

position that, in the American context, entails a concern for power but also a preoccupation with law and sovereignty; and (3) the minimalist disposition that accepts the idea that some government power is necessary while also regarding it as distasteful and dangerous. The legacy of these frames, assumptions, premises, and dispositions is a thin democracy. Most innocuously, thin democracy results in malaise; most perniciously, it prepares the ground for totalitarianism.

The antidote to thin democracy is strong democracy, which "rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogeneous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions." Again, Barber's argument is intelligent and carefully developed. He punctuates it with references to political theorists, from Locke to Habermas; he explores rather than merely disposes of objections and caveats to his own line of reasoning; he scrutinizes the nature of democratic regimes and the forms of citizenship; and he pauses every now and then to muse in a more speculative fashion. For example, there is a nice little piece on the nine functions of talk in the democratic process.

But for all the elegance of Barber's treatise, it could be argued that the success of *Strong Democracy* depends finally on the viability of his suggestions for change. The key questions are: Are these suggestions realistic enough to be taken seriously? And if they are serious proposals for political change, does Barber offer us a roadmap for getting from here to there?

On page 307 of the book is a twelve-point "Strong Democratic Program for the Revitalization of Citizenship." The list includes such items as a national system of neighborhood assemblies, a civic videotex service to equalize access to information, recommendations for experiments in informal lay justice and electronic balloting, selective elections to local office by lottery, and a program of universal citizen service. According to Barber, "This program does not illustrate strong democracy; it *is* strong democracy."

It appears that Barber is perfectly serious about implementing his program. In fact, he addresses the need for "facilitating conditions" for an agenda of this kind—conditions such as civic education, the appropriate kind of leadership, and the acceptance of certain prevailing morals and values. What Barber does not provide, however, is

a precise indication of what will motivate us to change. Where is the engine that will pull us to his place? The trouble is not that he fails to address this problem. He does—but with uncharacteristic imprecision. Thus, for example, although it may be true that neighborhood assemblies meet his criteria of being realistic, workable, and able to deal concretely with the obstacles that modernity places in the way of participation, we are left wondering how they will one day come to dot the landscape. Does Barber expect his own book to be so convincing a treatise that there will be a grass roots movement to follow his lead? Does he expect a few key people to pave the way? Or does he anticipate that natural evolution will take us there?

Barber's insufficient attention to that agent of change does not significantly diminish the importance of his book. For even if it were merely an intellectual exercise—which it is not—the problems of thin democracy are manifestly apparent and Barber's exploration thereof original and brave. We deserve to be discomfited by our collective inertia and provoked into doing something about it. *Strong Democracy* is a push down that long road. **WV**

WITNESS TO WAR: AN AMERICAN DOCTOR IN EL SALVADOR
by Charles Clements
(Bantam Books; 268 pp.; \$15.95)

WEAKNESS AND DECEIT: U.S. POLICY AND EL SALVADOR
by Raymond Bonner
(Times Books; 404 pp.; \$16.95)

THE MORASS: UNITED STATES INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA
by Richard Alan White
(Harper & Row; 319 pp.; \$14.95)

Aaron Segal

The once tiny rivulet of books on El Salvador and Central America has recently reached floodtide proportions. The latest crest brings one extraordinary effort (Clements), one good try (Bonner), and one failed attempt (White).

Charles Clements has made a long physical and emotional journey: from the Air Force Academy to Vietnam as a military pilot and then to medical school and a year as a pacifist doctor with the Salvadoran

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guerrillas in their besieged stronghold of Guazapa. His moving autobiographical witness is the first detailed account of life among the rebels. It is also a compassionate account of what it is like, with a minimum of resources, to provide health care to civilians and combatants on all sides in the midst of a civil war. Clements's book is painfully honest, introspective, and thoughtful. It hits home, whether Clements is discussing why preventive health measures work poorly in the face of air attacks or how to use native plants as medicinal drugs.

This book should forever destroy the myths about Cuban, Nicaraguan, and other foreign influences on the Salvadoran guerrillas. Again and again Clements hears of the young and old who risk their lives in response to the brutal, random violence of the Salvadoran military and security forces; of the terror and exploitation inflicted on tenant farmers and landless laborers; and of the lack of options for the rural poor. He meets rebel hardliners as well as devout Christians, and he presents them all in this compelling book. Most of all he meets himself, an American pacifist doctor refusing to bear arms in a war being fought against a shiftless army bearing advanced American weapons yet preferring to brutalize civilians. His is a telling witness.

