jobs I take are impulsive. I don't know, I—like in my solo show, I talk about how I exist in these thresholds of risk and reward, but I believe that the risk is the reward. It's just—it's like, life isn't—it's like Mars in Sag', like I'm pulling the arrow and following wherever it goes.

Silverman: Do you feel like the way you self narrate on stage differs from how you self narrate to yourself or friends?

Pluton: Less and less. Less and less. I think that now, as I think, a lot of my material now is really this new reckoning. I feel like—I feel like my stand-up is just a public reckoning. I'm reckoning with the decisions that I've made that—that have gotten me to where I am today. I think my impulsivity is about all of the minutiae that is supposed to have allowed me to maybe have more ease as a 30 year old person. It's like—my impulsivity to randomly choose this school in London, when I was 18 years old, to go to—that I had never—like, didn't do any research about which then, you know, defines that era of my life. My impulsivity to move to Seattle, Washington—I've never been before—it's like—and then, that part of my life—like it's just—you know? My impulsivity to pick the jobs that I've had which—in the service industry, that now has rendered me completely skill-less outside of making someone's drinks or bringing them food. It's like—this impulsivity that is just a response to my economic background that now I am constantly trying to, like, clear some air around to move through whatever comes next

Silverman: It's interesting to think about impulsivity and, like, intentionality in terms of how you have chosen-

Pluton: Yes.

Silverman: -really clearly a lot of the decisions around your making.

Pluton: Yeah, exactly, but it's like—I never had time to be intentional until very recently. I never had the privilege of being intentional. It's like—I always had to be impulsive because my life was a problem that I was constantly trying to solve, and sure, maybe there could have been, like, seven to eight more deep breaths around many choices that I've made around relationships I've started or ended? You know? Who knows? But, it's just—I've always been, like, in this rat race, like, addicted to the cortisol of staying on the treadmill as long as I can, that now I'm dogging to figure something out.

Silverman: And, how do you see yourself now, in relation to other social movements? Like, we're in such a heightened era-

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: -of such, like, restrictive, intense, fascistic sort of, like, lawmaking. How do you see yourself just as a public figure and just a human in the world in relation to all these things that are happening or unfolding?

Pluton: I feel really stressed, and I feel really scared because more and more, the only way to survive with any ease is to assimilate. Like that really is a word that I'm constantly going back to. It's like—it's harder and harder to really be a punk. It's harder and harder to really be an outsider because we live in such a restrictive, highly surveyed, fascist hell, that you want the ease that winning a capitalism offers you. Like, don't we all—I feel like my role currently is holding a bullhorn as close to my mouth as possible, plugging it into a subwoofer, and screaming, at anybody who can hear me, to wake up to their responsibility to care more than you ever thought could be possible. This year has been such a heart opening—my, like, agenda has been to open my heart to be able to feel as much as I can and allow that to propel me to want to create something better than whatever I just left it in. I really am really trying so hard every day to build something that somebody else can lay down on—just really trying to create some ease, but the industry that I'm in—there are very few people that I believe speak out, give a fuck, are willing to sacrifice any gig, any way to make money that could be maybe societally beneficial, but that's what's so hard. If you feel like you're the only one doing something that—it doesn't actually do anything, but this is what you're saying is an extremely heightened intense moment that I tried to surf because I also find that those crests are extremely interesting. Like—it's interesting to talk about how we're all kind of miserable, and there's a lot to be said there too.

Silverman: Do you feel like that's a big part of your public facing narration or [inaudible].

Pluton: I think so. I think that I'm at a place now where, the people who are in my orbit and are here for the Honey Pluton “cinematic experience,” do want me—they're curious about what I have to say, and they want my perspective—and they find solace in knowing that, you know, we're not alone. Everyone who's disenfranchised and screaming into the void—that there's a network of people who also want to stand next to you and scream even louder too.

