



## My Wicked, Wicked Ways

*Errol Flynn , Jeffrey Meyers (Introduction)*

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A hero to millions who adored his portrayals of Robin Hood and Fletcher Christian, Errol Flynn (1909-59) lived a life that far surpassed any adventure he ever acted out on screen: exotic travels, criminal exploits, passionate love affairs, violent confrontations, scandals, and international fame. In this highly readable, witty and colourful autobiography, reissued by Aurum Press in B-format using the original uncensored text, Flynn reveals himself and his remarkable life as he did nowhere else.

## My Wicked, Wicked Ways Details

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## From Reader Review My Wicked, Wicked Ways for online ebook

### Dave Russell says

I've never read anyone wallow so gloriously in their own evil--and evil is the only word for it. The womanizing was apparently the least wicked thing he did. He was a slave trader in New Guinea, for God sakes!

So, I obviously didn't come away liking him as a person. But as a writer he was remarkably good, in a glib, raconteurish type of way. It reminded me of Humbert Humbert, the unctuous, self-justifying narrator of *Lolita*. He is describing his own evil acts, but doing it in such a way that you begin to feel sympathy for him. As if no one that witty and sophisticated and self-pitying could possibly be a child molester. In the end, what more can you say about a man who met his second wife at his first rape trial?

Update:

The day before yesterday TCM showed Errol Flynn movies all day long, as well as a documentary about him. Watching some of his movies again, I've changed my mind about him as an actor. He could give a good performance when he believed in the movie (e.g., *Objective, Burma!*) The problem was he didn't like doing the kind of films they cast him, and it wasn't until late in his career when he could no longer swash a buckle, that he got the roles he wanted.

Also, the documentary made clear that his autobiography was mostly just good literature (i.e., total bullshit, well told.) Ironically, the fact that he's a liar makes him not as bad a person as I thought.

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### Alexandra says

Errol Flynn describes himself as a "tormented" man. My impression from his book is, that he was not an altogether happy man. He wanted to be taken seriously and he didn't feel that people took him seriously. He had aspirations as a writer and despite getting published, he felt he failed in this too. He was a man who, perhaps surprisingly, thought deeply and felt much, but did not always choose a wise course in life. "I am a contradiction inside a contradiction", he wrote and I think that might have been very true.

His autobiography reads like an adventure novel, said one commenter. I agree with this statement. From his ventures in New Guinea to his passing away (in Canada, I believe) he was a man of action, always looking out for new adventures, ideas, women and riches. He did achieve this, but as I mentioned before, he was not quite satisfied. On the contrary, he felt that his motion picture career had hindered his becoming what he had really wanted to become and be perceived as whom he really was.

I cannot say, after reading this, that I envy the destiny of the man who wrote it. But he certainly had varying experiences and tried to live life as fully as he could.

The book in itself is roller-coaster ride with hardly a dull moment. If you're into classic Hollywood stars and adventure stories, I can heartily recommend it!

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### L. Ramkey says

Clay-footed Errol Flynn set me to thinking with his autobiography. Perhaps what struck me the most was the extreme contrast between the first half of his life, living in unpretentious, free-spirited, straightforward,

poverty stricken, primitive, basic-human-level, wild west culture with Tasmania, Australia and New Guinea....And then fairly quickly being whisked to the most pretentious place on earth, Hollywood, with endless riches, glitz and glamour, inescapable contracts and obligations, contrived images, acceptable lies and liars, the value of money over authentic experience and art. It seemed that once Errol Flynn either figured out what was happening to him and/or got bored with the whole Hollywood experience, a fist fight then ensued within to reclaim his roots and his guiltless free spirit. I found it interesting that he was not really a drinker to much extent until he reached Hollywood. I think he could have walked away from fame and money fairly easily had it not been for obligations to the children he had by that time and the need to pay for the adventures he craved and seemed to need to doctor himself. Though he didn't claim to be a good father, I think he was the type of man who couldn't abandon them financially, thus strapping him to the Hollywood scene for the rest of his life.

