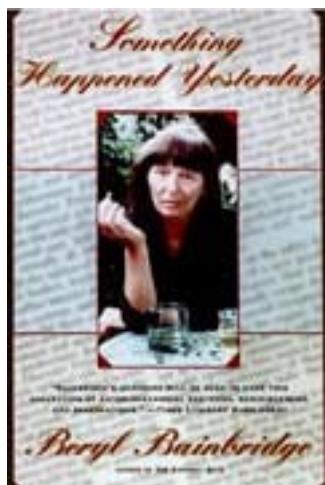


Something Happened Yesterday



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For six years, English novelist Beryl Bainbridge (*The Birthday Boys*) wrote a slightly dotty column for the *London Evening Standard*. Although the subject matter generally stays within the city's immediate environs, Bainbridge's skewed, droll reports will indulge her fans around the globe. Barmy digression is her stock in trade: attending a meeting to protest budget cuts in library services, she muses about playwright Joe Orton, who was "so incensed at his Islington branch failing to stock a copy of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that he defaced the jackets of lesser books and substantially raised the expectations of readers of Dorothy L. Sayers by incorporating the word 'knickers' in the blurb of one of her novels." Like a terrier with a juicy rat betwixt her teeth, Bainbridge grabs onto such small and large events as an MP hauled up for spanking and defended by "a medical chap" who claims "a whipping a day is more beneficial than an apple," a block fair where she is inveigled into reading fortunes, and an intrepid 5-year-old who interrupts a heated political discussion with a hose. --Francesca Coltrera

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