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Age: 17, Grade: 12

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Category: Poetry

Ode to Henry Cyril Paget

I see a black and white picture of you splayed across a velvet throne,
a fan of diamond-encrusted wings cresting your head,
relaxed, lustrous, luxurious, contemplating.
Below your form
, a historic deviation,
I see a crinkled, yellow newspaper,
Serving as your obituary;
in it are the words “a waste of life”,
and I wonder how you are tied—your existence and legacy bound—to such caustic words
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The sound of silk capes dragging across marble floors
whispers in my ears like ghosts.
I sit silently. When I blink,
the glint of emeralds and rubies sears into the back of my eyelids.
What were you?
Devine, maybe a divinity—
I need to *see* your mind, the very *framework*.
Who are you? What are you?
I refuse to believe that you were merely a man incapable of sensibility, of logic
the shameful royalty,
accepting their legacy with an ecstasy for wealth,
disgracing your lineage,
maybe an artist,
maybe a soulful philosopher,
perhaps you held a perception that cannot be understood by me or this unsatisfactory world,
Did your indifference have a motivation, an origin?

Why
did you dust the streets of Paris with rose-scented exhaust fumes?
Why
did you rip seats from a cathedral to create a berth for your stage, to erect a theater out of a place of worship?
Were you the new consecrated idol, the new god worthy of hallowed devotion?
And who was your first love?
I refuse to believe it was the woman you dipped in glass,
but I refuse to believe your last love was the jewels,
and I admire your use of allusion,
when your preformed Oscar Wilde plays in France, the notorious city of romance
we are all aware of his condemnation.
And I wonder if your audience stood appalled or in awe of your presence. I wonder if you made the inherent
rebellion against your inheritance in order to prod a bejeweled middle finger in their direction after they were unable
to grasp your projected ideology.
The fifth marquess, the Dancing Marquess,
turns sheer silk into a maelstrom,

Butterfly Dancing:

Perhaps “the monarch” realized his homonym, transforming into a piece of nature—the one instance you were connected to such a naturalistic concept
the one performance you gave in which people were compelled to contemplate their very souls—the one instance you were momentarily beheld with veneration.

Maybe you had a virtue, a religion

Maybe you were pious to your own authored doctrine

Maybe your existence was sacrilegious to an unprepared society

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What dominates your mind besides the circlet resting on your head, what takes real estate besides your estate, which is filled with compiled, unnecessary luxuries, adhering to every bone in your body,
every glint of your eye?

Did your skin become gold, encasing every ounce of raw vulnerability—a shield?

You were flamboyant; from the gracious glimpses I gather from the relentless grip of suppressed history, I am able to accurately deduce that your life was synonymous with *hubris*.

You are a studded Icarus, you flew too close to a metaphor of sun,
one as radiant and imposing as yourself.

Did you fall—

Descend

Plummet

Fall

Plunge

Dive

Fall

Descend

Into engulfing, amber flames—Hell— not a material possession in sight to grant benigance?

Gluttony is the *fifth* deadly sin; you ate riches.

Flames, like the ones your animose family used to reduce every internal thought you bled onto to paper to vehement cinders.

They built a pyre for their shame towards you

and refused to stand by your casket

,after refusing to stand by your bedside as your lungs trembled helplessly in the condensement of your ribcage

Tuberculosis

as you returned to the earth, the same earth that birthed the gold you lusted for.

An arrogant twenty-nine year old.

Perhaps someone with insight, either unsought or dejected.

You left a stain on your parents’ legacy, and I cannot decide if I respect that or not,

but I feel enticed to.

Henry, you are an indecipherable glyph in history,

but I have never wanted to learn about a ghost more....