

People & Places

Books

Political thriller resonates

Clinton & Penny team up for 'State of Terror'

By Hillel Italie

As US forces left Afghanistan this summer and the Taliban seized control, **Hillary Rodham Clinton** responded not just as a former secretary of state but in a capacity she never imagined for herself - as a novelist seeing her first work of fiction anticipate current events.

"State of Terror," completed months ago and coming out this week, is a thriller co-written by Clinton and her friend Louise Penny, the bestselling crime novelist. The main character, Ellen Adams, is a new secretary of state with a backstory familiar to Clinton watchers - the surprise choice for an incoming administration led by her onetime political rival, as Barack Obama had been when he brought in Clinton after the 2008 election.

Secretary Adams will soon be caught up in what Clinton calls one of her nightmare scenarios while in Washington - an international terrorist plot involving nuclear weapons. The trouble in part originates in Afghanistan, where the previous administration of Trump-like President Eric Dunn has made a deal (as Trump did) that Adams sees as effectively giving the country back to the Taliban and raising the risk of terrorist activity.

"We did do the outline a year or so before the (2020) election. We didn't know who was going to win. We didn't know what was going to happen," Clinton explained during a recent joint interview with Penny at the Simon & Schuster offices in midtown Manhattan. "Whoever was going to win - Trump, or I hoped, Biden - would be facing a fait accompli."

The nearly 500-page novel combines other details that resonate with recent news - for instance, a chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who, like Gen. Mark Milley under Trump, challenges the civilian leadership - along with explorations of friendship; a cameo for Penny's famed fictional investigator, Armand Gamache; and, for the writers, the enjoyment of placing women of a certain age at the heart of a political thriller.

Converse

Seated together on a modestly sized couch, Clinton and Penny converse like two public people who know well how to share talking points with the media while also clearly sharing a private history of travel, meals, confidences, inside jokes and mutual esteem. When Penny remembered her apprehension about meeting Clinton - "Hillary Clinton, my God, just so impressive, smart and thoughtful" - Clinton smiled wryly and rolled her eyes.

"Do you remember the first time we actually met?" Penny said to Clinton. It was in a New York restaurant, just a couple of months after Clinton's stunning loss to Trump in 2016.

"And you were at an event, I think the first in-person post-election event, in Boston," Penny recalled. "So you were late, and you came into this restaurant - a public restaurant, obviously. And she showed up at the door, and the restaurant was throbbing. Silence. Silence. And then as one, they rose and applauded."

"It was in New York," Clinton noted with a laugh - her home state, where she had won by double digits.

Each writer contributes an afterword in "State of Terror," reflecting on their friendship and professional partnership. They had, it turns out, long admired each other. Penny had followed Clinton's career since the early 1990s, when Bill Clinton was first elected president, while Clinton's best friend Betsy Johnson Ebeling told a reporter in 2016 that both she and Clinton were fans of crime novels and were reading Penny.

Penny met Ebeling shortly after the interview, and was surprised to learn that someone so close to Hillary Clinton was not an "intimidating power broker" but a slight, unassuming woman with the "warmest smile and kind eyes." She heard from Clinton a few weeks later. Penny's husband, Michael, had died of dementia, and among her condolence cards was one from Clinton that cited his accomplished medical career and offered thoughts on loss and grief.

"Secretary Clinton, in the last stages of a bruising brutal campaign for the most powerful job in the world, took time out to write to me," Penny wrote, adding that they had yet to meet and that Penny, a Canadian, couldn't vote for her.

"It was an act of selflessness I will never forget, and one that has inspired me to be kinder in my own life."

The book is shaped by Penny's narrative style and by Clinton's government experiences and global outlook, but also by grief that Clinton still finds hard "to fully accept." Ellen Adams is based in part on Clinton's friend, former Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher, who died in April 2019. Ebeling, the inspiration for Ellen's best friend, Betsy Jameson, in "State of Terror," died just a few months later. Ellen Adams' daughter, Katherine, is named for Tauscher's daughter.

Experience

Hillary Clinton, whose closest experience to writing a novel had been a play she wrote in sixth grade about a trip to Europe, is not the first in her family to do so: Bill Clinton has completed two bestselling thrillers with James Patterson, and their success encouraged some publishing officials to wonder if Hillary should try something similar.

The idea for teaming up with Penny began with Stephen Rubin, a longtime industry executive who since March 2020 has been a consulting publisher at Simon & Schuster.

In a recent email to the AP, he noted that Simon & Schuster CEO Jonathan Karp was seeking ideas for a new book by Hillary Clinton, who has been with the publisher for more than 20 years and wrote the bestselling memoirs "Living History" and "What Happened," among others. Penny's publisher is St. Martin's Press, an imprint of Macmillan, where Rubin once worked.

"I knew and really liked Louise from my days at Macmillan," Rubin wrote. "And I knew that she and Mrs. Clinton were very close friends."