In terms of evaluating his life, I recall a claim from him that "human nature" may not be the same all over the world as we like to think. In the world of his youth, men took young girls for wives or companions as common practice, they lived by their wits or the seat of their pants to survive what may be around the next corner. I would think head hunters and cannibals can take you to new heights of fear and clever tricks for survival. The lack of money and hunger (which was very real to him at times) and few boundaries handed down from his parents may have led to his crime sprees. The use of fists or other minor "crimes" was an acceptable medium for settling disputes. One indicator of that was a New Guinea conviction for him that called for jail time or a fine. Very civilized it would seem. He had no money so he took jail time....but the problem was, there was no jail. Things were different in New Guinea. Not to mention the desperation that might swell up in a young man from a "civilized" family who was essentially abandoned by his parents at age 15 and began to make his way alone by age 17. Cruelty doesn't always look like a head hunter. Experiences like these shape a young man deeply and forever.

What I liked about Errol Flynn most was his brutal honesty about himself and how he saw his world. In a particular passage he talks extensively about his many contradictions. By that time in the book, it was easy to see those in him. But I also saw so many of those contradictions in myself. So was Flynn really all that different from the rest of us with his inward struggles or was he just more honest about them? For his own reasons, I suppose, it seemed that he focused heavily on his "wicked, wicked ways", and seemed to allow those to overshadow his intellect and child-like curiosity, friendship, generosity and goodness to others, his peculiar brand of naiveté, his extraordinary talent and professional achievements. I thought the most "wicked" part of him was his sense of humor! Though far from perfect, I think he was a much better man than he gave himself credit for. I winced often but by the time I got to the end of his story, I was in his corner.

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## **Elisha says**

What can one say about Errol Flynn after reading this book? He certainly led an incredible life and definitely the title of "my wicked wicked ways" fits perfectly. How much is actually true without embellishment I'm unsure of and therefore take it all with a grain of salt. Authenticity aside, he is a surprisingly good writer. He is blunt and open about his life and things he's done. One gets the impression that he spent his life searching for something that would have given him true happiness and that he might not have known what to do with it had he found it. Towards the end of the book he describes himself as such

" I want faith and I am faithless.

I love myself and hate myself

I want to be loved but I may myself be incapable of really loving."

His autobiography may not endear him to some people but I found it a fascinating story of a man who was always searching for the answers and never quite seemed to find them. He seems to me to be an authentic

and completely, naturally, imperfect human.

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### **Samantha Mazzola says**

Someone needs to leak the ghostwriter of this book's name because this is just masterfully written, though I have little doubt that Errol's unique narrative came from no other source than the man himself. Witty, fascinating, supremely masculine with a touch of the tongue-in-cheek vulgar, this remains the best autobiography I've ever read.

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### **Tony says**

Flynn, Errol. MY WICKED, WICKED WAYS: The Autobiography of Errol Flynn. (1959). \*\*\*\*. I'm not sure what drove Flynn to write this autobiography. It was either to provide the truth of his background and subsequent life, or to add further to his boxoffice image and build upon the popular press surrounding him. The book reads much like "The History of Tom Jones." We learn that Flynn was not Irish; he was born in Tasmania. He attended several schools there and in Australia, mostly because his father, a famous marine biology professor had lots of pull. Errol didn't do well in school, and was finally expelled from the last one he was able to get into. At the age of seventeen, he heard of the discovery of gold in New Guinea, and hied off to get in on the action. He never did get to dig for any of the gold, but managed to participate in a number of different endeavors that helped provide him with, barely, a living. Along the way, he met a succession of characters that soon became his best friends. He and another friend decided to volunteer for the Chinese army during the Sino-Japanese war. They both quickly bored of the whole thing, since they were given menial duties that didn't match their need for heroics. They abandoned the army and sneaked off on a freighter that was headed for India. We learn of their adventures there. We also learn of Flynn's penchant for good looking women, many of whom he managed to meet and seduce in every country he visited. Leaving India, Flynn ended up in England, where he broke into an acting career, mostly on the stages of Stratford-on-Avon. Through a chance meeting with an agent from Hollywood, he got an invitation to move to California and get a part in a film. While in Hollywood, he took advantage of his surroundings and managed to meet and, mostly, make friends with many of the better actors and actresses at the time. He also took lots of R & R. On one trip to Mexico, he met Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo at their home outside of Mexico City. Although their first meeting was hostile, they soon became good friends. He then married his first wife, Lili Damita, and soon recognized that he had made a mistake. Flynn was always better at short-term relationships than he was at marriages. He soon learned that divorce was a costly item, and continually complained about how much he was paying Lili over the years in alimony and child support. Money is a recurrent theme in Flynn's tale. Although he made fabulous amounts of money during his career, he managed to blow it just as quickly, and ended up owing the government almost \$1 million in back taxes. This doesn't sound like a lot of money today, but back then, Flynn averaged \$250,000 per year. What he devotes a full chapter to are the rape trials he had to go through. Both involved charges of statutory rape. Of course Flynn pled not guilty, but it took a long time for the courts to rule in his favor. Add the expenses of the trial and the lawyers to his already taut budget, and you begin to understand his monetary concerns. He takes us through his third marriage and ends his tale with a series of lessons he has learned about life. This is the only disappointing part of this chronicle. Otherwise, it's a true adventure story of a man who tried to live life to its fullest, and who ultimately had to pay for all of it. Recommended.

