

*Wilson. The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915.* By ARTHUR S. LINK. Princeton, 1960. Princeton University Press. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. x, 736. \$10.00.

With the publication of the third volume of his definitive biography of Woodrow Wilson, Arthur S. Link amply demonstrates that this is one of the major works in American historiography. The volume, like its predecessors, has received well-merited praise from the principal journals and periodicals and was awarded one of the two Bancroft prizes for 1961. It would seem the height of temerity, therefore, to offer criticism of this really excellent book. But the fact remains that there is much that is wrong with it. When Link moves away from Wilson and the American scene, with which he is thoroughly conversant, to deal with other areas, the Mexican Revolution, for example, he crosses over into *terra incognita*. Because he does not know Spanish, he must rely on secondary works in English or on the State Department files in the National Archives. And while these files are extremely rich and of undoubted value in filling out the story of the Revolution, they are not the be-all and end-all of research in Mexican history. One would not expect, I trust, that an adequate account of Castro's revolution could be constructed solely from State Department reports!

Because Link had no means of checking the reliability of the reports, he is led into a number of unfortunate errors, some minor, others of major proportion. He says, for instance, that Villa was called "Don Pancho" by his followers, which was never true. And he calls Villa "ignorant." Villa was certainly uneducated, but I doubt if even his enemies considered him ignorant. Link misspells González' name. He says the provisional government of Gutiérrez was "dominated by Villistas," when the followers of Villa were always in the minority in that regime. He calls the units of Obregón and González "divisions," when they were actually army corps. He says that Lucio Blanco remained loyal to Carranza, when that officer deserted the Constitutionalists and his superior, Obregón, to join the Convention. He names Roque González Garza Minister of Interior in Madero's cabinet, confusing him with his brother, Federico. He says Obregón defeated the Villistas at Puebla, when it was the Zapatista forces of Almazán. To list these errors is simply to say that American historians, in trying to deal with Mexican history, do so at their own peril, for the ground has been too little explored. The great number of writers in English have only scratched the surface,

and unless the historian is willing to go to Mexico and to use Spanish sources, as well as English, he had best tread with care.

The major criticism I would make of Link's treatment of Mexican-American relations, however, has nothing to do with events in Mexico. Rather it concerns his assumption that Wilson, between the summer of 1914 and the fall of 1915, adhered to a policy of favoring Francisco Villa in opposition to Venustiano Carranza. It is true that there were instances, some of them inexplicable, of American concessions to the Villa faction. But I must say that I went through the same materials as Link and reached a different conclusion: Wilson opposed Carranza, not by pushing the recognition of Villa, but by promoting a neutral candidate. But because Link has assumed a position, he is stuck with it, and when there is little evidence to support it he bridges the gap with "apparently," "it must have been," and "certain signs seem to indicate." He is entitled to his opinion, of course, but in this instance I do not believe it is correct.

When Link is on his home ground he writes with a sure hand. His descriptions of the American political arena mirror accurately the excitement of the time. All in all, it is a fine book and written in the grand manner of the great American historians of the past and present. It could have been better. But then it is perhaps an impertinence to expect perfection in any endeavor this side of eternity!

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*El Postmodernismo*. By OCTAVIO CORVALÁN. New York, 1961. Las Americas Publishing Company. Index. Pp. 159.

Regrettably, the title and jacket blurb encourage the reader to expect far more than the author ever intended for this modest manual that might well have borne the more appropriate and less deceptive label, "Essays on Selected Spanish American Writers of our Time." Actually, as Corvalán himself states in the preface, the material grew out of a course dealing with some 20 major figures of Spanish American literature who produced their most significant writing between World War I and World War II. The author disarms us at the outset by asking us not to quarrel with him over the omission of many of our favorites. And certainly no one would deny a spot for González Martínez, who "opened the way for post-Modernism." Equally deserving of a chapter apart are the four women (Agustini, Mistral, Ibarbourou, and Storni) who kept poetry on a high and even keel during the *ultraísta* outburst. The only voices to speak for the newer esthetics in poetry and prose are those of