

## Power in the Age of Lies—It's Not about Trump

A few thoughts on my novel, “Power in the Age of Lies”:

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POWER is not a political polemic. Readers have compared POWER to Rand’s “Atlas Shrugged,” and there are similarities—both books are thrillers with political and philosophical themes, and both have female protagonists whose power rises from brilliance in industry.

But the differences matter. Obviously (and thankfully!) POWER is vastly shorter than Rand’s novels. One reason for the heft of Rand’s writing is maniacal repetition as she pounds her message into the reader. In contrast, the theme of POWER is the search for truth, both objective and self, and the courage to act morally on that truth. With this theme, hammering a personal political formula would be hypocritical. In fact, a principal character conflict—Madison, fighting for coal power to save people’s lives, and Conrad, advocating renewable energy through abstract economics—is never neatly resolved. Real-world challenges like wealth inequity and climate change are massive and nuanced. The solutions do not fit on a bumper sticker.

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POWER is not about Donald Trump. Yes, he’s a character in the book. Trump is an overwhelming presence in our media, so it would be disingenuous to pretend he doesn’t exist. (An agent suggested I rename him to Drump or Slump. Really?)

I do take shots at Trump, most of them factually supported in the endnotes. That was irresistible and cathartic. But Trump exists in the book only because he’s the personification of a decade-long shift by the political right to embrace nativism, authoritarianism, and disinformation. Trump will be gone in a few years, but these trends began before him, and they will continue after he’s gone.

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POWER is fiction because we are already deluged with excellent non-fiction documenting and analyzing our political crisis. But those of us who live in the political junkie circuit forget how few people read these books. Whether POWER can reach a new audience remains to be seen. But I believe fiction is a powerful medium to convey social and philosophical themes. I’ve attempted to smuggle a few in, disguised as an exciting thriller. We’ll see how that works out.

—M Verant  
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