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Review of Here Lies Hugh Glass: A Mountain
Man, a Bear, and the Rise of the American Nation
By Jon T. Coleman

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Here Lies Hugh Glass: A Mountain Man, a Bear, and the Rise of the American Nation. By Jon T. Coleman. New York: Hill and Wang, 2012. xii + 252 pp. Notes, index. \$28.00 cloth, \$16.00 paper.

Jon T. Coleman's *Here Lies Hugh Glass* attempts to apply flesh to the corporeal body of Hugh Glass through the use of nineteenth-century hyperbole and twentieth-century reinvention. As such, Coleman weaves narratives of fiction and fact together, giving the reader a disjointed summation of Glass's life, a life Coleman suggests is more Homer Simpson than Homer's Odysseus. We see a character emerge in 1823 who is wounded in a battle with the Arikaras and survives a mauling by a female grizzly bear, only to meet his end ten years later at the hands of Arikaras along the banks of the Yellowstone River. Beginning in 1825 with James Hall, the first person to write of Hugh Glass's ordeal, Coleman reveals a series of chroniclers less interested in the man than the scars he carried.

Coleman's narrative gains traction when he describes the work of the fur trade: "the fur-trade expeditions seemed exotic for the horrific punish-

ment they visited on workers." His descriptions of the physicality of western labor and how it shaped and remade the bodies of the workforce, whether free or slave, helped identify the workers' trade and manliness to their employers. By the end of chapter 1, however, Coleman admits, "I've come a long way from Hugh Glass." Unfortunately, the subject of his narrative remains missing in action as Coleman muses his way through the concept of environmental Americanism.

Coleman's use of the pathos that defined the life of Hugh Glass is a bold move, even for a historian who admits he purposely chose an undocumented individual because "the story of Hugh Glass and his environments calls into question the central conceit of biographies: that individual human lives tower above all else." In his quest to see "how much I can get away with in the company of somber academics" while creating history that is "fun, sly, challenging, and artful," Coleman mostly wanders across the page, much as Hugh Glass and his contemporaries wandered the prairies, providing the reader with vague references to his main character. With tongue in cheek and using the contrived vernacular of adventurer George F. Ruxton, Coleman's *Here Lies Hugh Glass* don't shine.

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