Fiction allowed Clinton and Penny to consider a world on the edge of disaster, but also to work in more personal and lighthearted details. One passage is an obvious wink at an awkward moment for Bill Clinton - a reference to "didn't inhale," his hedging description in 1992 of his marijuana use in college. Clinton says the "ego-driven and uninformed" President Dunn (as he's described in the book) is and is not Trump, and contends that the hostility between Ross and the president she serves under, Douglas Williams, is not a reflection of her time with Obama. (AP)



Clinton



In this July 10, 2017 file photo, Paul McCartney performs at Amalie Arena in Tampa, Fla. USA. McCartney has revisited the breakup of The Beatles, refuting the suggestion that he was responsible for the group's demise. Speaking on an episode of BBC Radio 4's 'This Cultural Life' that is scheduled to air Oct 23, McCartney said it was John Lennon who wanted to disband The Beatles. (AP)

Music

McCartney insists he wanted to continue

'Lennon responsible for Beatle breakup'

LONDON, Oct 11, (AP) - Paul McCartney has revisited the breakup of The Beatles, flatly disputing the suggestion that he was responsible for the group's demise.

Speaking on an episode of BBC Radio 4's "This Cultural Life" that is scheduled to air on Oct. 23, McCartney said it was John Lennon who wanted to disband The Beatles.

"I didn't instigate the split," McCartney said. "That was our Johnny."

The band's fans have long debated who was responsible for the breakup, with many blaming McCartney. But McCartney said Lennon's desire to "break loose" was the main driver behind the split.

Confusion about the breakup was allowed to fester because their manager asked the band members to keep quiet until he concluded a number of business deals, McCartney said.

The interview comes ahead of Peter Jackson's six-hour documentary chronicling the final months of the band. "The Beatles: Get Back," set for release in November on Disney+, is certain to revisit the breakup of the legendary band. McCartney's comments were first reported by The Observer.

When asked by interviewer John Wilson about the decision to strike out on his own, McCartney retorted: "Stop right there. I am not the person who instigated the split. Oh no, no, no. John walked into a room one day and said, 'I am leaving The Beatles.' Is that instigating the split, or not?"

McCartney expressed sadness over the breakup, saying the group was still making "pretty good stuff."

"This was my band, this was my job, this was my life. So I wanted it to continue," McCartney said.

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The Fisk Jubilee Singers' first tour

wasn't an immediate success, but their perseverance through financial hardship to find an audience took them around the world and kept their school afloat.

Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, celebrated the singing group's 150th anniversary last Wednesday and reflected on a legacy that was built with their performances of slave spirituals, which kept alive not only the university but also a musical tradition. Poet, author and educator **Nikki Giovanni**, who is a Fisk alumna, talked about that first tour during her keynote speech during Jubilee Day, their annual event.

"We're here today celebrating," Giovanni said. "But when we look at how we carried those songs, and we carry those songs now, and we still lean on the everlasting arms."

Opened as a liberal arts school for freed Black slaves in 1866, Fisk University was financially struggling just a few years later. Giovanni explained that one of the students, **Ella Sheppard**, who was born a slave, offered to help. She was a piano player.

Nine students, some of those former slaves or descendants of slaves, set off on a tour on Oct. 6, 1871, singing mostly European songs, such as those by **Gilbert and Sullivan**, to white audiences, Giovanni said.

They got little response and barely made enough money to feed themselves, but still managed to donate money to victims of the deadly Chicago fire of 1871. The turning point was when they started singing the songs their ancestors had brought with them to America: spirituals.

"Everybody was shocked," Giovanni said. "They'd never heard anything like that."

"The songs they performed, such as 'Steal Away,' were a musical bond to

their ancestors who were brought over from African nations.

"We were put on a block and we were bought and we were sold and we were bought and we were sold," Giovanni said. "And the only language we still had was the music that had been passed down from **Jesus to Mary Magdalene**."

Soon the word spread of their performances and they were invited to sing at the White House by President **Ulysses S. Grant**. Then they toured internationally, singing for **Queen Victoria** and others. Their work helped Fisk build Jubilee Hall, the oldest building on campus and one of the oldest academic buildings continuously dedicated to educating Black students.

In addition to their anniversary, they earned their first Grammy Award for best roots gospel album this year and started a new endowment.

Also:

ROME: The northern Italian city of **Turin** will host the next edition of the Eurovision Song Contest in the spring.