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## **Michael says**

There was nobody like Errol Flynn. He was one-of-a-kind, a grown-up kid who, constantly looking for adventure, sailed through life on his good looks and innate charm.

He was really a "flake". He avoided responsibility, usually letting his "little head" dictate to the one on top of his neck.

No woman could hold him for very long.

You'd be a fool to loan Errol money, as his creditors back in his native Tasmania would be quick to tell you. He spent that green stuff like there was no tomorrow.

But, tomorrow did come and his last days were plagued with health and financial problems. He died at age 50.

What remains for us to savor is his dashing, heroic on-screen image that will be forever young.

I understand that this autobiography was ghost written, but Flynn certainly had a strong hand in writing it. The book has his wry, witty "voice" and is a very entertaining read.

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## **Sean Peters says**

Hi

read this quite a while ago.

An interesting book, Errol did get up to so much trouble, and played hard, drank hard, partied hard, and sad to see his career go down hill so quickly.

good read

regards

Sean

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## **KEVIN says**

Errol was an adventurer first and a movie star second. He was an unconventional, unique rebel easily bored and frustrated with normal behaviour which he found almost impossible to keep up. Hollywood managed to corral him for a while but only for a while. Thank goodness they did because now we have the films to watch. Compared to the dash and flash of his Robin Hood and Captain Blood the leading men of today simply pale into insignificance.

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## Monica says

No cabe duda que Errol Flynn era todo un auténtico aventurero, y esta autobiografía suya lo demuestra con creces ,ya que, evidentemente ,todo lo que se pueda decir, haber escuchado antes o leído sobre esta estrella de los años dorados de Hollywood se quedan muy corta al adentrarse en su autobiografía. Dotada del mismo carisma que él, escrita con ironía a la par que un descarado y sinceridad (e incluso cierta Fantasía exageradora..quién sabe) escandalosa, resulta totalmente mágica y adictiva en su lectura, pese a ser una persona de instintos amorales y peculiares principios, en ocasiones. No deja de ser sorprendente que su figura sea tan carismática y su simpatía no se deteriore tras ello. Así comprobamos, mediante su lectura, que no solo en la pantalla o en presencia seducía; es algo que traspasa. La esencia de un encanto irresistible que brilla en su escritura, que es parte de su personalidad: un ser totalmente magnético, atrayente y atractivo. Irresistible a todas luces.

Y a las pruebas me remito, porque leyendo esta magnífica obra de sus memorias desde tan temprana edad, su leyenda oída durante años se queda corta al auto retratar una vida repletas de aventuras y desventuras; demasiadas para tan corto periplo vital, un ser creado a sí mismo mediante prueba y error, y vuelta a la carretera y al mismo experimento. Sediento de la esencia de su propio camino, dudoso y muchas veces poco ético, pero igualmente espectacular y tantas veces rocambolesco. Sus historias en la pantalla no le llegan a los talones.

