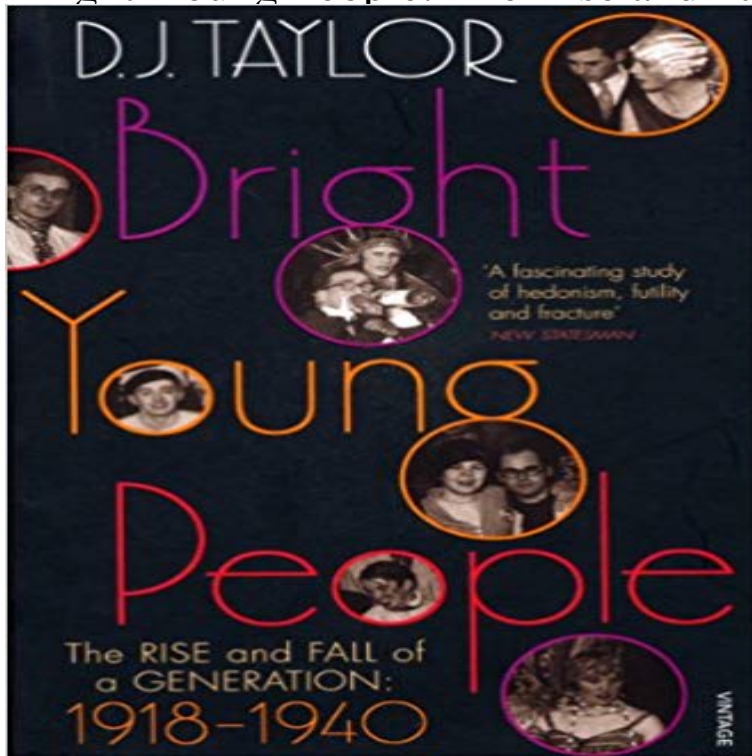


Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918-1940



Bright Young People/ Making the most of our youth/ They talk in the Press of our social success/ But quite the reverse is the truth. [Noel Coward]The Bright Young People were one of the most extraordinary youth cults in British history. A pleasure-seeking band of bohemian party-givers and blue-blooded socialites, they romped through the 1920s gossip columns. Evelyn Waugh dramatised their antics in *Vile Bodies* and many of them, such as Anthony Powell, Nancy Mitford, Cecil Beaton and John Betjeman, later became household names. Their dealings with the media foreshadowed our modern celebrity culture and even today, we can detect their influence in our cultural life. But the quest for pleasure came at a price. Beneath the parties and practical jokes was a tormented generation, brought up in the shadow of war, whose relationships - with their parents and with each other - were prone to fracture. For many, their progress through the serious Thirties, when the age of parties was over and another war hung over the horizon, led only to drink, drugs and disappointment, and in the case of Elizabeth Ponsonby - whose story forms a central strand of this book - to a family torn apart by tragedy. Moving from the Great War to the Blitz, *Bright Young People* is both a chronicle of England's lost generation of the Jazz Age, and a panoramic portrait of a world that could accommodate both dizzying success and paralysing failure. Drawing on the writings and reminiscences of the Bright Young People themselves, D.J. Taylor has produced an enthralling social and cultural history, a definitive portrait of a vanished age.

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