

THE NEW YORKER

IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

In the November 21, 2016, issue of *The New Yorker*, in a series of essays, **Toni Morrison, Junot Díaz, Mary Karr, Larry Wilmore, Jia Tolentino, George Packer, Jill Lepore, Jeffrey Toobin, Atul Gawande, Jane Mayer, Gary Shteyngart, Hilary Mantel, Mark Singer, Evan Osnos, Nicholas Lemann,** and **Peter Hessler** reflect on the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election (p. 48).

When a Populist Demagogue Takes Power

In “The Tough Guy” (p. 66), **Adrian Chen** reports from the Philippines, where he writes about Rodrigo Duterte, the provincial mayor who was elected President in May, after promising to rid the country of crime and drugs by killing thousands of criminals—and who recently gained worldwide attention for reportedly calling President Obama “a son of a whore,” setting off a dramatic shift in foreign relations. In 1996, as the mayor of Davao, one of the most violent cities in the Philippines, Duterte announced a crackdown on petty crime. Between 1998 and 2009, a total of eight hundred and fourteen killings, mostly of teen-agers, were attributed to a vigilante group called the Davao Death Squad. Duterte has frequently spoken approvingly of the killings and intimated that he had a hand in the D.D.S. Editha Caduaya, a journalist, tells Chen, “We know he is there, but you cannot see him.” It is difficult to find a resident of Davao who is willing to speak out against the death squads, but Clarita Alia, whose four teenage sons were killed within six years, tells Chen that Duterte “is a demon.” In 2015, Duterte announced that he was running for President, even though he had neither the family name nor the party machinery that is typically needed to compete in a Presidential election. He pledged to kill “up to a hundred thousand criminals” when elected, and boasted of his womanizing. Senator Alan Peter Cayetano tells Chen that Duterte “was bullheaded in telling people our problem is drugs. We’re nearly a narco-state, and our police are afraid.” (Cayetano had been Duterte’s running mate, but Presidents and Vice-Presidents are elected separately in the Philippines, and he lost.) Pia Ranada, a reporter, says that Duterte came across as “the populist leader who will look after your interests, who cares for you because he’s one of you.” She continues, “People were really crazy about him. It’s the only word for it.” Duterte won in a landslide, and “many people saw his victory as a protest against the political élite’s continuing inability to address the country’s problems,” Chen writes. Duterte thinks out loud, in long, rambling monologues, laced with inscrutable jokes and wild exaggeration. Erwin Romulo, the former editor of *Esquire Philippines*, tells Chen, “There are no slow news days anymore in the Philippines.”

In Duterte’s first three months as President, the Philippine *Daily Inquirer* listed more than fourteen hundred drug users killed by police and vigilantes. Duterte’s war on drugs has resulted in the deaths of more than three thousand people, drawing condemnation from human-rights groups and Western governments. Nicole Curato, a sociologist, tells Chen, “Killing has been normalized. . . . Before, it’s the state that turns a blind eye on it, and now a broader society is also willing to just turn a blind eye on the culture of violence.” Not long after Duterte took office, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights started a task force to investigate the extrajudicial killings. The leader of the task force, Gwen Pimentel-Gana, tells Chen, “We now will have to tell the government, in your fight against crime or in your fight against drugs, do not forget that lives of people are sacred.” In August, the Senate launched a probe into the killings, led by Senator Leila De Lima, a former Secretary of Justice, who tells Chen, “Based on what I saw, what I heard, and what we have researched on the phenomenon of killings in Davao, I have no doubt in my mind that there existed such a death squad.” Jose Diokno, a human-rights lawyer, tells Chen, “The more the authorities encourage themselves and other people to take the law into their own hands, then the more our system is going to become weaker and weaker. My fear is that, at some point, it will collapse.”

Losing in Love but Winning in Art

In “A Female Antihero” (p. 42), **Elaine Blair** profiles the writer and filmmaker Chris Kraus. Kraus’s first book, “I Love Dick,” received little notice when it was published, in 1997, but, through word of mouth and the endorsement of influential writers and critics, it has been discovered by a new generation of readers. In August, the director Jill Soloway released a pilot for a television show based on the novel. In “I Love Dick,” an experimental filmmaker, Chris, follows her husband, Sylvère, to California, where she develops a crush on his colleague, Dick. Chris and Sylvère write letters to Dick, a lark that brings them closer



