

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-