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# IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

## President Trump's First Term

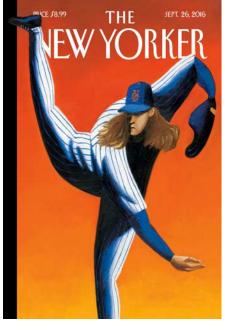
In the September 26, 2016, issue of *The New Yorker*, in "President Trump" (p. 38), **Evan Osnos** examines what the United States could expect from Donald Trump's first term, speaking with Trump's campaign advisers and associates, veterans of five Republican Administrations, economists, war gamers, historians, legal scholars, and political figures in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Now that Trump is virtually tied with Hillary Clinton in the popular vote, a Trump "victory is no longer the stuff of dark comedy or fan fiction," Osnos writes. "It is fair to ask: What would he actually be like as a President?" Although many people from Trump's party say they do not expect him to fulfill some of his most often stated vows, studies of past campaigns show that they offer a surprisingly accurate preview of Presidencies. Trump aides are organizing what one Republican close to the campaign calls the First Day Project, telling Osnos that, if elected, "Trump spends several hours signing papers—and erases the Obama Presidency." Stephen Moore, a campaign adviser, explains, "We want to identify maybe twenty-five executive orders that Trump could sign literally the first day in office." Trump's advisers are weighing several options for the First Day Project: he could renounce the Paris Agreement on greenhouse-gas emissions, re-start exploration of the Keystone pipeline, suspend the Syrian refugee program, direct the Commerce Department to bring trade cases against China, and relax background checks in order to loosen restrictions on gun purchases. The former House Speaker Newt Gingrich tells Osnos that he is urging Trump to give priority to the obscure conservative issue of ending lifetime tenure for federal employees: "You start changing that and the public-employee unions will just come unglued."

The former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers predicts that Trump's economic and trade policies—inspired by supply-side economic principals—would help trigger a protracted recession within eighteen months. He says, "The perception that we might well be pursuing hyper-nationalist policies would be very damaging to confidence globally and would substantially increase the risk of financial crises in emerging markets." The American Action Forum, a conservative Washington think tank, ran budget projections of Trump's immigration plan. Raids on farms, restaurants, factories, and construction sites; beds for captured men, women, and children; and chartered buses and planes to carry millions of deportees would cost approximately six hundred billion dollars. And, as President, Trump would have the power to name some four thousand appointees. Michael Chertoff, who served both Bush Presidents, tells Osnos, "I think anybody contemplating going in will have to have a very serious look in their own conscience, and make sure they're not kidding themselves."

Trump's comments on foreign policy have already produced reactions beyond his control. After Trump expressed reservations about supporting NATO, Osnos visited the RAND Corporation, a nonpartisan research institute

supporting NATO, Osnos visited the RAND Corporation, a nonpartisan research institute that has run simulations of the likely effects if America's policy of deterrence fails, and Russia invades the Baltic states. David Shlapak, the co-director of RAND's Center for Gaming, said, "In twelve hours, more Americans die than in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined, in sixteen years." Shen Dingli, a foreign-policy scholar in Shanghai, tells Osnos that Chinese officials are concerned about Trump's unpredictability but, he thinks, have concluded that Trump is a novice who makes hollow threats and would be easy to handle—they would worry about the policies of a President Hillary Clinton, who "is more predictable and probably tough." Jorge Guajardo, a former Mexican diplomat, warns that the surge of hostility from American politics will weaken Mexico's commitment to help the United States with counterterrorism. "Post-9/11, the coöperation has gone on steroids. There have been cases of stopping terrorists in Mexico," Guajardo tells Osnos. "But people are saying, If the United States elects Trump, give them the finger."

In the early decades of this century, "Americans have sometimes traced our greatest errors to a failure of imagination—the inability to picture a terrorist, in a cave, who is able to strike; the hubris to ignore extensive State Department predictions of what would come of the invasion of Iraq," Osnos writes. "Trump presents us with the opposite risk: his victory would be not a failure of imagination but, rather, a retreat to it—the magical thought that his Presidency would be something other than the campaign that created it."



