

Youth takes the helm

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Youth takes the helm

From time to time there is an eruption. The foundations of society are rocked and through the cracks pour the rapacious young, who think only of letting off steam, turning everything topsy-turvy and erecting a monument to their youth on the ruins.

Everything, and at once, is their battle-cry.

There is nothing new in this. Every century, or almost, experiences a similar upheaval in the world of fashion, and it is a good thing that it is so, as everyone agrees. Obviously it does not happen without much shedding of tears and gnashing of teeth. But it happens just the same and history is made out of what started as just an act of defiance. Incidentally fashion always plays a big part in literary and artistic revolutions: Théophile Gautier's red waistcoat and the dandified costumes dear to de Musset caused a scandal in their day but are now considered typical of the period, just as ours will be remembered for its polo-neck sweaters and blue jeans. What is new today is the similarity of the clothes worn by both sexes. It is sometimes difficult to say with any certainty whether someone seen in the street or glimpsed behind the wheel of a sports car is a man or a woman. Very often they both have the same hair style, and even more often the same look of having been poured into their tight-fitting narrow trousers.

Do you remember the photographs of Bernard Buffet's marriage to Anabel? They both looked strangely alike. And at another equally famous wedding, of Brigitte

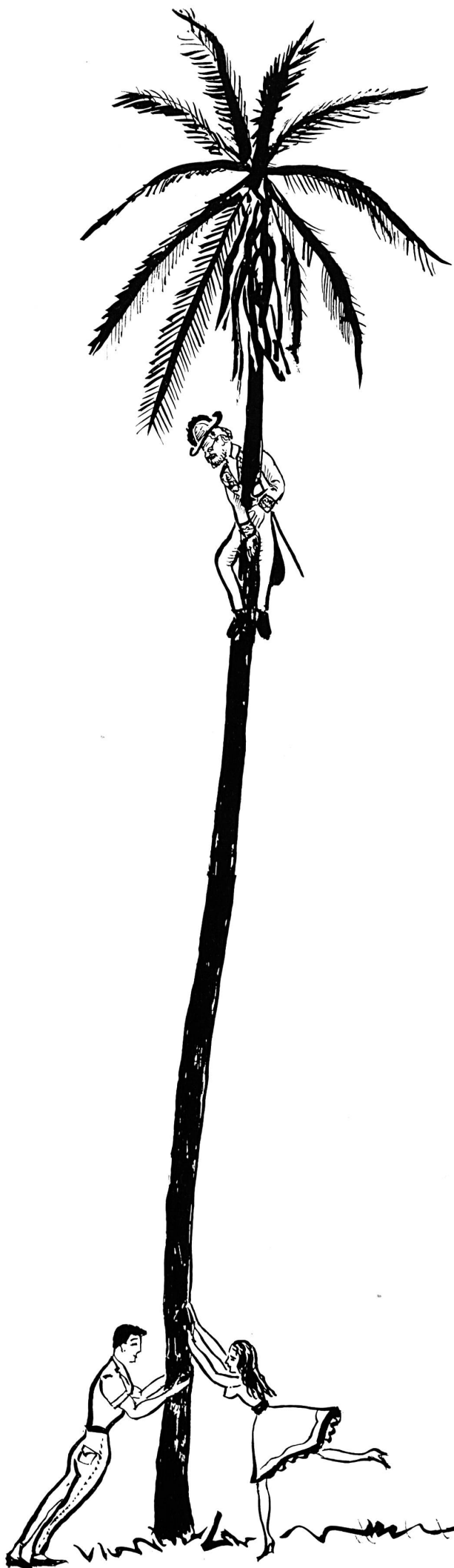
Bardot and Jacques Charrier, one was almost surprised to see the bride wearing a dress.

Do not think that I am criticising; I am not. This carefree attitude has something gay and attractive about it. And then again there is no escaping the fact that the youth of today are the ones who decide, who set the present pace of living. And yet it is not so long ago since a certain Mademoiselle Françoise Quoirez (not yet Sagan) knocked timidly on a famous publisher's door. Since then of course every young girl with a yen for writing feels she has left it too late if she does not get into print before she is 18. The ideal would be a Minou Drouet who could paint the customs and intrigues of her time with the precision of a Stendhal and a candour approaching that of the Marquis de Sade.

But let us be serious.

Of this overpowering avalanche of youth, of their frenzied activity, their pursuits, their insatiable hunger for nonconformity, something will remain; they will leave their mark upon our time.

I mentioned Bernard Buffet. Whether one likes his painting or not, it corresponds to a mood of our day, it has created a style. This tall, thin, sad-looking young man, who gives a long, thin, sad look to everything he paints, reflects today's generation, or rather the spirit of this generation. And we must be grateful to him for having rendered his melancholy figuratively; if it had taken an abstract turn, his paintings would have struck a note of inexplicable gloom on our walls. Obviously,



it is a far cry from the high spirits of a group of impressionist painters pooling their meagre resources to hire a rowing boat, to the bored air of the sleek man about town driving his own Rolls-Royce.