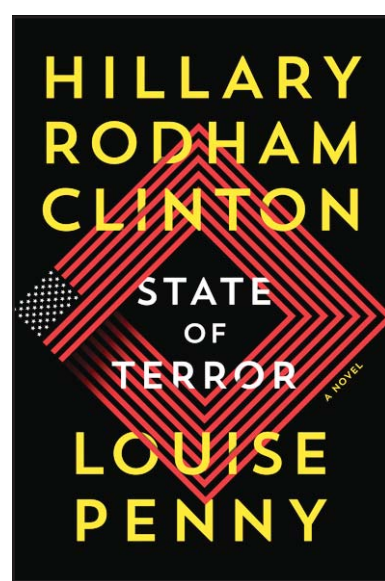
Turin Mayor **Chiara Appendino** tweeted on Friday that "we have brought to Turin the most followed musical event in the world."

The final of the widely popular song competition, which includes voting by the public, will hold its final on May 14, with semifinal competitions on May 10 and 12, the Eurovision Song Contest said.

Turin's Palaolimpico, an events center that was built for the 2006 Winter Olympics, will be the venue for the 66th edition of the musical competition.

The contest was previously held in Naples in 1965 and Rome in 1991.

Maneskin, an Italian rock group, won this year's edition which was held in **Rotterdam**, in the **Netherlands**.



This cover image released by Simon & Schuster shows 'State of Terror,' a novel by Hillary Rodham Clinton and Louise Penny. (AP)



Steller



O'Dell

Variety

CHANDLER, Ariz: The Arizona Daily Star and the Navajo Times have won top honors in the Arizona Newspapers Association's annual Better Newspapers Contest announced Saturday.

The Arizona Daily Star in Tucson earned Arizona Newspaper of the Year in the daily category. One of its journalists, **Tim Steller**, was named the 2021 Journalist of the Year for his work covering the **US-Mexico** border. "Steller has an unmatched understanding of the political history of the borderlands and how it intersects with state and national politics," judges said.

The Navajo Times based in Window Rock won for Newspaper of the Year in the non-daily category. **Krista Allen** with the newspaper earned Journalist of the Year for non-dailies for her coverage of the coronavirus on the Navajo Nation.

"Her work demonstrates a special kind of community journalism," judges said. "She is persistent and compassionate in interviewing people who are navigating a pandemic and facing incredible losses."

Arizona Republic reporters **Rob O'Dell** and **Richard Ruelas** received the daily newspaper award for Story of the Year for their series, "The Patriots," that shed light on a much-seen but little-understood movement in Arizona.

"O'Dell and Ruelas demonstrate that the in-your-face confrontations from the movement had a distinct impact on the GOP and, therefore, on the decisions made by Arizona's leaders, from the Chandler school board to the governor at the height of a deadly pandemic," judges said.

Michele Nelson of the Payson Roundup won in the non-daily category for her series, "mobile home park evictions," that illustrated a trend that had serious consequences for low-income residents in a state that already has a severe shortage in the housing and rental markets.

"She has a real talent for showing readers the human face of the issue and revealing the distinctions in homes that mean the difference in residents having some money in hand to start anew versus none," judges said. (AP)

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MOLINE, Ill: An Illinois man unexpectedly won the Quad Cities Marathon when the two Kenyan runners who had far outpaced

him were disqualified after being diverted off the course by a race volunteer bicyclist.

Tyler Pence crossed the finish line in 2 hours, 15 minutes, 6 seconds to become the first US runner since 2001 to win the race through the Quad Cities along the Mississippi River in Illinois and Iowa. Pence, the head track and cross-country coach at the University of Illinois-Springfield, logged

his fastest time ever with the win and took the first prize of \$3,000.

Pence's win came after **Elijah Mwangangi Saolo** and **Luke Kibet** diverted from the course a little more than halfway to the finish line when the bicycle rider leading them mistakenly went straight when he should have turned, the Quad-City Times reported.



George Clooney, (left), and Amal Clooney pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'The Tender Bar' during the 2021 BFI London Film Festival in London, Sunday, Oct. 10. (AP)

Race director **Joe Moreno** confirmed that the bicyclist went the wrong way but said the two runners also should have known not to follow him.

"At that intersection where that incident happened, the course was well-marked," Moreno said. "The signage is well-displayed. The volunteers are there. And the fourth element is those elite runners have a meeting the day before to get familiar with the course." (AP)

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MORICHES, NY: A bull that escaped from a farm on **Long Island** and eluded searchers for two months has been captured, authorities said.

The 1,500-pound (680-kilogram) bull, nicknamed **Barney** or **Barnie**, was corralled late Wednesday by staff from Skylands Animal Sanctuary and Rescue, **Suffolk County SPCA** Chief **Roy Gross** said in a news release.

Photos posted by the animal sanctuary on Facebook showed the bull on a bed of hay inside a trailer.

"Look who we found cruising around Long Island," the organization said. "He is one handsome kid."

Suffolk County police used drones and helicopters to help capture the bull, who will live out his days at the Skylands sanctuary in **Wantage, New Jersey**, Gross said.

Rescuers had been searching the animal ever since he broke through the fence at a Moriches farm on July 20, but he remained on the lam as residents of the area posted sightings on social media. (AP)