Unos claros ejemplos: ya a los siete años se marcha casi una semana a intentar trabajar como jornalero de campo, tras una de sus numerosas y acaloradas discusiones con su progenitora ( que según él albergaba el gusto por los mismos placeres), y antes de cumplir la veintena, llega a ser mendigo en varias ocasiones, trabajador de una fábrica de sellos, oliendo botellas por si contienen queroseno en otra, se marcha a Nueva Guinea y trabaja como Cadete sanitario, capataz de una plantación de cocos, desboñigador de Ovejas, Peón de un pozo minero, pescador con dinamita en alta mar, y incluso, llega a ser acusado y encarcelado por un crimen en una trifulca con las tribus locales, cuando buscaba Oro. Todo eso, antes de llegar a Hollywood. Entre medio está el lío de las faldas, siempre perpetuo a lo largo de su vida, que la mayoría de las veces le ha hecho entrar en conflictos de mayor o menor peligro, y otras tantas de ha ayudado a salir de uno de su múltiples atolladeros vitales.

Y si para éstas alturas no se ha apagado la sed de diversión por parte del lector..ávido de ver qué le depara próximamente y riza el rizo, hay un pasaje que hará las delicias de todos, por su rubrica rocambolesca, previo a su aterrizaje en Europa, formación en los teatros de Inglaterra y contratación para la meca del celuloide, en el que cual se 'embarca' por una ruta que le lleva como año y medio de aventuras, juergas, trapicheos y contiendas peligrosas junto a un amigo médico.

Llegados a éste punto de la obra, el tono puramente alegre de los primeros pasajes, pese a sus complicada y trotada vida a tan temprana edad, se torna en jocosidad inapetente, inercia y estado de rutina y hastío. Los que esperen mucho del pasaje central que dedica a su estrellato y años en Hollywood, quizá se defrauden. Flynn no era un actor o estrella al uso, convencional ( y bien se puede comprobar leyéndole..creedme). Lo que para algunos pudiera ser relevante:... 'hice éste film así, me preparé asa...compartí escena con..que ensayaba con la técnica tal..se filmó en...', para él es irrelevante, pues lo que desea resaltar es su encontronazo fallido con su primer matrimonio y relación tormentosa, así cómo los oportunismos propios y ajenos, los directores crueles, el maltrato animal en la industria visual y la poca importancia para los magnates del dinero al escuchar a un ser que intentó ser sofisticado, creativamente hablando, y su no oportunidad de un papel que se extrapole al de aventurero y / o espadachín; su frustración, la cual saldaba con sus numerosas juergas en su hogar de Mulholland, además de sus aventuras en alta mar o bajo éste. Y, sobretodo, la renta personal que sacó de su explotación impersonalizada en sus años dorados. También hay cabida para anécdotas cinematográficas, pero todas personales y de entidad negativa, revestidas con su característica ironía. Como excepción, se divirtió y entusiasmó en un par de films (cuando no estaba Jack Warner de por medio ni su odiado Curtiz), e incluso aportó su granito de arena a la causa. Ahí queda todo. Lo dicho, un tipo

no convencional o blanco de cara a la galería en el Hollywood del estrellato.

Tanto en la anterior, como en su siguiente y última parte: ‘Cazadores de cabezas de Hollywood’ y ‘????’, Flynn, narrativamente hablando, discurre por la senda de los claros oscuros in crescendo; (sin dejar su tono jocoso e irónico) como los característicos matices ocre de su adorado Van Gogh. Aquí detalla exhaustivamente todo el proceso, fondo, y consecuencias, sobretodo en el plano personal, que acarreo su acusación de violación estatutaria. Fue un antes y un después en su vida, un punto y aparte de inflexión. Sabe hacer crítica y auto crítica de él y todos. Se sentía un ser utilizado por los estudios, las mujeres, la prensa y hasta los cómicos, de los cuales era un recurrente en aquellos años. Hastiado de su encasillamiento y el mundo vacuo de la cinematografía, relata amargamente su soledad y aislamiento, pese a estar ‘aparentemente’ en la cúspide. Las apariencias engañan, y él era un engaño a medias..ni tanto ni tan clavo, como suele decirse; todos tenemos nuestro sentir y pesares, no somos sólo una cara por entero. La del conquistador, juerguista y ‘espadachín’ de primera le vino bien a los productores que se lucraron de su fama. Él se tenía por otro:

“sólo yo sabía lo profunda que era mi herida. Yo les gustaba por lo que aparentaba ser”.

