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## Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual & Political Biography of Alexander Morris (review)

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their opinions and make choices to sell products as early as the interwar years (see Cook's article "Kiddie Capitalism" in the December 5, 2001 issue of *PopPolitics.com*). Children's supposed "agency" as consumers (and adults' desire to acknowledge their free will) made them useful product mouthpieces. To what extent did camp materials encourage children to convince their parents to allow them to attend a particular camp? The camping industry was certainly part of an increasingly commercialized children's culture, and Paris's study would have profited from a closer examination of the limits of children's consumer authority.

These are minor deficiencies in an otherwise engaging and thoroughly researched study. *Children's Nature* will appeal equally to scholars of childhood, leisure, culture, and twentieth-century America. Paris places children's experiences, alongside adults' concerns about children's leisure time, at the centre of American cultural change, making *Children's Nature* a model for other historians of childhood and youth to follow.

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TALBOT, Robert J. — *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual & Political Biography of Alexander Morris*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2009. Pp. 223.

In *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties*, Robert Talbot paints a complex picture of the person who negotiated treaties on behalf of the Crown — Alexander Morris. According to Talbot, Morris is a rare man in Canadian history who, during the negotiation of several of the historic numbered treaties, came to understand and adopt the perspective of the Indian negotiators. Talbot's thesis is that Morris developed an understanding of treaty as the basis of a timeless and sacred reciprocal relationship between the Indian people and the Crown, rather than seeing treaty as the means to realize the colonial aspirations of the Crown in British North America. However, the thesis is not argued persuasively. The lack of persuasion, nevertheless, does not make the book an uninteresting read; nor does it mean the book suffers from a lack of scholarship. It simply means that the work does not provide enough evidence to argue that Morris was such a unique character within the Canada-Aboriginal relationship of the later nineteenth century.

Talbot clearly articulates that he is endeavouring to explore a middle ground between the idea that treaty was a process entirely made up of sharp dealings on the part of the Crown, in which the Indians did not comprehend the implications, and the more recent scholarly argument that the Indians were the ones who really understood the sacred intent of treaty, which was to forge a relationship with the Crown that would fundamentally ensure that both parties prospered into the future. Talbot's thesis occupies a conceptual space between George Stanley's

work on the Canadian North-West and interpretations of the treaty process provided by Jean Friesen and John Tobias (pp. 14–15).

Talbot admirably traces Morris's early life, education, and career development into his role as treaty negotiator and the end of his public life as Lieutenant-Governor of the newly created province of Manitoba. Morris supported a grand vision of Canada as a country to be carved out of the vast riches and resources of the North-West. Very little thought or regard for the original habitants of the territory entered into this vision. The elements of this portrayal are problematic when they then form the basis of the thesis that Morris came to empathize with and admire the First Nations people. In *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties*, Talbot simply states that a conversion in thinking took place as a matter of fact, rather than supplying supportive documentary evidence to substantiate it. Talbot's summary in chapter 6 provides a good example of what I mean:

During his [Morris's] time in the North West, the "Indian question" became more and more present in his mind. The goal of building a transcontinental empire, easily conjured up in the distant Perth, Montreal, or Ottawa, lost some of its immediacy. The realities of the First Nations' plight could no longer be dismissed or ignored. As Morris invested more personal time and energy in the treaty-making process, he gained a personal stake in the treaties and their long-term outcome. They took on a huge significance for Morris, and he became increasingly disillusioned with Ottawa as he realized that his colleagues and superiors were not of the same mind. (p. 56)

And further:

He paid close attention to the language of their [the First Nations'] conversation, especially in negotiations, and often appropriated their symbolism and imagery in his attempts to reach an understanding. Developing a genuine concern for their situation and circumstances, his sympathy turned to empathy. His goal of seeing the territory settled and its resources developed remained ever-present, but he recognized the threat this posed to the future of the Native people. By the end of his tenure, he had come to admire them in many ways, and he sincerely hoped they would survive as distinct, self-sustaining communities. (pp. 56–57)

The evidence required to support such a striking conversion in Morris's thinking should be diverse and substantial. Unfortunately, the textual support Talbot uses to support his claim seems to be equally supportive of the argument that Morris could not overcome the ever-present desire to extinguish Indian title, in accordance with the parameters established in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, to make way for settlers and the realization of a British empire from sea to sea.

