

fascinated with the awful mess write about it—even lovingly if necessary. Greene does exactly that, but he at least chooses his subjects well. A Congo or a Korea or a Formosa or a Haiti are the right subjects for him to write about because they characterise our own situation better than we realise in our well-camouflaged democracy. What do we know about the world? Next to nothing. Our modern English literature is so pale and so provincial, so contemplative of its own little navel that Greene's vast look at real corruption comes almost as a pleasure.

All the characters in *The Comedians* are perfectly impossible. The three main characters, Smith, Brown and Jones, are quite believable because they are truthfully fantastic. Brown is the morally-burdened Greene narrator, Jones is an affectionately conceived fake who finds his vocation in a moment of luck when he lives out his lies fighting a 'war' of liberation, and Smith is an American so innocent that death, murder and political violence do not divert him from his determination to vegetarianise the underfed world. Smith is a good American nonetheless, and Greene's profoundly European contempt for ignorant America turns here into an almost gentle affection: in fact, Smith is the other side of *The Quiet American*.

The Comedians is more valuable politically than Greene will probably admit intellectually, and when you get used to the rot, the book gets a grip on you like a biting wasp. For me, Greene remains the only writer in English who is trying, on the very highest level and with great literary skill, to interpret our times with anything like a serious purpose, and for this one forgives him a great deal. *The Comedians* leaves everything else being written these days very far behind, and we ought to be grateful

that we have one author in our language who knows what is at stake and has the courage to write about it.

JAMES ALDRIDGE.

Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy

Joseph A. Schumpeter

Unwin University Books, 432 pp. 20s.

THE APPEARANCE of this well-known work in a (relatively) cheap edition is not without interest. In many ways the author and his work occupied a unique position. Coming from Austria, he was evidently much influenced by Marx in his younger days, and this fact made him stand intellectually head and shoulders above his American colleagues. In America he became, virtually, *the* economic ideologist of American monopoly-capitalism, with his emphasis on the role of the large-scale capitalist *entrepreneur* as 'innovator'. Yet in this present work, while defending modern capitalism as a system of production, he forecasted its historical doom (although regretting this). Capitalism, in his opinion, was in decline, mainly because it had lost its former moral and ideological hold: 'the scheme of values of capitalist society is losing its hold not only upon the public mind but also upon the "capitalist" stratum itself'. In Marxian terms this could be expressed as a growing contradiction between 'superstructure' and 'base'. In many ways it is an unusually objective book, if also perverse in places. In an address to the American Economic Association in 1949 entitled 'The March into Socialism', which is appended to the present edition, he shows himself impressed with 'the present state of inflationary pressure' and its omens for the disintegration of the system—an inflationary situation which he evidently thought had come to stay.

MAURICE DOBB.