Su deterioro y decadencia personal era obvio, y en parte lo agradecía, hartado de su etiqueta:

“Me gustaría tener una fachada detrás de la fachada, y por ello mi cara me disgusta especialmente. Nunca me ha gustado, ni siquiera cuando era bonita, sólo me gustaba lo que quería pensar que había detrás de ella [...] siempre he pensado que mi cara y mi aspecto no reflejaban al ser real, que mi cara la ensombrecía[...]. El curioso que había en mí recorrió el mundo en busca de respuestas de la vida; pero mi cara se interpuso en el camino”

Aún no había encontrado su quimera particular...y la buscaba, pese a su experiencia, en los mismos pastos que le han desgraciado tanto: aventuras, mujeres, riesgos...su desgracia fue él mismo, a la postre. Con todo, intentó disfrutar y contemplar su auto retiro, sacar lo máximo de su última etapa vital..era un soñador – despierto y empírico empedernido.

Así pues, una autobiografía genuinamente cautivadora, que embriaga y atrapa desde la primera página hasta la última por su alta, tremendamente divertida, dosis de descaro, aventura, confesión a la vez que radiografía sabia, reflexiva y sin tapujos de un ejemplar de persona casi único, que hace palidecer a todos sus personajes en la gran pantalla, en la que también exorciza sus demonios particulares, mostrándonos su dimensión real. Un alma filosófica lastrada, saciada, de modo incorrecto mediante su inagotable sed de aventuras, su curiosidad en búsqueda de su yo y su designio en la vida.

Mi máxima nota, como no, y un imprescindible para tanto los que desean pasarlo en grande con un libro de mil y una aventuras a la par que acabar de constatar el carisma irreverente del seductor por excelencia, pero también el de una persona sensible, reflexiva, auto cultivada y creada a sí misma:

“Yo soy un hombre al que le gusta la compañía de las mujeres. Siempre me ha gustado y siempre me gustará. Pero también me gusta estar con gente maravillosa, gente alegre de los dos sexos. Sobretudo me gusta estar con jóvenes, para que me recuerden que la vida se renueva constantemente. Me gusta la gente, en suma. Me gusta disfrutar la emoción de vivir cada día, cada hora del día, porque sólo estamos aquí una vez, y vamos a sentir el viento mientras podamos”

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## Christina says

It was kind of a relief to finish this book. Reading it was kind of like having an extended visit from a drunken uncle who has great stories, zero self-awareness, some uncomfortable opinions, and ventures into TMI especially when talking about boobs. Uncle Errol never learns from his mistakes. He pinches your cheeks and causes a lot of awkward moments. He's sipping vodka and fondly believes you think it's water. After several shots from his "water bottle," he starts philosophizing like a drunk college senior. You're never sure

whether to believe his stories about the crocodiles and swindling natives in Papua New Guinea. Uncle Errol's never boring, but you do wind up feeling pretty sorry for him (and any woman who had to deal with him on a regular basis, except maybe Lili Damita, who honestly does sound pretty terrible).

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### **Sarah says**

Hard to know what to say. I found him pretty repugnant & shallow. Even before his discovery & fame & great success in Hollywood he was clearly a ne'er do well & pretty much a bum and a low life. He had a lousy & adversarial relationship with his mother which probably explains a lot as far as his behavior toward (& relationships with) women. I couldn't find any redeeming qualities; his beauty really was only skin deep. I'm thinking of another Lothario, David Niven, who was at least amusing & charming when recounting his "escapades". Errol is neither. It appears he had little business sense or judgment either and in the end karma caught up with him as he self destructed with booze & a disastrous attempt at producing & starring in his own movie after he fell out with Hollywood.

