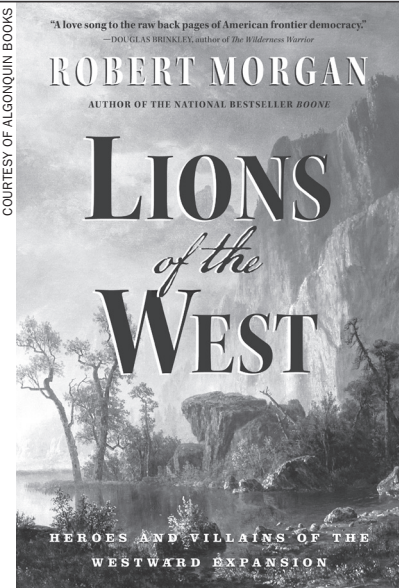


In *Lions of the West: Heroes and Villains of the Westward Expansion*, Robert Morgan gives us biographical sketches of ten Americans critical in the nation's movement to the Pacific shore. That movement, of course, involved securing land owned by Europeans and Mexicans and inhabited by Indians, while also confronting British interference in trade and Indian affairs. Here, as in his acclaimed biography of Daniel Boone, Morgan balances characterization of public figures with descriptions of conflicts that shaped the United States, such as the War of 1812, Battle of the Alamo, Mexican-American War, and white men's fights with Apaches and Cherokees. In these histories, he goes beyond myth and suggests alternative points of view, encouraging us to consider Mexican perspectives, for instance, and to realize that leaders are complex, flawed human beings like the rest of us.<sup>1</sup>

But it is not only these nonfiction books that show Morgan to be a student – and a master – of history. His fourteen volumes of poetry, three short story collections, and six novels reveal his insights into landforms, environmental change, the interdependency of every element of the universe, class conflict, pioneer life, family stories. During talks with this 2010 North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame inductee, I've learned that two stories his family passed down depict great-grandfathers in the Civil War: John Morgan died at Camp Douglass, a prison camp in Chicago, and Joseph Benjamin Franklin Pace survived the Elmira, New York, prison camp and in 1865 walked from Greenville, South Carolina, where he had arrived by train, to the farm near Zirconia in the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains, where Morgan grew up. Morgan's poems "The Road from Elmira" in *Sigodlin* and "Confederate Graves at Elmira" in *Terroir* consider this family war story, and "Martha Sue" in the short fiction collection *The Mountains Won't Remember Us* and *Other Stories* surely incorporates some of Great-Grandpa Pace's experiences as well.<sup>2</sup>

COURTESY OF ALGONQUIN BOOKS



"ONLY FOOLS WOULD  
START WARS. YET WE  
CONTINUE TO DO  
JUST THAT."  
—ROBERT MORGAN

“AFTER THE FIGHTING,  
*the* SCARS REMAIN”:

<sup>1</sup> Robert Morgan, *Lions of the West: Heroes and Villains of the Westward Expansion* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2011); *Boone: A Biography* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Morgan, *Sigodlin* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1990); *Terroir* (New York: Penguin Poets, 2011; reviewed in *NCLR Online* 2013); *The Mountains Won't Remember Us* and *Other Stories* (Atlanta: Peachtree, 1992).