

**richard buller**

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*To Flame Without Burning*  
*Revisiting Brideshead, West Egg*

Asia magazine annual, 1927:

Through a megaphone darkly, the 1920's.

The Cover: brown, Decoéd beauties,  
anglophiled and alluring,

like chocolate Flappers in the heat of day,

Where Deneuve in *The Last Metro*

("The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet black bough")

Goes back a war, to wear,

look on page 63,

pink and silver gauze.

Hear the harp, tenderly plucked:

Nostalgia of sleep.

There! on page three,

Julia and Charles

in a yellow coupe:

smoking,

speaking soundlessly

of bat-squeak sexuality.

Sebastian is there, too,

on the rough outskirts,

ever the outsider looking in,

always watching,

always hoping.

"Though hast nor youth nor age

But as it were an after dinner

sleep dreaming of both"

Gaze more at the book. See page 326:

A gentleman!

Standing at the crowded summer shore,  
sporting blanched Gatsby slacks,  
a tie tousled by breeze  
(do I spy a postage-stamp design?).

Our gentleman looks away,  
Not taken by the mob-beach,  
Parasol vanity.

Here, he thinks, the ultimate:  
Flapper holocaust.

All, all a feral seasick circus.

Look beyond the illusion,  
observe the horizon.

See from your fedora perspective  
the flawed gardens of what is not.

The tragedy of a dream:  
how the waves want to devour everything;  
how you look one way, the wind blows another.

The sunbathers cry their throaty chant:

How dare you stand alone!  
Do not — hey listen you! —  
*do not look to the water.*

You must never turn away.

Play! Play! Play!

All is created for enjoyment —  
why be obtuse?

“I have left behind  
illusion . . .”

See page 148: a party!

Apparition of Flaming Youth  
(Now burnt-up used pocketed  
passages hidden deep in once-  
read folios).

Take heed to the book:

“Gay blue seas of the south . . .  
rippingjazzrhythms from far-away orchestras . . .  
Don’t travel this winter . . .”

The far-off murmurs of niggardly  
warnings deeply tendered.

But we are young!

RIPPINGJAZZRHYTHMS!

Let us sing! dance!

Where the manual on  
How to Flame Without Burning?

Hear the fading celluloid rattle:

The sky is too Pink;  
The sea is overly Turquoise;  
and these Men have no faces,  
only Masks of an age long-vanished.

The striped beach towel may  
hide aging, but it will  
pale, like the yellowed rattle;  
it, too, will be discarded.

“Here . . .  
I began to be old . . .  
Here my last love died”

To page 237: a War Hero!  
selling automobiles.

A hero, certainly a chap,

— but the memories of war too quickly wither,  
and reputation dies with the fickle pompous soldier  
who sick-wallows with the sick—

Who is this man, this relic of death's grotto,  
who poses to sell Packards?

His eyes sparkle green:

the motto of the modern world!

Freedom in order to sell more.

Do you hear Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen?

Then move on! To page 1043: a night club.

The Café Noir—

coffee house of misplaced youth.

See how smoke swirls round the cabaret clown;

see his white pasty grin,

thick with closeted sensuality.

He mourns for wounded birds:

As far as sparrows are concerned,

I am a dove.

Enable us to fly!

“So we beat on,  
boasts against the current,  
borne back ceaselessly into the past”

You have noticed my wounds?

Perhaps that is dust you detect,

but it is the talc of humanity,

a pure lethal powder that once was my heart,

crushed pharmaceutically by

time,

squandered passion,

and You:

Lustrous . . . animated . . . overdressed.

“Nowhere, beloved, can  
world exist but within”