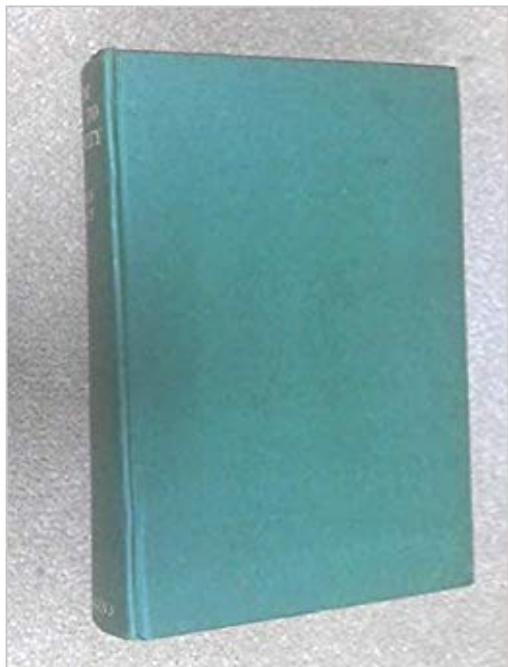


## From Here to Eternity *by* James Jones



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## Reviews of the *From Here to Eternity* *by* James Jones

Steel\_Blade

Many veterans who have read Mr. Jones's novel assert it was an accurate portrayal of the times in the Army. I'll take their word for it. The closest I ever came to serving in the military was joining the Cub Scouts and playing with my G.I. Joe action figure (a.k.a. doll) when I was a kid. The novel revolves two major characters, Robert E. Lee Prewitt and Milton Anthony Warden. There are other notable individuals such as Angelo Maggio, Dana Holmes, and the cook Maylon Stark. The two major women characters Karen Holmes and Alma "Lorene" Schmidt are well developed but take a back seat to Prewitt's and Warden's stories. 'From Here to Eternity' exudes masculinity in all its glory, violence, sexuality, and imbecility. It is a story about men obsessed with manliness and status. Petty politics reins supreme. The government-sanction frat club continually fight boredom and sexual frustration during peace time. I had to keep reminding myself that most of them were young

immature men.

The novel was published in 1951. It was understandable that the publishers originally edited out some of the more unseemly material because of the American market's more puritanical sensibilities. Fortunately, 'From Here to Eternity' has been restored to the author's original intent. The racy material would not even meet up to the standard of erotica in today's society. Maybe it got the blood rushing and heart pounding while reading it in the 1950s but today it's meh. What I did find shocking, considering when it was published, is the laissez-faire attitude towards homosexuality. It sometimes is depicted as predatory and other times as consensual. Also, be warned, racist jargon is peppered throughout the work. African-Americans, Jews, and Italians are especially targeted. Also, alcohol was apparently one of the major food groups.

It is a brutal book but not gloomy. 'From Here to Eternity' is loaded with irony and thoughtful discussions about a variety of human conditions. It occurs during a time when women had limited options and Jim Crow was still very much alive. Information was easily manipulated for patriotic reasons and military culture was insular. Mr. Jones's impressive novel is to be savored. It is not some swaggering John Wayne-like comic book but a grown-up's work. For nearly three decades, I avoided reading 'From Here to Eternity' because of the movie poster famously showing Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr sucking face on the beach. I've never seen the film and assumed the book was some kind of military Harlequin Romance drivel. Boy, was I ever wrong.

Nekora

Forget the admittedly-excellent motion picture. Jones has a way of making a place and a time come alive that is utterly absorbing that has allowed this book to quietly sneak off the bestseller lists and onto a deserved place in the American canon. Critics may suggest that this restored edition runs long - ignore them. By the end of the novel you have not only seen the full tapestry that Jones wove, you have lived as a private in the inter-war US Army right up through the shock of Pearl Harbor.

Gio

An interesting firehose of American prose! I remember seeing the movie version of this work a very long time ago and I think there may have been a TV Mini-series, but neither can compare with the original written word. Clearly, Jones was a very angry, but capable writer who managed to capture the disaster that was the inter-vellum US Army and weave in the culture of depression era America and its offspring. Add in 1941 era Hawaii, and there is an amazing story.

That said, I think Jones lets his social anger bleed through a bit much and in the last 1/3 of the book particularly, his characters wax a little too philosophically, lapsing into soliloquies that rival the most extreme of Ayn Rand. If you are trying to understand the 1940s and just what happened at the beginning of the War, this is a must read.

Xmatarryto

This review covers the restored edition of James Jones' "From Here to Eternity". The afterword and notes point out this edition is much closer to the author's original version of the story, which means it is complete with profanity, sexual scenes - including masturbation, pre-marital and extra-marital affairs, and homosexuality - as well as some light political commentary that did not pass the conservative editors of the 1950's when the book was published. While the book is set in Hawaii, it isn't really a book about Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Instead, it is a much deeper character analysis of the "dog soldiers", a term which is explained later in the book, the men who led them, and the women who loved them. All of this is a portrait of a peacetime United States Army prior to its involvement in WW2.

This book is not one that glorifies the military life nor does it highlight deeds of heroism and courage on the battlefield. Instead, the author provides a frank view into the life of the typical enlisted men who were common to the peacetime forces in the early 1940's. These are men who led a hard life

that included scrapes with law, being 'on the bum', etc. Contrasted with these enlisted men are officers that either went to West Point or graduated from a Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program. These two groups of men are on opposite ends of the spectrum in regards to their wealth, education, and experiences, but in other ways they are much closer together in their debauchery and dependence on each other.

The story is primarily told from the perspectives of Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt and First Sergeant Milt Warden. Occasionally, the narration diverges to points-of-view from other soldiers, to officers, and to the women they turned to for sex and love, but mostly for sex. The story is set in February or March 1941 through January 1942. It does include Japan's attack on Hawaii, but as mentioned that is a minor part of the story. What you get is an intense look at life serving in Company G, which is an infantry outfit of the United States Army.

There is not much redeeming content for the Christian reader. While there are numerous sexual encounters, they author does not go into graphic detail. The book does show the depravity of man and the lengths he will go to in order to seek comfort and fulfillment. I'm sure not all soldiers and officers were as drunken, disorderly, and unfaithful as Jones portrayed them in the book, but that seems to be a primary focus and common traits of the men and women involved. Having served in the Marine Corps, albeit 50 years after this story, it appears some things are still the same when it comes to men and women and the military.

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