



Book of the Week

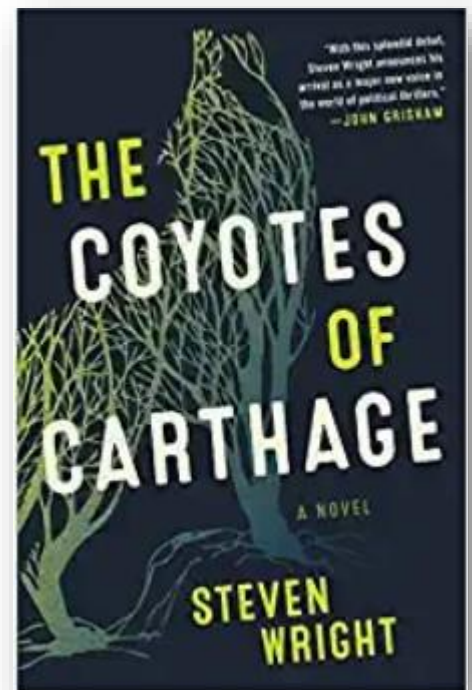
***The Coyotes of Carthage* by Steven Wright**

Book Review by Eddie Keith

As a constant though plodding reader, I am always reading a book or two. I enjoy both historical nonfiction and entertaining fiction by my favorite authors. Occasionally, however, I read or hear something intriguing about a new release that inspires me to take a chance on a different subject and/or unfamiliar author. Such was the case with *The Coyotes of Carthage*, a 2020 political thriller by Steven Wright, a law professor at the University of Wisconsin. It was a good choice, as well as a particularly timely one.

The subject of the book is political intrigue and misinformation surrounding a political campaign. Sound familiar? In the past year one of my favorite television series ever, *Homeland*, concluded with seasons that introduced a Russian intelligence officer who manipulated social and mainstream media to sow distrust and violence in America. That seemed pretty far-fetched until I read Wright's book, which pursued similar themes. Truth has emulated fiction in the 2020 Presidential campaign, election, and aftermath as conspiracy theorists, social media campaigns, and rival television networks have battled for the hearts, minds, and votes of the American people, underscoring that reality is perception to us all.

In Wright's book Andre is a political "consultant"/manipulator for a company which has been hired by a large mining company to orchestrate a campaign in a rural county of South Carolina that will allow the company to purchase public land for their use in a project. The rub is that the sale of the land is definitely not in the interest of the local citizenry, as it will lead to destruction and likely pollution of the pristine land. As an African-American outsider in a conservative Southern county, Dre begins by enlisting (bribing) a local couple to be the face of the campaign. He and his company provide the resources and expertise to guide the local "straw men" and organize an effective campaign that plays to the "God and guns" values of the locals. Misinformation, lies, manipulation, and slander are freely employed. As for Dre personally, he must



battle both his desire to keep a high-paying job and his conscience. To learn the outcome, I encourage you to read the book.

The Coyotes of Carthage is not a happy book. As James Brady in a review in the *Washington Post* described it in his headline, “Steven Wright’s *Coyotes of Carthage* pulls back the curtains on how democracy works. It’s not pretty.” (We’ve been reminded of that in the last few months.) Wright’s book is, however, enlightening and timely. If you read this book, you’ll never be able to watch or read a political ad in quite the same way again. You’ll want to ask two questions: “Really?!?” and “Why?”

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