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## James michener hawaii review

I'm finally done with Michener. This is a big problem. Let's be clear: big books don't scare me. The unabridged Les Mis is one of my favorites. I'm a fast reader. That being said, it took me almost a month to finish James A. Michener's Hawaii. Here's why: Hawaii is an epic. There's no other word for it. They are a thousand onion-skin pages of small, small words, full of history and conjecture. It's fascinating, it's captivating, it's vividly written - but it's also incredibly dense. For every hundred pages of exiting ocean travel, there is another hundred pages on the economics of pineapples. I was lucky enough to start reading Hawaii while I actually lived on Maui. My mom sent me this book without telling me she had (nice move, Mom), and when it arrived, I was a little skeptical. Technically, it's nonfiction. I'm always skeptical about nonfiction, because it can be so painfully dry. There are exceptions, of course. Michener is one. When I reluctantly cracked open this book, it wasn't long before I realized that I should have done it weeks earlier. Hawaii begins with the prehistoric formation of the Hawaiian Islands, and carries the reader all the way through the 1950s (it couldn't go on because it was written in 1959). Because it is such a long piece of work, it is split into six different 'books'. The second book (From the Sun-Swept Lagoon) was by far my favorite because it follows a group of thirty or so Bora Borans as they leave their home island and travel 2,000 miles north to an unknown destination in a FRIGGIN' KANO. Anyone who knows me knows that I love boats and shipwrecks and abandoned islands and ocean stories, so the first two hundred pages or so were right on my alley. Michener has history read like a novel (no doubt he imagined it in his own way), and is as eloquent as his fictional-inclined contemporaries - if not more so. Consider, for example, the following quote: For nearly forty million years, the first island in the bosom of the sea struggled and tried to be born as a perceptible land. For nearly forty million submerged years its underground volcano sesaid and coughed and caved and spewed rock, but it nevertheless remained hidden under the dark waters of the restless sea, to whom it was an insignificant irritation, a small climbing pretentious thing of no importance. If I could give the first and second books five stars, I probably would. Teroro remained my favorite character for the next 800 pages, and once Michener had moved from the Bora Borans, I missed them. This is probably because the third book focuses on a painfully self-righteous group of missionaries from New England and misplaced crusade to Christianize Hawaii. Although I understand the need for this part of the book (especially (especially almost all the Caucasian characters that appear afterwards are descended from this small group of families) it quickly began to feel repetitive. From the Farm of Bitterness, the third part, spends a little too much time on the cycle of hopelessly biased Reverend Abner Hale struggling to convert the Hawaiians, then losing his temper with their pagan ways and having a tantrum until his inexplicably patient wife manages to calm him down. Honestly, by the time I got to the fourth book, I was so sick of Abner Hale that I considered skipping about a hundred pages to get past the point where he died. The fourth book (From the Starving Village) was considerably less painful. Although it is nominally focused on Nyuk Sin and her expansive Chinese family (Kees) as they settle on Oahu, it also follows the growth and expansion of the missionary families as they gradually take over all of Hawaii's trade and industry. In this fourth part we also have the plague, the leper colony Molokai, and lots of prostitutes (There is a lot of sex in the book. It's all quite winking, nudge-nudge, but if the idea of a thirty-year-old man while away a few blissful afternoons with a sixteen-year-old island girl bothers you, you might have to skip a few chapters). The fifth book shifts to the rigid traditional Japanese family of Kamejiro Sakagawa, while still keeping track of the Kees, the Hales, the Hewletts, the Whipples, the Janderses and the Hoxworths. Here we spend a lot of time learning all the different prejudices of the ports of Hawaii towards each other in the process of the absorption of Hawaii by the United States. This is where the Second World War takes place; and although the exploits of the four recruited Sakagawa boys are described in detail, more huge events (such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, the bombing of Japan, and D-Day) are only briefly discussed, or in a few peculiar cases, not mentioned at all. The Golden People, the last book of Michener's Hawaiian marathon, wants to bring the heroes of the previous four terms (or their descendants) together, perhaps in an attempt to highlight the ethnically ambiguous Hawaiian identity. The book ends quietly and on a peculiarly political note. Personally, I found the end a little abrupt. That being said, Hawaii is definitely worth reading. The Baltimore Sun's description of it as a mammoth epic of the islands is pretty spot on, and the power of Michener's prose manages to move the story forward at the breakneck pace needed for such an ambitious, lengthy piece of work. It's part fiction, part fact, but if you decide to read it, you'll learn more in these 900-some strange pages you'd be reading ten other novels (which probably would take about the same amount of time). Michener's characters are his and colorful, sometimes hilarious, and have a huge capacity to capture the reader with the peculiar feeling that he has met these people somewhere before. Close, yes, but also delicious. There are a few criticisms, of course, and I'm going to present them in list form, because if I try to get detailed, this review will come out longer than the book itself. And here they are: Despite the inclusion of family trees, characters are (with a few exceptions) almost impossible to keep track of. This is not helped by the fact that the Hawaiian families, Chinese families and English families apparently used the same names over and over again for something like three hundred years. This is not Michener's fault, of course, but it makes reading difficult in places. The book can sometimes feel a bit schizophrenic, because it is so busy to jump back and forth from the Hales to the Whipples to the Kees to the Sakagawas. And while Michener's attention to the so-called 'Oriental' community is both interesting and necessary, it's worth nothing that after the third 'book,' Hawaii is no longer really about Hawaiians at all. Perhaps this is a conscious reflection of how the Hawaiian people were effectively ignored after the immigrant population