Silverman. This is a question I just read, and perhaps— I don't know if you'd wanna answer? It says, “what are the struggles in being trans for you?”

Pluton: Yeah. I think the struggle for me in being trans is to get over cisgender conditioning. It's like—that's what's crazy—like—that's what's so crazy is that transgender as an aesthetic is crazy, and transgender now has, like, its own “keeping up with the joneses.” Transgender has its own models, and—like models, not as an occupation, but as a way to categorize success.

Silverman: What does that look like?

Pluton: It looks like fitness. It looks like affluence. It looks like assimilation. It looks like how it does before, but now we have trans people that look like that, you know? So I think the struggle really, in being trans now, is allowing trans to still mean, like, transgressive, and transgressive

means that you're not making yourself go fucking crazy by trying to be replicably successful. Like—that's really the hardest part about being trans—is to not let myself get completely bogged down and overwhelmed by attempting to look like, sound like, and get to an ideal that is anything outside of who I am exactly today. That's the hard part about being trans now.

Silverman: And so when you see you're putting your grappling hook forward, what is that going towards?

Pluton: It's going towards, maybe, one day, having my show get picked up or making, you know, what—in any sort of entertainment way, like, breaking through to the other side in which you're able to have this be your full-time job which is rare in general, but especially if you're trans. It's like—literally, who is that? It also looks like—maybe I find whatever job it is that allows me to have a little bit of economic ease and some sense of clarity. That's what it looks like, but I feel like I'm ready to put the hooks down and just—I'm turning a corner where I know I need to prioritize receiving versus anything else

Silverman: Mmm. Receiving?

Pluton: Just letting myself receive instead of—yeah, my friend, September, was like, “you have—it's like, I'm not—it's like, I'm trans but I'm also an anarchist. I'm trans and I'm also an anti-zionist. I'm—and I'm like—I'm trans, and I'm also an anti-assimilationist, like I'm—and I also want a career. It's like, so—it's like, that's random as fuck for me to also want the second thing, and my friend September is like, you know, “you in this industry is taking a shank and-”, like, wedging myself open through any door that is closed. But, once I open it everyone's really happy that I'm on the other side of it, and it closes right behind me, you know what I mean? I'm like, “no, keep it open,” so I think that, when I say “receive”, I just mean to be in a liminal and spiritual relationship of trust where I need to trust the forces that be around me instead of chronically and constantly making myself available to them.

Silverman: Yeah.

Pluton: Yeah.

Silverman: And do you have a greater spiritual life, or how would you define your relationship with-

Pluton: I say I'm literally religious at this point.

Silverman: And how would that be?

Pluton: I love God, and I don't—to me, like, spirituality has been so co-opted and watered down into something that I don't actually recognize—like I believe I am religious because I believe

in God, and I pray, and I know if no one else has got me, God's got me. And, to me, that transcends spirituality because—not because I'm necessarily like monotheistic or like Abrahamic in any specific way but because—it isn't necessarily—just the word that I want to use is God and that looks like prayer and patience and trust in a undefinable creative force that exists in a way that is much greater than you or I.

Silverman: Was that modeled to you in your earlier life?