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### **michael says**

absolute and unfettered entertainment from start to finish. i cannot recommend this book highly enough. i now have to read the motley crew autobiography to see if it can possibly compare. like a real showman, errol flynn gives you everything you want and none of what you don't. the outrageous-anecdote-to-page ratio runs about 1:1 all the way through. among some that will stick in my head- the final gag with john barrymore, the private steamboat cruise up the mississippi, the spanish teeth that nearly cost flynn his arm, the female slave(s) in new guinea, the ammonia up the crocodile's ass trick, and of course errol's brief dabbling into sheep castration (about that last one, i'll just say that before he became famous for sweet-talking women into bed with him, he employed his mouth in other endeavors)

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### **Matthew Sanchez says**

This book sticks with you in ways that will benefit and bring you down. The words make sense, and at the same time are self destructive. By the last page you'll feel like you're losing your best friend. Your soul will be compromised. Your mind will long for more.

Flynn will be in, and the "in" will send careless whispers through your mundane days.

The ups and downs will tickle your spirit.

You'll feel like a man -- woman -- a free spirit. You'll fist fight the fool. You'll charm the virginal to the point of orgasim

You'll overtake Hollywood, legal jurisprudence, and the prude alike. All the while you'll grasp this book in your hands longing for an orange filled with Vodka . You'll meet art. You'll meet literature. You'll meet debauchery, lechery, petty theft, victory and defeat.

Already you're in in -- now you can be in like Flynn.

## Christopher Roth says

Apparently he wanted to title it "In Like Me." In my quest for the sleaziest Hollywood memoir (Scotty Bowers's "Full Service" and Lever's "Me Cheeta" are top of the list so far), I found Errol Flynn's autobiography to be valuable in many more ways than this. Written at the age of 50 when he was washed up, drinking himself to death, living mostly on his Jamaican estate but also enjoying a second wind of film success playing layabouts and has-beens rather than swashbuckling heroes, *My Wicked Wicked Ways* was published after Flynn's death shortly after. He led an amazing life: born in Tasmania, son of a famed naturalist who was the first person to bring platypuses to England for study, descendant on his mother's side from Bounty mutineers (with the sword arm to prove it), he ran tobacco plantations and engaged in shady dealings and battles with crocodiles and cannibals in New Guinea for four years--he was surreptitiously filmed dueling with a croc by some Hollywood location scouts and they hired him--as well as serving in both the Sino-Japanese War and the Spanish Civil War, traveling around the world, having an out-of-body experience in an opium den in Macau, having his stomach slit wide open by a rickshaw driver in Ceylon and surviving, befriending everyone from King Farouk to U.S. presidents, being turned on to marijuana by Diego Rivera, getting to know Fidel Castro personally in Cuba, screwing probably literally thousands of women etc. In fact, the book is so jam-packed that the Castro stuff only gets referred to, not told. Flynn also reveals himself as a confused, vulnerable, often self-loathing soul whose biggest regret was not having become a writer of a very intellectual stripe, which had been his first dream. He portrays the statutory-rape charges brought against him as politically motivated (something about being made an example of by a D.A. who had not received his kickbacks from the studios), and indeed they possibly were. In any event, he was humiliated, impoverished, and raked over the coals by self-proclaimed defenders of morals for something that wouldn't be a crime in most countries: a man in his early 30s having a consensual one-night stand with a 17-year-old hardly makes him a Polanski or an Arbuckle.

Flynn seems so self-aware, self-deprecating, and self-reflective that it's almost amazing he was actually an actor. Indeed, it is very tough not to like this fellow. It would have been fun to know him.

Turns out there's a huge literature ABOUT Flynn above and beyond this, including accusations that he was a Nazi, which does not really square with taking his life into his hands by fighting Franco's forces in Spain and sneaking into Cuba to meet Castro. There seems to be quite a cult of him. I'd appreciate any references to the best stuff written about him after his death. Not interested in the biopics, though.

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