

Andrew C. Theophanous, *Australian Democracy in Crisis: A Radical Approach to Australian Politics*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980. Pp. 224. \$16.95.

Though *Australian Democracy in Crisis* is not an easy book to categorize, it is specifically concerned with an analysis of those seemingly paradoxical and aberrant events and actions in Australian society and politics such as the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975. There have been a series of books specifically concerned with the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and his unprecedented dismissal of a democratically elected government, namely G. Freudenberg's *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics*, D. Home's *The Death of the Lucky Country*, Paul Kelly's *The Unmaking of Gough* as well as those by the participants, Kerr's *Matters for Judgment* and Whitlam's *The Truth of the Matter*. All these authors are deeply and unequivocally polemical and concerned with the particular events which lead to the November 11 coup. In this regard, Theophanous' approach differs substantially; for though one of his central preoccupations is to analyze this specific crisis in Australian democracy, his aims are far more ambitious--an explanation of the total crisis which contemporary Australia is experiencing.

He has been influenced notably by Jurgen Habermas' *Legitimation Crisis*, published in English in 1973. He also includes an extended summary of his other major influences--Rousseau's notions on democracy, Durkheim's views on anomie and Marx's analysis of alienation. Since this is not intended as a textbook for undergraduates, it is not necessary to retain these eclectic appraisals. Rather, these theoretical aspects should have been more concise and integrated with his empirical data. Nowhere is there a clear examination of the central argument, for this is lost amidst a plethora of different theories and approaches and sections of the empirical data. For instance, the chapter on social identity, culture and the family is not at all integrated with his primary focus upon economic and political crisis. Other areas like the crucial role of transitional capital in Australia need expansion and more emphasis.

Overall, however, *Australian Democracy in Crisis* is a very worthwhile analysis, and its main problems stem from its ambitious scope and complexity. It is, moreover, challenging and controversial, particularly in its discussion of the 1975 coup. Undoubtedly, readers will be divided on the whole question of the propriety and constitutional basis of Whitlam's dismissal.

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