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## Review of *Dark Storm Moving West*, by Barbara Belyea

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*Dark Storm Moving West.* By Barbara Belyea. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2007. xiv + 188 pp. Maps, images, notes, sources, index. \$49.95 paper.

In the freshet of scholarly and popular studies accompanying the recent bicentennials of Lewis and Clark's and David Thompson's westward explorations, *Dark Storm Moving West* forms an eddy of reflection on the practical, communicative, and philosophical challenges of understanding Euro-American exploration in western North America. English professor turned exploration historian Barbara Belyea eschews traditional narratives or grand theses in favor of dense rumination on particular episodes, personalities, and questions. Swirling and ruffled at the surface, these waters yet find more subtle coherences in their depths than Belyea herself admits.

Her essays are focused loosely on the figure of Peter Fidler, a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) fur trader and explorer. Fidler's exploration and surveys of the northern Great Plains and the Athabasca district made key contributions to the HBC's struggle with David Thompson's Northwest Company for domination over the interior fur trade and, more generally, to the completion of Euro-American maps of western North America. The elusive, protean figure of Fidler guides Belyea's observations on scientific cartography, field surveying and exploration, the use of Native cartographic insights and methods, and the nature of Native-newcomer interactions along the fur-trade frontier.

This book, however, is both more and less than a biography of Fidler, or yet another account of "mapping the West." Belyea's essays question the simple "survey-to-map" story of European cartographic achievements by showing, for instance, how explorers like Lewis and Clark and surveyors like Fidler incorporated

Amerindian geographical knowledge and even cartographic techniques into their practices on the ground. These largely uncredited contributions found their way into the earliest European "scientific" maps and descriptions of the West through acts of translation and erasure.

Indeed, various problems of "translation"—of geographical knowledge, of cultural traditions, of scholarly research—quietly unify Belyea's seemingly divergent commentaries. For instance, Fidler's acts of what might be thought of as "contact cartography" revealed his unique ability to assimilate Native cartographic practices alongside European survey techniques. Similar inquiries into cultural and scholarly "translation" guide the two essentially historiographical essays on Native women in fur-trade society and ethnographic practice that close the book.

These arguments are illuminated to great effect by the dozens of maps, plans, and images accompanying the text. Unfortunately, these are neither numbered nor listed—one must grope from textual reference to map and back again. The book's large format (rather like a ledger bound on the short edge) and attractive layout permit the maps to be printed large enough to appreciate and study, although making the volume somewhat inconvenient to hold and to store on a shelf.

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