together—until it becomes clear that Chris’s erotic obsession threatens their marriage. According to Kraus, “It all happened”—the correspondence was in fact written by Kraus and her husband at the time, under the circumstances described in the book. The character of Dick is based on the cultural theorist Dick Hebdige, who has said that “the book was like a bad review of my presence in the world.” When asked about Hebdige’s objection to being depicted in the book, Kraus tells Blair, “I’ve been depicted in other people’s books. If you know writers, it’s going to happen.” The idea of autofiction—novels that make playful use of author’s identity without claiming to be autobiography—was little known in the U.S. in 1997, and the book, published by the small press Semiotext(e), sold fewer than a hundred copies a year until it was reissued, in 2006. The success of novels such as Karl Ove Knausgaard’s “My Struggle,” Ben Lerner’s “10:04,” and Sheila Heti’s “How Should a Person Be?” have helped “I Love Dick” find a contemporary audience; this year, the novel has sold fourteen thousand copies. Chris’s discursive, self-deprecating voice—and her jokes about her failed love life and career—also feel strikingly familiar to fans of Amy Schumer and Lena Dunham. When “I Love Dick” was first published, Kraus recalls, “People remarked all the time, ‘She’s so self-hating, she has such a poor self-image.’ If a man makes fun of himself, it’s a joke. If a woman does, it’s a pathology and she needs therapy.”

“I Love Dick” is the first volume of a trilogy: “Aliens & Anorexia” was published in 2000, followed by “Torpor,” in 2006. Kraus says, “When I got to the end of ‘I Love Dick,’ the obvious question was: What could possibly bring a married couple to the point that they would engage in such an enterprise?” Her most recent novel, “Summer of Hate,” was published in 2012. Today, Kraus is writing a biography of the writer Kathy Acker, who died in 1997, at the age of fifty. “I’m finding that I have to gather the research materials as if they were my diaries,” she tells Blair. “Her correspondence, notebooks, diaries—I have to absorb them to the point that I can write from them as if I were writing from my own material.”

The Film J. D. Salinger Nearly Made

In “Esmé in Neverland” (p. 34), **Jill Lepore** uncovers the story of how a television director persuaded J. D. Salinger to adapt his beloved short story “For Esmé—With Love and Squalor” into a film, and explores why, after years of correspondence, the film was never made. “Esmé” was published in *The New Yorker* in 1950, and Salinger, who was skeptical of the entertainment business, declined several requests from directors and production companies to acquire the rights to the story. (“My contempt for Hollywood is immeasurable,” he once wrote.) Then, in 1962, Salinger received a letter from Peter Tewksbury, an Emmy Award-winning television director best known for “Father Knows Best” and “My Three Sons.” His latest project, “It’s a Man’s World,” was the only TV show that Salinger watched that year, according to Tewksbury. Salinger agreed to allow Tewksbury to adapt the short story, on one condition: he would cast Esmé. The girl he chose was Jan De Vries, the daughter of Peter De Vries, a *New Yorker* writer and close friend. Jan was the same age as Esmé, “about thirteen,” and she got interested in acting. “How we revel in her enchantment with her newfound theatrical world,” her father wrote to Salinger. “She is lovely.” But by the time Tewksbury and Salinger settled on a script Jan had outgrown the part. “I really wish I didn’t have to say this but I do: she’s too old,” Tewksbury told Salinger. “So there will be no film.”

Plus: In Comment, **Amy Davidson** looks ahead to Donald Trump’s Presidency, when he will have some four thousand appointments to fill on his first day in office, and considers the dilemmas that the executive appointees will face (p. 29); in “When I Knew I Found the One,” in Shouts & Murmurs, **Jen Sypra** imagines the moments of the title (p. 41); **Dan Chiasson** reads the Jamaican-born poet Ishion Hutchinson’s second book, “House of Lords and Commons” (p. 84); **Adam Kirsch** reads the work of the Israeli novelist S. Y. Agnon (p. 87); **Anthony Lane** watches the new Tom Ford movie, “Nocturnal Animals,” and Paul Verhoeven’s new film, “Elle” (p. 92); in a Sketchbook, **Etgar Keret** and **Maira Kalman** depict Pilobolus Dance Theatre’s “The Inconsistent Pedaler,” a surrealist fable that will be performed at N.Y.U.’s Skirball Center (p. 73); a poem by **Essy Stone** (p. 81); and new fiction by **Lauren Groff** (p. 78).

Podcasts: **David Remnick**, **George Packer**, and **Amy Davidson** discuss the outcome of the 2016 election and what it means for the future of the country; **Dorothy Wickenden** speaks with **Evan Osnos** and **Jill Lepore** about the election and the history of populist movements in this country; **Lauren Groff** reads her short story “Flower Hunters.”

The November 21, 2016, issue of *The New Yorker* goes on sale at newsstands beginning Monday, November 14.