

**POE'S LITERARY BATTLES: The Critic in the Context of his Literary Milieu.** By Sidney P. Moss. Durham: Duke University Press. 1963. \$6.00.

By organizing a great deal of material in a new way, Moss is able to shed some light on the petty world of the magazines; this is a good companion to Perry Miller's The Raven and the Whale (New York, 1956). I liked especially Moss' lucid explanation of the connection between the notorious copyright situation, literary magazines and "puffing." Given the fact that "puffing" was practically an economic necessity, one can understand the bitterness of the response to Poe's lifelong attack on it. The peculiarly personal and nasty quality of Poe's battles Moss accounts for as follows: Poe was so much better a critical infighter than his powerful opponents that he forced them to resort to name-calling.

Moss praises Poe for single-handedly fighting off two literary cliques, one in New York and one in Boston, but, oddly enough, fails to satisfy the reader's curiosity about the motives behind the Boston battle. Perhaps he feels that Poe is really less praiseworthy in that encounter, and fears that saying so would hurt his thesis. Well, I heartily approve of any attempt to explain Poe's behavior in terms of the problems faced by a professional in a tough racket, but there's no point trying to deny that whatever else Poe was or was not, he was often an ass. In his dips in the frogpond the brays are clearly audible above the croaking.

Incidentally (and this is not a criticism of Moss' volume), I do wish someone would write a good critical description of the flavor of the magazines themselves--they're such nervous and insecure little sheets!

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**SINCLAIR LEWIS.** By Mark Schorer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1963. \$.65.

This forty-seven page pamphlet shows a familiarity with subject matter and a quiet competence attributable to the years Mark Schorer spent on his biography of Lewis. Some scholars in Schorer's situation would have attempted to include, through compression and allusion, as many significant facts as possible. Instead, Schorer appears to have made a careful selection. The result is an uncrowded and engaging piece, chronologically organized, that merely indicates that Lewis had a complex biography, briefly describes and criticizes every novel, and finds room for literary history. Schorer holds that, although Lewis was not a great writer, he was a histor-

ically important one. Lewis had a "stridently comic gift of mimicry that many a more polished American writer does not have at all. And a vision of a hot and dusty hell: the American hinterland . . . . He could document for an enormous audience the character of a people and a class, and, without repudiating either, criticize and laugh uproariously at both."

University of Kansas

Melvin Landsberg

THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN V: July 1, 1753, through March 31, 1755. Leonard W. Labaree, Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., eds. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1962. \$10.

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin deserves to stand beside Boyd's Papers of Thomas Jefferson as a definitive tribute to America's other great 18th-century virtuoso. When completed, forty volumes hence, this edition will contain over 6000 pieces written by Franklin, trebling the number printed by Smyth half a century ago, and more than 20,000 others, consisting of letters to Franklin and third-party letters. In the period covered by the present volume Franklin received the first public honors at home and abroad for his work in electricity, was appointed joint deputy postmaster general of North America, and--in view of French advances on the frontier--advocated vigorous defensive action at the Albany Congress of 1754. Letters like the gracious and witty one he addressed to the Royal Society acknowledging receipt of the Copley Medal mark the emergence of an epistolary style for which he would gain renown in later life.

The University of Oklahoma

Bruce Ingham Granger

A VIEW OF MY OWN: Essays in Literature and Society. By Elizabeth Hardwick. New York: The Noonday Press (Farrar, Strauss and Company). 1963. \$1.65.

This collection of essays and reviews has lively and just things to say about William James, George Eliot, Boston, Americans in Italy, David Riesman, Edna Millay, Mary McCarthy (perhaps a descendant of Margaret Fuller?) and other matters and people, mainly American. The author looks at her subjects--including women in the twentieth century, about whom she has some unexpected remarks--directly and without deference to received opinion, and with discriminating sympathy. A novelist herself, Miss Hardwick has the power, too unusual among critics today, to understand that books are written by human beings responding to the demands of an art and the