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By Abraham Lincoln

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*****.I see Abraham Lincoln as a literary genius, one of the great American prose stylists and certainly the greatest ever to occupy the Presidency. He could have written a Greek tragedy. Instead, he starred in one; and his abilities as a writer were accessories to his acts in office. They also gave his hagiographers ample material from which to build the myth of the patient, tolerant, humble Lincoln. That man is Lincoln's great fictional triumph; a character as enduring as Huck Finn and about as authentic. Herndon is the antidote, the man who knew him like a brother and described the struggles for self-control, the ambition, the intellectual arrogance, the bouts of rage and depression. The Lincoln worshippers in the History Departments were embarrassed by Herndon and tried to bury him in footnotes. Those lulled by the music of Lincoln's words tend to miss the facts and the deeds. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that my deaf fiancée, who has no ear for the music of Lincoln's prose, finds him despicable....



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