Raymond Bonner tells in one volume the story of U.S. involvement in El Salvador, primarily from 1979 to 1984, and the story of the Salvadoran civil war. His relentless pursuit of documents and sources results in a scathing condemnation of Washington's duplicity. Bureaucrats convinced that support of the corrupt Salvadoran military was essential to prevent a "communist takeover," covered up human rights atrocities, illegal uses of aid money and of U.S. military advisors, and many other outrages. The hard-core ideological element of the Reagan administration upped the ante and torpedoed possible negotiations.

Less insightful is Bonner's story of the complex Salvadoran civil war. A two-week visit with the guerrillas in Morazan Province corroborates the impression of their motivations given in Clements's book. But the economy gets short shrift, as do the political actors opposed to both the military and the Marxist-Leninists.

Bonner's major premise is that the U.S. could have and still should use the withdrawal of aid to curb the mad dog Salvadoran military. However, a withdrawal of aid had little impact on the similarly brutalizing Guatemalan Army. What happens if the U.S. uses its stick and the Salvadoran military either finds other benefactors or

disintegrates, as happened in Nicaragua under Somoza?

This intelligent, extremely well-researched, and humane book examines the recent past but pulls back from a hard look at future options.

Richard Alan White has attempted to present the big picture, an overview of U.S. involvement in Central America. Since his book summarizes in three paragraphs the social structure of five very different countries, it contributes confusion rather than clarity. There is a thumping polemic based on scads of documents, hearings, and other sources tracing parallels to Vietnam and to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Curiously, there are individual chapters on each of the Central American countries except Nicaragua. These are analytically insipid, and the discussions of counterinsurgency doctrines, the role of the CIA, U.S. aid, and "reform versus repression" are stale.

U.S. influence in El Salvador and Central America is great, but its leverage is often negligible. Subject to constraints arising from U.S. domestic politics and to the internal machinations of highly idiosyncratic societies in Central America, U.S. policymakers grasp at ideological and other straws and at straw men. Clements and Bonner forcefully remind us, from different perspectives, that *the Salvadoran reality is a military murdering its own people and driving them into rebellion.* WY

**RADICAL TRAGEDY:
RELIGION, IDEOLOGY AND POWER
IN THE DRAMA OF SHAKESPEARE
AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES**

by Jonathan Dollimore

(University of Chicago Press; 312 pp.; \$20.00)

Robert Griffin

In November, 1534, the English Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy declaring the king Supreme Head of the Church of England and then went on to make it high treason to deprive the king of any of his titles. The break with Rome was complete. Henry VIII was free to establish the legitimacy of his divorce and remarriage and to enrich himself and his favorites at the expense of the Roman church.

This was not without its dangers, however, for in the eyes of the Roman church the king was now an outlaw. His strategy, which became an important and carefully cultivated policy of the Tudor monarchy,

was to encourage the view that the monarch was divinely ordained and that to disobey him was to rebel against God's law. In the words of Shakespeare's Richard II:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

This theory (or doctrine) of the divine right of kings was a direct outgrowth of the Reformation conflict of church and state. Previously, the prince had authority only through the church. When the various national princes broke with the Roman church, they converted their limited right of sovereignty into a free-hold and the divine right concept became a major asset. St. Paul's "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God" had provided for centuries a comprehensive theological explanation of power, including as it did every instance of power. Any governing body requires what Max Weber called the necessary "reigning fictions"; for the Tudor monarchy this was the myth of divine right.

According to Lawrence Stone in *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, "the real watershed between medieval and modern England was the period 1580-1620." His account of the crisis of authority in religion, ideology, and power that destroyed this carefully nurtured Tudor myth of the divine right of kings and precipitated the civil war remains virtually unchallenged since its publication in 1965. The drama of the period was very much about this crisis—and often, despite official censorship, explicitly so. Shakespeare's Richard II asserts the divinity of his crown, but his fate denies it; and in *Henry V* (which was written only five years later, in 1599) Hal, on the eve of battle, muses:

... I think the king is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man. . . ."

There is, as I have said, something of a scholarly consensus nowadays that there was a collapse of political authority around the turn of the century, a collapse reflected in the dramas of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In the area of "ideology and power," then, Jonathan Dollimore's thesis seems noncontroversial. There is no such consensus, however, respecting a pervasive religious crisis, and Dollimore is consequently more revisionist here than in his political interpretations. However, because of the dialectical nature of Renaissance drama it is often difficult to give a definitive