Take the cinema. Here, fame is no longer slow in coming but appears overnight. Starlets and young leading men make their appearance with all the suddenness of certain volcanic islands. Producers in their twenties, actors in their teens, burst into the headlines like acrobats in a Chinese Opera who erupt onto the stage with a leap and a bound. The cinemas with the longest queues in the evening are those showing films for young people, acted by young people.

Older people, those over thirty that is, go there to try to understand, either their children or their day and age, from the sayings of B.B. or Pascale Petit, Jacqueline Mayniel, Mylène Demongeot or Marpessa Dawn, or among the young men Jacques Charrier or Alain Delon.

Take music. Not the great music we used to hear, but the kind the young people are crazy about, that is either a soft lament or a yell of reproach that overwhelms, rouses to a frenzy and deafens. Elvis Presley's, for example. Much to the satisfaction of chair manufacturers, it is a music that arouses the destructive instincts of its fans, but it sends them, there is no doubt of that, and is here to stay — as Gerschwin's Rhapsody in Blue has stayed.

Take crime (and this is by the way). At one time it was the uncontested preserve of apaches, drug-peddlers and other hardened toughs with padded shoulders and a paunchy look. Today the young have taken over; you just have to glance at any American newspaper to see that there is a veritable crime wave among teenagers. This is the sad side of the picture, another aspect of the upheaval.

In the calmer field of couture, which more particularly concerns this periodical, the young reign undisputed masters. There is Saint-Laurent who keeps the Dior flag flying high, Cardin, Laroche, Givenchy and Goma, who create simple and sumptuous dresses, dresses that go off to the four corners of the earth. These young designers too have made their own styles, have set themselves up as champions of a new school.

There are also the young who build the new empires — those of oil and the atom — who upset the established facts of economics and planetary formulas. No, on second thoughts, never before has a period witnessed such an upheaval.

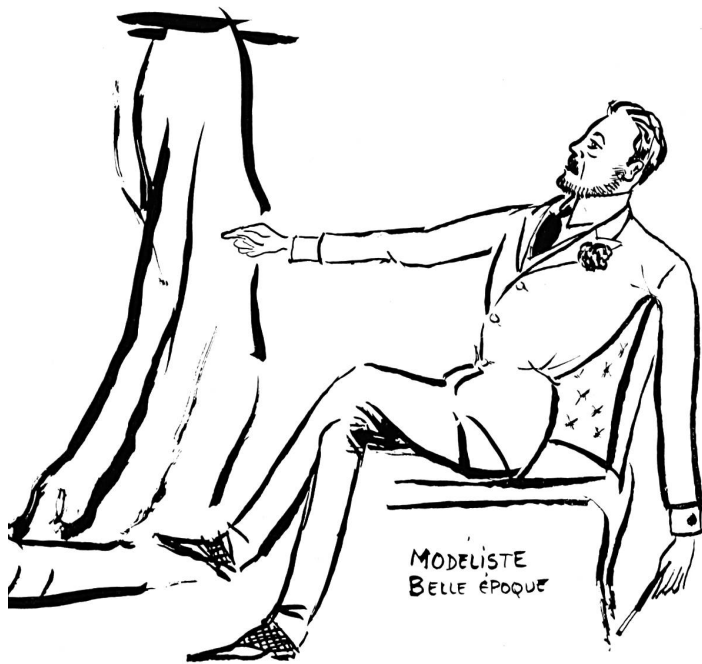
And the most extraordinary thing about it all is that the older generation do not grumble or protest, never

think of cursing those who are supplanting them. Astonished at having given birth to such curious creatures, they seem to take delight in watching their capers, like Mr. Jean Rostand with his frogs. Some even seem to harbour a kind of tender concern for the youth of today, who shoot up and bloom like luxuriant tropical flowers.

I believe that the western world is becoming Americanised without even realising it. Greece had its followers, as in their day did Rome, Spain, France and Great Britain. But these countries, during the period of their material and intellectual supremacy, served as models for traditions, whereas America is a volcano in perpetual



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ting itself into the limelight under the indulgent eyes of its elders. Faster and faster. It is the lust for life of a James Dean that sometimes comes to a violent end under an upturned Porsche but can also be extremely productive.

It is doubtless to this juvenile frenzy that we shall owe the rejuvenation of our old Europe, in which so much new blood is stirring. The young have deliberately supplanted and taken over from their elders.

But even so, no matter how dynamic and quick they may be, they are still not as fast as the grass that grows in the spring...

Gala

eruption. It is a country of the young; the old, all except a lucky or shrewd few, are left behind in the mad stampede towards the top.

One may not like it, but one cannot say that this ceaseless surge is harmful. Our era is in a state of perpetual effervescence, and out of this seething cauldron springs fully armed a race of new beings to conquer the world of art and science. How primitive appears to us now the custom of certain native tribes who made their old people climb a coconut tree, which the young shook until only the strongest were left clinging. The others fell and were no longer a burden to the community.

Today, by tacit and unanimous consent, the younger generation is setting the pace, writing books, creating fashions, composing music, painting pictures and thrus-



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