Pluton: My parents are reflexively spiritual in a way that I find to be really problematic and psychologically devastating. They're really—like—"The Secret", where—it's like, "if I want it, I'll get it." But, that's the problem—is that you want—it's like—we can't always be in these, like, chronic states of want when you're also, like, a low-income immigrant who doesn't have a degree and you live in government subsidized housing with your two kids on food stamps. It's like—but you think that, if you put some shit on a corkboard, it's gonna come to you? It's like—that is so predatory. Like—I find that modern spirituality is, like, insanely predatory where it just preys on people who have nothing at all, but you think that, if you read the 70 page book, that you'll have something. But, to me, my relationship with God is a relationship of, like, gratitude—and it's a relationship of, like, faith—and it's a relationship of trust and to know that what I want is this, you know—this sacred ambition and this drive that has defined my life for 30 years. But, it also can look like a million different ways that are also supported by myself and my creator that isn't just this, like, capitalistic hamster wheel of never being satisfied. You always want more, and so my parents were very on that, like, fucking—like, why the fuck did my parents have a Kabbalah red string on? I'm like—why are you doing this, like, Jewish mysticism that's essentially just you being tricked into existing under capitalism as wholeheartedly as possible? So, their relationship was way more, like, sinister, and I find they were just, kind of, preyed and—my mom was listening to, like, Abraham Hicks and—what's his name—the South African or the German guy—Eckhart Tolle—where it's like everything everything everything is about manifestation which I think is extremely foolish because it isn't true. You can't get everything that you want, but you can be okay with the circumstances of your life and allow that to propel you forward with care for someone other than what you want for yourself. Like—what do you want for people that have the same condition as you—which I don't think that spirituality considers at all, but I do believe that religion does.

Silverman: Are there any sources that you read from?

Pluton: My first source that I found to be revelatory was when I was reading Ram Dass and was reading, "Be Here Now" and was studying Buddhism for the first time. I don't consider myself to be Buddhist, but I found that having a meditative practice that was oriented around the present and around presence was extremely liberatory for me because it's anti-ambition—and it's like—it's about knowing that if you are here currently, then you already have so much to just be grateful for in general. I think that that was the first text that really found me, and I was grateful that I found it however I did, and then—presently I like to read, um—I like to read Starhawk. I really resonate with a lot that she has to say, and I went to, like, witch school, that my friend Ilza

taught which was like a Western pagan year-long course on aligning yourself to the moon cycle and to the witch's wheel—and I found that to be really helpful too. It's just like—how are we in conversation with the natural forces that will be here that we should be fostering and in community with as well?

Silverman: What people have been most important to you in your life?

Pluton: I'd say my friend Ilza, who—that's actually like my mom—who was my teacher at witch school and is a friend of mine now. She lives in New Orleans, Ilza Mara Radziszewski. She's an author, artist, high priestess. I love her a lot, and think about her every day. My friends, Still Spencer and Dana Klasky, who are also two trans men I've been friends with since childhood. In London, my friend Schlossi, my friend Hannah Ford, my friend Layla, and my friend Karis who were, like, such a posse—and those was the first time I was able to have a community of outsiders who prioritized art and community in a way—that I got to see work for a small amount of time. They were all really influential to me because I was so young. I was, like, 19, 20, 21 and they were all a bit older than me as well. My girlfriend, Adj McCall, is really influential to me and then—in New York City, I feel really grateful for Spike-Spike Einbinder, and Savannah Lyons Anthony, whose play I'm in right now. Nora Treatbaby is very influential to me, and the other group—the other—the other, like, individual issues I have with other artists—where it's just a feeling where you can finally feel understood in a way that melts anxiety and isolation. It's like—I know I'm on the right path because I have you in my life. Those are some people that I have, for sure, like—I know I'm okay because you see me and care about me which sometimes you just need to be reminded of.

Silverman: Yeah. I was wondering if there's other things that come to mind that you'd wanna add to the record?

Pluton: I think that I want to talk about—I don't know—transness is, like, a responsibility. I think that—I don't know—it's like—maybe it's, like, more en vogue right now to be, like, whatever, like—I'm so over the commodity of trans—and now it just is, like, this reflexive part of my being that I don't need to politicize—but I—I do feel like I have, within transness, a responsibility to risk and to ancestor. I do care work for a 70 year old lesbian with dementia who just, like, comes from such a different time, obviously, where there was way more risk and, like, things were on the line—and there are still—there are still dynamics within transsexuality, even really contemporary metropolitan life, that are risky and complicated and dangerous and awkward that I don't want to lose. I don't even really have, like, an eloquent answer, but I've just been thinking about that—and this—and I don't know what that all looks like, but I feel really grateful that I'm trans every day.