

Left and below:
ballet moments from
Harper's Bazaar

BALLET

TULLE TALES

Epitomising grace and elegance, ballet has long been a source of inspiration for fashion designers. A new book celebrating this enduring relationship features original photographs from *Bazaar*, including Louise Dahl-Wolfe's 1947 portrait of a model wearing a tutu-like Christian Dior gown and a dynamic shot of the American dancer Sono Osato. FRANCES HEDGES' *'Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse'* by Patricia Mears (£50, Vendome Press) is out on 17 October.



BOOKS

COVER STORIES

Nicholas Coleridge's memoir celebrates the magic of magazines

By LYDIA SLATER

One afternoon, ill in bed, the teenage Nicholas Coleridge picked up his mother's magazine to pass the time. It changed his life.

'I was mesmerised by the wit, by the blend of serious journalism and trivia, by the glamour of the fashion photography, sheen of the paper, punning headlines, understated snobbery... I knew in a heartbeat I wanted to make a career in glossy magazines,' he writes. The periodical in question was *Harpers & Queen* (as the British edition of *Bazaar* was then known, following a merger with *Queen*).

The Glossy Years, Coleridge's sparkling, gossipy and often hilarious memoir, is full of gems from his years at Condé Nast Britain, where he is now chairman. But for me, it is his recollections of working at *Harpers & Queen*, the title that launched his glittering career (and, incidentally, introduced him to his wife) that resonate the most. Coleridge's first article was published on these pages, and thereafter, he became a regular contributor and interned during his holidays. By 29, he had been made the magazine's editor. Shortly after his appointment, he was kind enough to print my own schoolgirl scribbles in a 1987 issue, though he was long gone when I joined as features editor in the late 1990s.

In both his time and my own, *Harpers & Queen* aimed to satisfy a disparate readership encompassing the rural smart set, London ladies who lunched, bohemian intellectuals and modish trendsetters with a mix of edgy fashion, in-depth cultural reviews and the gloriously anachronistic snobbery of the Jennifer's Diary social pages. These were overseen in Coleridge's era by the fearsome Betty Kenward, who used punctuation as a code to indicate status (untitled guests were separated by a comma, titled guests a semi-colon, 'allowing the reader to draw breath in wonder'; only royalty merited a full stop).

'The *Harpers & Queen* years were endlessly fun,' Coleridge declares, recalling the pithy maxims of the then CEO Terry Mansfield - 'God doesn't read *Vogue*, never forget that, Nicholas' - and the anarchic atmosphere of the Soho

offices: 'drunks, punks, George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley from Wham! You never knew who'd show up.' Angry letters from readers were a reliable source of mirth: he cites Lady Young of Graffham complaining that her wallpaper had been described as red with white stripes, when it was in fact white with red stripes. 'I obtained a sample of the disputed wallpaper, and as it turned out, the red and white stripes were identical in width. Nevertheless, we published a fulsome apology.'

'There's a huge place in my heart for *Harpers & Queen*,' Coleridge says. 'It opened my eyes to a way of thinking and seeing, and a kind of attitude and poise that I found very influential.' Reading *The Glossy Years* catapulted me straight back into that intoxicating, irresponsible magazine heyday in which I also had the good fortune to participate. I only wish I'd had the sense to keep a diary too. *'The Glossy Years'* by Nicholas Coleridge (£25, Fig Tree) is out now.



FICTION

ON PIRATES & ROCK THYME

Sophie Dahl describes how evocative childhood days on blustery British beaches shaped her first children's book



Literary fiction abounds with love by the seaside; lovers roll in with the waves. I grew up on romance in the Riviera, print-style, devouring it in the confused, hot way teenagers do. *Tender is the Night*, *Bonjour Tristesse*, Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* - where, in the jasmine-scented glare of a European summer, a couple bring a third person into their road trip and bed. (*But why?* I asked, aged 15, *why a third?*)

All of this European heat was compelling, but so, in a different way, were *Jamaica Inn* and *To the Lighthouse*, books that were soaked in rock thyme and cold salt spray. And, to a shy English girl, they were far more relatable; I never made it to the Riviera. Instead, I spent the school holidays shuttling between the houses of my two grandmothers with blissful consistency: one on the choppy east coast of America, the other in West Sussex - vast of sky, grey of sea.