decidedly took over, but it still felt rather strange. Every now and then, Michener as the author will interject and interrupt the third person's omniscitive style of narration with a first-person pronoun (i.e., the results of this alteration, which I mentioned earlier...), which is annoying at best and shocking at worst, and without ceremonially yanking the reader out of the flow of the story. Events that seem brilliantly important are sometimes completely obscured. I wanted an account of the attack on Pearl Harbor so badly, precisely because Michener is such a good writer. Instead, I got a Japanese boy on a bike, pedaling around wondering what was going on in hell. Chance squandered. At the very end of the book [spoiler alert?] Michener suddenly reveals that Hoxworth Hale, one of the missionary-descendant characters, has been telling this story all along, which I think is supposed to mean the nasty first-person interruptions that I mentioned earlier came from him. I get that authors do this sometimes, pretend to be one of their characters, but it's weird here because Hoxworth Hale doesn't even appear to 600 pages in, and when I came to the end, instead of thinking, Oh hey, that was smart, my thought process was more along the lines of, Wait, what? Which is really not a note you want to end up on. Still, for a book about as long as the Bible, these are pretty minor complaints. In the end, I'm glad I tackled this book because it gave me a much deeper understanding of this wonderful, amazing place I was lucky enough to live for a few months. I can't not sure if it would be so captivating for anyone who hasn't spent a few afternoons exploring the beaches and jungles and volcanic craters of Hawaii, but if you don't get there, this might be the next best thing. Three and a half stars. Buy it on Amazon here, or add it to your Goodreads shelf here. This article needs additional quotes for verification. Help improve this article by adding quotes to trusted sources. Unsourced material can be challenged and removed. Search sources: Hawaii novel – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR (February 2013) (Learn how and when to delete this template post) Hawaii First EditionAuthorJames A. Michener[1]CountryUnited StatesLanguageEnglishPublisherRandom HousePublication dateNovember 20, 1959[2]Media typeprintPages937pp. Wikiquote has quotes related to: James Michener's Hawaii Hawaii is a novel by James Michener. [3] The novel was published in 1959, the same year Hawaii became the 50th U.S. state. The book has been translated into 32 languages. [4] The historical accuracy of the novel is high, although the story about the early Polynesian inhabitants is based more on folklore than anthropological and archaeological sources. Written in episodic format like many of Michener's works, the book tells the story of the original Hawaiians who traveled to the islands of Bora Bora, the early American missionaries (in this case, Calvinist missionaries) and merchants, and the Chinese and Japanese immigrants who traveled to work and search for their fortune in Hawaii. [5] The story begins with the formation of the islands themselves millions of years ago and ends in the mid-1950s. Each section explores the experiences of different groups of arrivals. Plot The novel tells the history of the Hawaiian Islands from the creation of the islands to the time when they became an American state, through the views of selected characters who represent their ethnic and cultural groups in the story (for example, the kee family represents the viewpoint of Chinese-Hawaiians). Most chapters relate to the arrival of different peoples to the islands. [6] Chapter 1: Of the Limitless Deep describes the creation of the Hawaiian land of volcanic activity. It goes into tasteful detail describing things like primary succession taking root on the island, to make life finally thriving. [7] Chapter 2: From the Sunswept Lagoon begins on the island of Bora Bora, where many people, including King Tamatoa and his brother Teroro, are angry about the neighboring islands of Havaiki, Tahiti, etc. Tamatoa suggests to his brother and friends that they should migrate to another place where they can find religious freedom. After agreeing to this plan, his brother secretly sets fire to Havaiki to take revenge for the human sacrifices they have demanded of Bora Borans. Later they take the canoe Waiting for the West Wind and sail to Hawaii. Later a trip back to Bora Bora bring back with them some women and children and an idol of the volcano goddess, Pele. [8] Chapter 3: Farm of Bitterness follows the journey of the first Christian missionaries to Hawaii in the 1800s and their influence over Hawaiian culture and customs. Many of the missionaries become founding families on the islands, including the Hales and Whipples. Michener's character Reverend Abner Hale is a caricature of the true-life missionary Hiram Bingham I.[9] Chapter 4: From the Starving Village covers the immigration of Chinese to work on the pineapple and sugar cane plantations. The patriarch of the Kee family contracts leprosy (a.k.a. the Chinese disease) and is sent to the leper colony in Molokai. Chapter 4 contains a fictionalized version of 1893 historical events known as the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Chapter 5: From The Inland Sea focuses on Japanese workers brought to the islands to replace Chinese workers; the latter are starting their own business. It also relates to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Chapter 6: The Golden Men sums up the changes in Hawaiian culture and economy based on the interrelationships of different groups in the islands. [10] Cinematic adaptations In 1966, parts of the book were made in the film Hawaii (1966), starring Max von Sydow and Julie Andrews. [11] The film focused on the third chapter of the book, Farm of Bitterness, which covered the island kingdom's settlement by its first American missionaries. [12] A sequel, the Hawaiians (1970), starring Charlton Heston, covered further chapters of the book, including the arrival of the Chinese and Japanese and the growth of the plantations. [13] References ^ Ali Rothstein (Fall 2001). Michener, James Albert. Pennsylvania Center for the book. Archived from the original on February 25, 2016. Picked up April 1, 2017. ^ Books-Authors. The New York Times. November 6, 1959. p. 26. ^ Albin Krebs (October 17, 1997). James Michener, author of novels that sweep through the history of places. The New York Times. Picked up march 1, 2017. ^ Lum, Doris (date unknown). Michener, James A.: Hawaii in 20th-Century American Bestsellers. University of Illinois. Picked up at 2010-03-24 from unsworth/courses/bestsellers/search.cgi?title=Hawaii. ^ Hawaii (review). Archived from the original on 2012-04-04. 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