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1 From The Men's Health Forum 2002: Getting it sorted: a new policy for men's health: The Men's Health Forum. London

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POSITIVE ABOUT VIRTUALLY EVERYONE

Living history. Hillary Rodham Clinton, 2003. London: Headline; ISBN 0 7472 5515 6 cloth, 562 pp., £20.00 cloth.

There is a story of a Native American who was taken to see the ocean. Instead of being awestruck by the majesty of the vast seas as the kindly white guide had intended, it was the vast crowds on the beach at Long Island that astonished him. Surely there could not be so many people in the world. Reading Hillary Clinton's autobiography I feel like that Native American, baffled by quantities of humans. Surely it is not possible to have so many aides, so many teams of cherished helpers, so many good friends, such a gigantic social milieu; simply to know so many people. Three pages of acknowledgements are needed to thank the people who helped her with the book, including three women who each spent two years working closely with her on it. It is hardly surprising that there is not much sense of an individual reflecting and interpreting in the chronicle of events that the reader gets.

Though *Living history* is about world historical events it is a dullish read. With so many people to talk about it is hard to manage penetrating characterization: 'I was excited to see Naina Yeltsin evolve in her role since we'd ... met in Tokyo In 1995 I had helped her secure a donation of nutritional formula Russia needed' (p. 411); two Arkansas friends offer 'personal support as well as helpful perspectives on politics and history' (p. 259); the Hungarian president is a 'heroic figure' (p. 361) and 'my talented domestic policy staff [seven names listed] was invaluable' (p. 383). Rodham Clinton is positive about everyone – well not quite everyone. Kenneth Starr, prosecutor in the impeachment of Bill Clinton, is not in the great circle of friends. She says that of all the world leaders she has met she disliked only two – or rather, dislike is my interpretation as what she actually says is 'only two have acted in ways that I found personally disturbing: Robert Mugabe ... who giggled incessantly and inappropriately ... and the Prime Minister of Slovakia' (p. 361). Rodham

Clinton has to be circumspect and keep her feelings carefully controlled: 'Everything you say is amplified' (p. 171). In a television interview after the media story that alleged Bill Clinton's affair with Gennifer Flowers, Hillary Clinton gave way to spontaneity in the remark that she was not 'some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette' (p. 107) and aroused a media frenzy of fury. Oh dear, she had to apologise and explain that she had not meant like Tammy Wynette herself, but like the character in the song.

The carapace of professional self-control and bland affability that she has developed protects her from media intrusiveness, and the Republican Party's penchant for dirty tricks. It serves her particularly well when she comes to Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky. She cries and yells, was 'dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged' (p. 466) but the reader is not allowed to penetrate to what a heart-broken inner self might really be like – and why should she allow such intrusion? She dries her tears and gets quickly on to discussing the Republican Party's undeniable misuse of the Constitution in initiating the impeachment of Bill Clinton for having an affair. Impeachment is intended for 'the most serious of offenses' (p. 474). Rodham Clinton quotes from a letter signed by 400 historians and sent to Congress, urging rejection of impeachment on the grounds that: 'The Framers explicitly reserved [impeachment] for high crimes and misdemeanors in the exercise of executive power. Impeachment for anything else would, according to James Madison, leave the President to serve "during the pleasure of the Senate" thereby mangling the system of checks and balances that is our chief safeguard against abuses of public power' (p. 486). In other words, impeachment for lesser matters could lead to the president being ejected from office by Congress whenever it disagreed with his policy. Added to this frivolous use of the process of impeachment the way in which it was pursued was, according to Rodham Clinton, entirely inappropriate. For example, preliminary information gathered should have been confidential but was made public by Kenneth Starr and evidence was included from witnesses whose testimony was not contested in cross-examination (p. 475).

Politicians normally publish their memoirs after they have retired from the political struggle; then they have to toe no party line and please no voters. But Rodham Clinton is only 56 and is now senator for western New York. Madeleine Albright speaking on *Everywoman* for the BBC World Service (10 November 2003) said that she could see Rodham Clinton as the first woman president of the USA. With a political future in front of her naturally Clinton is careful. *Living history* can be read as an extended political manifesto. And she has

a lot to offer voters. There is the perfect American story of humble, but deserving, beginnings followed by success as a result of intelligence, energy and honest hard work. After the second world war her father started a small fabric business in Chicago and the whole family helped with the silk-screen printing when he branched out into design. At school she worked hard, joined its Cultural Values Committee to promote tolerance, was encouraged to think about the needs of others through involvement in the Methodist Church (religion has throughout her life been a source of comfort and strength). In schooldays, like her father and all but one of her classmates, she was a Republican, a 'Goldwater Girl'. (Rodham Clinton thinks that her mother's views were more Democrat inclined, but she kept them quiet.) As an undergraduate at Wellesley came first doubts about the GOP (Grand old Party) – or as she explains it, the Republican Party moved to the right with the nomination of Nixon (p. 36). At Yale Law School her political interests developed and times were changing as Nixon escalated the Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights movement flourished.

