

Book Reviews and Notices

Lions of the West, Heroes and Villains of the Westward Expansion, by Robert Morgan. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2011. xxiii, 496 pp. Illustrations, maps, chronology, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer David A. Walker is emeritus professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa, where he taught western history for 37 years.

The drama of American expansion into the trans-Mississippi West continues to attract scholars and a general reading audience. Robert Morgan pursues this theme through a series of ten chapters, each focusing on a “lion of the west”: Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, John Chapman [Johnny Appleseed], David Crockett, Sam Houston, James K. Polk, Winfield Scott, Kit Carson, Nicholas Trist, and John Quincy Adams. Morgan hopes to “create an integrated narrative where the separate lives link up and illuminate each other, making complex, extended events more accessible to readers in the twenty-first century” (xxii).

Most readers will be familiar with each individual except for Chapman and Trist. Frankly, including Chapman is a stretch when compared with other subjects. The author admits that Chapman was not an explorer, hunter, or scout but “became such a character of legend and folklore that people forgot he was a real person” (92). To broaden the author’s focus beyond the region from Texas through the Southwest to California, he could have included Marcus Whitman in the Pacific Northwest.

Presidents Jefferson, Jackson, and Polk each contributed to Manifest Destiny in contrasting ways. For Morgan, Jefferson was the foundation based on a lifelong interest in western land, a scientific inquiry of the environment and its native inhabitants, and a desire to establish an “empire of liberty.” By contrast, Jackson’s interest centered on his early military campaigns against the Creek, culminating in victory at Horseshoe Bend. Thoroughly Jeffersonian and a Jackson protégé, Polk openly claimed all the Oregon Country, coveted Alta California, and sought opportunity to declare war against Mexico.

Tennessee linked the careers of Jackson, Polk, Houston, and Crockett. The latter was a frontier settler, explorer, Indian fighter, and politician as well as a popular folk hero. Similarly, Houston established

roots there before heading west to Texas, where both men hoped to build a fortune and recover ruined reputations.

Texas statehood and an international boundary dispute triggered war with Mexico, culminating when General Winfield Scott led American forces to capture Mexico City. Scott admired Jefferson and remained loyal to Jackson, but was blindsided by Polk as a potential political rival. Scott "was the father figure Trist had always needed and the kind of leader who brought out [his] best" (377). Trist, a staunch Jeffersonian who married the president's granddaughter, served as Jackson's favorite adviser but never established a successful relationship with Polk. Yet as a loyal Democrat, fluent in Spanish, with previous diplomatic experience in Cuba, he was sent to negotiate the war-ending Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

As a representative westerner similar to Daniel Boone (subject of a 2007 biography by Morgan) and Crockett, Christopher "Kit" Carson enjoyed success across the Southwest as mountain man, explorer, and army scout while the public admired him "in the blood and thunder dime novels of the Victorian era" (318). The chapter on Carson could also be titled John Charles Frémont. Carson served as the major guide for the first three of Frémont's expeditions across the West. Author Morgan's view of these two men epitomizes his subtitle: hero and villain. Carson was the "greatest scout of the nineteenth-century West" (307), while Frémont possessed "overweening ambition and claims for himself. . . . He liked to assume roles he had not earned . . . yet he believed he had become a kind of Napoleon" (322, 345).

The final chapter focusing on John Quincy Adams describes the evolution of his views on westward expansion, from outspoken support ("The United States and North America are identical" [399]) to becoming the "most vocal and eloquent opponent of expansion into the Southwest, the annexation of Texas, and the Mexican-American War" (392). For Adams, "the greatest danger of this Union was the overgrown extent of its territory, combining with the slavery question . . . [that] might only be ended by a cataclysmic war between the opposed sections of the country" (404, 407).

Morgan thoroughly integrates appropriate printed primary and secondary material, including valuable Mexican sources. "We will not understand the story of westward expansion if we do not recognize that the Mexican side of the narrative is an essential part of *our* story as well" (xxii). However, there are several important bibliographic omissions: Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage*, Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder*, and William C. Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo*. The publisher provided an excellent set of 19 maps depicting both detail and con-

tinental perspective. Periodic passing reference to other biographical chapters ties the book together. This also means some repetition of historic events that are usually summarized after the initial discussion. Overall, this highly readable narrative, while offering little new for experienced western history scholars, provides an excellent overview of American interest in the trans-Mississippi West during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes, by James Joseph Buss. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011. vii, 328 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Stephen Warren is associate professor and chair of the department of history at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. He is the author of *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795–1870* (2005).

Winning the West with Words is a smart book about the erasure of American Indians from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois history. Focusing on the nineteenth century, James Joseph Buss explores how non-Indians deployed the rhetoric of dispossession to facilitate Indian removal and to define American conquest as pacific and well-intentioned. Territorial governors such as William Henry Harrison, artists such as George Winter, and state historical societies described Americans as well-meaning conquerors. In their view, pioneers were family farmers who cleared the land, removed the Indians, and made way for a new American nation. This view of history, long called “progressive” by historians, equates American Indians with barbarism and American settlers with civilization. This mythological understanding of what it means to be an American, which has become the foundation of American identity, received its fullest treatment in the lower Great Lakes, the focus of Buss’s thoughtful book.

Buss challenges the myth of “passive conquest” (220) by describing the ongoing reality of cross-cultural midwestern worlds. County historians and state officials promoted the notion that the War of 1812 cleared the lower Great Lakes of native peoples, enabling settlers to enter an empty land. But many of the Miami Indians managed to avoid removal and remain in north-central Indiana. The Wyandots converted to Methodism and worked with missionaries to thwart Ohioans committed to ethnic cleansing. In 1843, when the Wyandots were forcibly removed from Ohio even though they had adopted most of the beliefs and behaviors of their non-native neighbors, their commitment to their lands forced midwesterners to examine the ugly truth of racial determinism.