### Don't Ask Hari Nef, the Alt-Glam Queer Scenester, About the Transgender Moment

In "Model Citizen" (p. 26), **Michael Schulman** writes about the actress and model Hari Nef—the first openly transgender woman to receive a worldwide modelling contract—who, in light of the recent trans pop-culture preoccupation, is skeptical of what she sees as cultural tokenism. Just after graduating from Columbia University, in 2015, Nef was signed by IMG—the agency that represents supermodels such as Kate Moss and Gigi Hadid—and offered a recurring role playing Gittel, a transsexual ancestor of the main characters on the TV series "Transparent." Ivan Bart, the president of IMG, tells Schulman, "She reminded me of Stella Tennant back in the nineties—beauty with an edge." Jill Soloway, the creator of "Transparent," recalls, "I remember marvelling at how she fills a frame—her face and her posture, but also how her energy naturally engaged every subject and object within that frame. I think this is something that maybe Warhol felt for Sedgwick, Demy for Deneuve, Allen for Keaton. I found my 'it' girl." Nef admits that she has made inroads into the mainstream, but acknowledges that she is privileged: she is college-educated, well off, and white—while trans women of color face much higher rates of violence and discrimination.

Today's so-called transgender moment is fuelled by the success of the actress Laverne Cox and by Caitlyn Jenner who, last year, was the first internationally known celebrity to come out as transgender. But, Nef tells Schulman, "there isn't a trans *moment*. There were zero, and now there are ten to fifteen. That's not a moment. If anyone's having a moment, it's white cis men." When asked about Jenner, who invited activists to appear on her reality show but endorsed Ted Cruz for President, Nef replied, "Why isn't she angrier? Why isn't she posting a photo on her Instagram of every trans woman that gets murdered?" On the way to an event this summer, Nef tells Schulman that red carpets unnerve her: "Having your body in front of the firing squad like that can just feel really vulnerable." At the C.F.D.A. Fashion Awards, in June, Nef struggled to fit her Gucci gown over what she described as her "big old trans rib cage" and spent the ceremony twisting in her seat so that the *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour, her tablemate, wouldn't see her unzipped back. In March, at a benefit in Long Island City, Nef was despondent that the governor of North Carolina had just signed a statewide "bathroom bill" barring transgender people from using public rest rooms that match their gender identities. She tells Schulman, "It's literally putting trans people under house arrest." As the party guests got up to mingle, Nef remained in her chair. "I don't want to have a perfect body. I just want to have a chill body. I just want to have a casual body that people don't stare at." She continued, "I don't want to keep doing these auditions thinking about my deep-ass voice. Because it's the chicken or the egg: am I ashamed or am I made to feel ashamed?"

#### Why Did Anna Lyndsey Live for Years in the Dark?

In "Twilight" (p. 48), **Ed Caesar** investigates the credibility of the memoir "Girl in the Dark," published in 2015, and speaks with Anna Lyndsey, the pseudonymous author, about her mysterious condition, which she says causes crippling sensitivity to light and kept her confined to darkness for years. When Caesar arranged to visit Lyndsey at her home, in Hampshire, England, she offered instructions: visitors should "ring the bell, then when I answer the door, I'll open it slightly and then they should wait outside for a few seconds before pushing it open and coming in, so that I have time to get out of the hall." When Caesar arrived, he was surprised that Lyndsey stood in the doorway, arms outstretched, seemingly unbothered by the daylight pouring into the hall. Lyndsey explained that since she finished her book, in 2014, her sensitivity had steadily diminished. During her worst spells in the past decade, she spent hour after hour confined to a room in her house that was completely blackened. While any extended exposure to light still causes discomfort, she has recently been able to walk outside in normal clothes, during daylight hours, for the first time in eleven years.

"Girl in the Dark" has received widespread media coverage and mostly excellent reviews, but "it raises as many questions as it answers," Caesar writes, and some doctors have been puzzled by Lyndsey's story. Skin ailments normally manifest as a mark or a rash, but since 2006 Lyndsey's symptoms have been invisible. She dismisses any psychosomatic explanation for her illness. Discussing her recent improvements, she said, "Have I been exploring my childhood? Have I been having psychiatric help? Have I been doing neural retraining? Fucking hell, I have not!" Lyndsey attributes her improvement to probiotics and a low-histamine diet. Barbara Gilchrest, a dermatologist at Harvard, told Caesar that she had "never encountered anything linking high histamine levels in the blood or diet to light sensitivity of the kind described by the patient."

