

My Turn
Hillary Clinton targets the presidency

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There cannot be many people perusing these columns who have much interest left in Hillary Clinton. If you think of her as a careerist, corporate hack, your prejudices about her will be confirmed by this account of her life.

We could be generous and say that her political career is a depressing if unsurprising illustration of the necessary compromises with the realities of American politics required of anyone aspiring to be a Democratic president in an age when political funding by corporations is unrestricted. But there is no evidence here that she (or husband Bill) ever saw as compromises the neocon/corporate views on the economy and social welfare which they espoused long before they had the White House in sight. The Clintons discovered that attacking the poor and the trade unions was electorally popular way back in their days in Arkansas.

For a British reader this tale has resonance, for the Blair/Brown faction within the Labour Party copied the Clintons' 'New Democrats' strategy right down the line,¹ the only real difference being that the opposition to the changes within Labour put up more of a fight than the opposition in the Democrats and the American unions.²

As the author documents Clinton's positions, changes and backtracking, he shows in considerable detail it's not that she 'sold out': she had nothing to sell in the first place. Her 'journey' hasn't been from left to right: neither she nor Bill was even vaguely on the left. The author notes that with the rise of left-leaning Bernie Sanders as a presidential contender, Hillary is – of course! – moving slightly to the left. Yes, she's a

1 This is glossed over in Tom Bower's *Gordon Brown* (2004) which I skimmed through recently. If you wonder why Labour Party members chose Corbyn, this account of Brown's careerism, strange personality and feuds with Blair shows the kind of thing they were reacting *against*.

2 Centrally, NuLab and the New Democrats abandoned the urban working class because they presented problems which could not be solved within the conceptual framework created by the dominant ethos of globalisation and the free movement of capital.

woman and a female president would be a significant step. But that's all one could say.

With people like Clinton, who have maintained a public front for nearly forty years, I find myself wondering: 'So what does she really think about X? How does she talk with her confidants?' We may find out one day when her political career is over and her inner circle write their memoirs. I think Henwood would say that the answer is going to be that what the public saw is what there was.

This is a short book, only 126 pages of text; but it has 40 pages of footnotes. The author explains that his first writing about Hillary in a piece for *Harpers Magazine* produced several lengthy attempts at refutation by her supporters. In this expanded version of that article he leaves nothing unsourced. This is nicely written, a pleasure to read and very good indeed.

Robin Ramsay