And of the two, it was the windswept shingle of the Sussex coast that found its way into my first children's story, *Madame Badobedah*. For me, there is something haunting and nostalgic about England's beaches in winter - the wild, *French Lieutenant's Woman* longing of them, waiting for summer to come and unbutton the serge.

My adult books had each begun life as a picture in my head, and this was no different: a little girl in dungarees walks barefoot on the beach, a fishing net in hand. She is on her way home to a tumbledown

Regency B&B, where she lives with her parents, the managers. This is the Mermaid Hotel, a place full of secrets. The next picture was of an enigmatic old lady - imagine an elderly, feather-clad, Eastern European version of Auntie Mame - who is surrounded by all her worldly possessions when she meets Mabel, the forensically curious girl protagonist, an only child. Mabel immediately fancies the old lady (the Madame Badobedah of the title) to be an international jewel thief. And so on...

In the book, the curved beaches of my childhood were made flesh by the talented artist Lauren O'Hara, as was my grandmother's dressing table, which seemed when I was young to have hundreds upon hundreds of drawers full of mystery (now that I own it, they come in at a demure nine). The feel of thistles on a bare foot, the smell of a Guerlain perfume: so many snapshots from childhood and beyond have found themselves embedded in my fiction, surrounded now by mermaids and jewels, or held in the raspy, rolling R of a 'Darlink'.

In her wonderful seaside novel *Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier wrote: 'If only there could be an invention that bottled up a memory, like scent. And it never faded, and it never got stale. And then, when one wanted it, the bottle could be uncorked, and it would be like living the moment all over again.' For me, that's fiction - the ability to take our stories, and have them play with pirates. *'Madame Badobedah'* by Sophie Dahl, with illustrations by Lauren O'Hara (£12.99, Walker Books), is published on 3 October.

EXHIBITIONS

DUAL PASSIONS
A London show celebrates the gallerist Betty Parsons as an artist in her own right



'Buzzing' (1965) by Betty Parsons. Right: her 'Seeds' (1970). Bottom right: her 'Midnight Flute' (1968)

Recognised first and foremost as a mid-century dealer, Betty Parsons made a seminal contribution to the post-war New York art scene. Her eponymous gallery, which opened in 1946, promoted the work of emerging artists of the era, including Helen Frankenthaler and Jackson Pollock. Now, an exhibition at London's Alison Jacques uncovers Parsons' lesser-known role as an abstract painter and sculptor, charting the evolution of her signature bold, colourful style throughout her six-decade career. Highlights of the show, which focuses on her paintings from the 1960s and 1970s, include *Midnight Flute*, with its crimson and cerulean concentric ovals, and the dynamically composed *Buzzing*. MEG HONIGMANN

'Betty Parsons' is at Alison Jacques Gallery (www.alisonjacquesgallery.com) until 9 November.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SILK, TULLE AND SATIN EVENING DRESS BY CHRISTIAN DIOR. PHOTOGRAPH BY LOUISE DAHL-WOLFE. HARPERS'S BAZAAR, DECEMBER 1947. GEORGE, ATT, LYNES, FRITZ, HENLEY. PHOTOGRAPH BY LOUISE DAHL-WOLFE. COLLECTION CHRISTIAN DIOR © CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY, ARIZONA BOARD OF REGENTS. ARTWORKS: COURTESY OF ALISON JACQUES GALLERY, LONDON AND ALEXANDER GRAY ASSOCIATES, NEW YORK. © THE BETTY PARSONS FOUNDATION, FROM MADAME BADOBEDAH BY SOPHIE DAHL © LAUREN O'HARA FOR WALKER BOOKS 2019