Morris was trained during his legal studies to understand that the Crown was the only entity that could extinguish Indian title. A man intent on achieving the mandate to ensure certainty of title in lands destined for settler occupation

could equally be expected to use whatever means of achieving such a goal, including displaying what could be characterized as empathy for the people standing in the way. It is the interpretation of texts describing the negotiations that provides the sinew for the skeleton of the arguments for each interpretation of Morris's perspective. Fortunately, the possibilities of interpretation are formed around a text produced by Morris himself: *The treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, including the negotiations on which they were based, and other information relating thereto*, which is the most referenced work in Talbot's book. It should be in this text that there is evidence of a transformation in Morris's opinion of the treaty partners, but a clear demonstration of a conversion of thought does not emerge from the textual evidence provided by Talbot. The impression I had from the book was that Talbot had modified his impression of what the treaties were all about to be aligned with the modern interpretations of Friesen and Tobias, and then sympathetically examined Morris.

What Talbot's work does demonstrate, I think, is the respect and regard with which the First Nations negotiators held Morris. After the treaties negotiated by Morris moved from the signing to implementation phase, it became clear to the First Nations parties that the Crown was not implementing the terms of the treaty, nor was the Crown paying any attention to promises that may have been made verbally but were not explicitly in the text. As repeated appeals were made by the First Nations to Morris for the Crown to live up to the terms agreed to in the negotiations, it was clear that the First Nations regarded Morris as an honest dealer. As Talbot reveals, Morris made repeated appeals to the Department of Interior officials, in his capacity as Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, for Canada to respect the terms of the agreements he had made with the First Nations. Talbot's thesis rests partly on his view that Morris did not ever ask Canada to go beyond what Morris understood to be the promises he made during the negotiations he conducted. In this regard, Morris held the conviction that treaties should be implemented in accordance with the terms negotiated, as understood by him. The problem seems to be, in light of a critical look back on the situation, that neither Canada nor the First Nations seemed to be in agreement with Morris's understanding of the promises he had made. Morris seems to have constructed a unique perspective, which he carefully carried between the two parties, and he was then left to advocate further on behalf of Canada and the First Nations during implementation of the agreements signed by both parties.

The primary aspect of Morris's career that seems to challenge Talbot's thesis is his land speculation activity in the North-West and the newly formed Manitoba. Talbot admits that Morris never let the interests of the First Nations get in the way of his private land interests (p. 49). Morris was a shrewd businessman, "looking out for number 1," which would seem to put a constraint on the empathy and reciprocity he may have brought to his relationship with the First Nations. If Morris was "looking out for number 1" in his personal land and business dealings, it would seem that he might also have brought the same approach to dealings on behalf of his employer, thereby ensuring his continued

employment. This possibility strains the idea that Morris's view of Aboriginal-Crown relations was one of reciprocity.

Nevertheless, *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties* presents a complex, thorough, and thought-provoking portrait of Alexander Morris, who may very well have been a thoroughly unique character in the Crown-Aboriginal relationship at the time of the first expansion of Canada. The book makes a case that he was, but I remain to be convinced.

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TRAVERS, Tim — *Pirates: A History*. Stroud, UK: The History Press, 2009 (hardcover edition, Tempus Publishing, 2007). Pp. 336.

Numerous books on piracy have been published in recent years. Historians working in this field are hardly able to keep up with the surge of publications. This book provides a broad survey from the ancient Mediterranean to modern Somali pirates, from the seventeenth-century Caribbean to the Malacca Straits. Unlike most other recent publications on the subject, this book is written by a professional historian, so it is worth considering his perspective in some detail.

To begin with the most important point: readers who expect new insights or interpretations of one of the most romanticized chapters in history will be disappointed. Tim Travers provides a narrative designed for a wide readership. Most topics are addressed in very general terms, based largely on the reading of secondary literature rather than original research. The use of primary sources is restricted to a few manuscripts exclusively from London depositories.

The structure of this book is rather unconventional. Instead of an introduction, the reader finds a chapter on "The Pirate World," which deals with some features of the social and cultural history of piracy. Only in the conclusion does the author try to answer the question: what is a pirate? Piracy is generally defined as the arbitrary and indiscriminate seizure of goods, persons, and vessels at sea. Vikings, many Elizabethan sea rovers, and most buccaneers were not pirates, even though their exploits are described in Travers's book. The organization certainly has its merits, as it enables Travers to insert a broad spectrum of related topics, yet the title of the book is misleading.

Travers's expertise in pirate history derives from having taught courses on the subject matter at the University of Calgary for more than a decade. This enables him to avoid the various traps into which too many authors fall. For example, Travers is correct to raise serious doubts as to whether Edward Thatch, better known as Blackbeard, really was the violent and ruthless roving villain portrayed in the literature. As well, the passage concerning the only two known female pirates of the early eighteenth century, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, is also more realistic than in most other recent publications. To be sure, this book still contains a number of errors; for instance, Dirk Chivers's real