Throughout her career Hillary Clinton has consistently supported the interests and legal rights of children, and then of women and human rights in general. In the early 1970s at Yale there was a seminal meeting with Marian Edelman, the first black woman admitted to the bar in Mississippi who 'helped direct me into lifelong advocacy for children' (p. 46). Another seminal meeting at Yale was with fellow law student Bill Clinton. Early evidence of his persuasive powers was that he argued to allow both of them in to the closed Yale Art Gallery in exchange for picking up litter in the Gallery courtyard (p. 53). Bill Clinton is something (though only something) of an exception to the flattish characterization of most of those who appear in *Living history*; the reader can see his engaging qualities, and it is clear that Hillary loved him (as he her) and probably still loves him. Hillary's love for daughter Chelsea is also plain, as is her desire to protect Chelsea from the media frenzied life of the president's family.

After law school Hillary Rodham launched into her career of work for human rights, and support for Democratic politics, at first independently and then, after marriage, with Bill Clinton. She says, towards the end of the book, that: 'Throughout Bill's tenure I had traveled the world on behalf of women's rights, human rights, religious tolerance and democracy' (p. 500). That remark sums up both Rodham Clinton's strengths and weaknesses as a politician. The weaknesses are what she leaves out. The undoubted good things she promotes do not exist without an economic context, a social structure and international relations that are based on more complex

issues than pleasant chats with world leaders. She might be talking about a different world from that discussed by Joseph Stiglitz in *Globalization and its discontents*. Stiglitz's concern is the effect on developing and ex-Communist countries of the USA influenced International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF's conditions for loaning money are total deregulation, abolition of tariffs and the conquest of inflation at all costs by high interest rates – a recipe one might note that the USA does not adopt within its own borders. Without developed markets and a reliable banking system sudden deregulation tends to produce a gangster economy, as in the former Soviet Union. A gangster economy then undermines faith in democracy and any reform (Stiglitz, 2002: 159). Countries that did not follow the IMF prescription (e.g., Malaysia and China) did better than the many that did (Stiglitz, 2002: 156). Rodham Clinton never acknowledges that the influence of the USA in the world could be anything but good, with its sunny democracy all ready to export. For example, the Taliban in Afghanistan and its crushing of women's rights and human rights in general is deplored, but it is not mentioned that the USA government (not Clinton's government admittedly) had supported the Taliban in the days of Soviet Communism.

But one should not underestimate the kind of difficulties Rodham Clinton faces as a politician (Stiglitz, once chief economist at the World Bank has retreated to academia and is now a professor at Columbia University), subject to personal attacks and the imperfect operation of USA (as probably of any) democracy. She and Bill Clinton struggled against vested interests of doctors and the insurance industry to establish universal health care; that they did not manage to do so is more an indication of the monumental task than their failings. It was not easy for the British government to establish the National Health Service in 1948, but they did not have an insurance industry as well as consultants against them. Her support for human rights, and particularly for women and children's rights to always be included as part of human rights, has been consistent. The UN Women's conference in China 1995 where Clinton gave a major speech illustrates the conflictual context in which she has to operate. The conference coincided with the arrest of Chinese human rights activists so this raised doubts with Clinton and her advisers as to whether attending the conference would provide tacit approval of China's policies. The Chinese government, fearing criticism, constantly sought to know what she was going to say, while she received other kinds of attack from the political right and various religious rights – fearing an anti-family and anti-American jamboree. She decided to go ahead and though the speech does not name offending

countries, it is not hard for the audience to fill them in. She lists very plainly (p. 305) offences against women, and in their opposites, the values she stands for:

It is a violation of human rights when babies are denied food, or drowned ... because they were born girls ... when women and girls are sold into the slavery of prostitution ... when a leading cause of death worldwide among women ... is the violence they are subjected to in their own homes by their own relatives. ... If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that women's rights are human rights.

For those sociologically minded readers who are wondering, Hillary meets Anthony Giddens on page 426 and on page 428.

REFERENCE

Stiglitz, J. 2002: *Globalization and its discontents*. London: Penguin.

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REVISITING THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL IN LATE MODERNITY

Personal and political: feminisms, sociology and family lives. Miriam David, 2003. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books; ISBN: 1 85856 305 4 paper, 190pp., £17.99 paper.

Miriam David, in the introduction to her 'intellectual biography as a feminist sociologist in the academy', states that this is her 'personal perspective on the origins and development of a feminist sociology of family lives in late modernity' (p. 1).

Growing up in the postwar generation in Yorkshire, in a middle-class, second-generation immigrant Jewish family, she describes her mother and grandmothers as having a great influence on her life. Her mother was somewhat unusual in that she had attended university in the late 1920s, subsequently becoming a teacher. Although she gave up her own career upon marriage, her mother's expectation nevertheless was that her daughters would go on to higher education. Of interest to note was that both parents' wish was for their daughters not to become teachers but to develop 'broader interests' – yet all have become teachers, '... in one way or another ... fascinated by the relations between education and families' (p. 18).