Those associated with the memoir's publication steadfastly endorse Lyndsey's account, and two British companies purchased the film rights and are co-producing the movie. But in her conversations with Caesar Lyndsey often described what she called "the pain of incredulity." "Somebody once said that three of the most powerful words in the language are 'I believe you,'" she explained, in a letter Caesar. "Their implied opposite is no less powerful. Repeated over and over again, it became a psychic flaying, on top of the agonising burning of my skin." When a Reiki healer once suggested that Lyndsey was benefitting from her illness, Lyndsey became enraged. She tells Caesar, "Somebody says to you, in the middle of all that suffering, 'Well, you might not be aware of what you're getting out of being in this position, but you're getting something out of it, and you're doing this to yourself."

#### For Obesity, Diet and Exercise Rarely Work—Increasingly, the Solution is Surgical

In "Keeping It Off" (p. 32), **Rivka Galchen** reports on bariatric procedures—surgeries that treat obesity—and scrubs in to an operating room at Beth Israel Medical Center to observe a sleeve gastrectomy, one of the four main types of bariatric procedures. Galchen—who, as a medical student, spent a month on a surgical team that performed bariatric surgeries—writes that American health is "assailed by long commutes, sedentary jobs, yo-yo dieting, and the charming toucans and tigers that beckon to children along the breakfast aisle of the grocery store." Two out of three American adults are overweight, and one out of three can be said to have obesity. Research into conventional weight-loss methods has repeatedly pointed to the conclusion that diet and exercise alone fail overwhelmingly often—only a small percentage of patients see sustained weight loss. "This makes for an unsettling and consequential revolution in our understanding of our bodies," Galchen writes. William Dietz, a nutritional biochemist, tells Galchen, "Embedded in the stigmatization of obesity is the idea that this is something that people have done to themselves; that's not the way to understand it."

Approximately two hundred thousand bariatric surgeries are performed in the U.S. each year, and there is a 0.15-per-cent chance of dying from a bariatric procedure. (The chance of dying from a knee replacement is higher.) Bariatric procedures remove no fat tissue—they change the stomach and intestine so that a person feels full more quickly, absorbs fewer calories, or both. Around seventy-five per cent of bariatric patients have sustained weight loss five years after their surgery. Yulia Zak, a bariatric surgeon, describes the wide-ranging benefits she observes in her practice: "I would be seeing a preoperative patient, often someone who was depressed, maybe unable to find a job, in part because of their mobility and appearance, and who was on insulin meds and blood-pressure meds, and with sleep apnea and high cholesterol," she said. "Then, right next door, I would see someone for their two-year postoperative appointment, and they would be off those medications, and they might have a baby with them, or a new job. Obesity-related infertility or mobility issues were no longer a problem for them. There was no other field of medicine where I saw people's lives improved so dramatically." Galchen writes, "Surgery changes a person into a being with a different intestinal tract, a different hormonal response to food—it's almost like becoming a member of a new species, one better adapted to our current world." But obesity, and the stigma associated with it, can't be solved by hundreds of millions of surgeries. George Bray, who studies obesity, tells Galchen, "When the day comes that we can mimic the weight loss without the surgery, I think surgery will fade away. How long this will take, and what form, I can't hazard a guess."

Plus: In Comment, Amy Davidson looks ahead to the first Presidential debate, and considers why Hillary Clinton, following "one of the worst weeks of her campaign," should embrace the exposure, openness, and spontaneity that her role demands (p. 21); in Shouts & Murmurs, Simon Rich imagines his own tale of faith in "The Book of Simon" (p. 31); Katrina Forrester examines the modern pornography industry (p. 64); Adam Gopnik reads several books about the urbanist Jane Jacobs (p. 69); Emily Nussbaum reviews the BBC series "Fleabag" (p. 76); Anthony Lane watches the new Ron Howard Film, "The Beatles: Eight Days a Week—The Touring Years," and Sharon Maguire's "Bridget Jones's Baby" (p. 78); and new fiction by Petina Gappah (p. 58).

Podcasts: Margaret Talbot, Benjamin Wallace-Wells, and Evan Osnos discuss the role of media in this election cycle; Judith Thurman speaks with Nailah Lymus, the founder of a modelling agency that represents Muslim and modest models; Eileen Myles speaks with the Poetry editor, Paul Muldoon, about the poet James Schuyler.

Digital Extras: Lucie Brock-Broido reads her poem "The American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act."

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