

Bainbridge, Beryl

Dame Beryl Bainbridge: 1934 - 2010 is acknowledged as one of the greatest British novelists of her time. Author of seventeen novels, two travel books and five plays, five of her novels have been shortlisted for the Booker Prize; most recently *Master Georgie*, which went on to win the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the WHSmith Literary Award. She has also been awarded the Whitbread Novel of the Year Prize twice, for *Injury Time* and *Every Man for Himself*.

Born in Liverpool and raised in nearby Formby, Beryl spent her early years working as an actress, leaving the theatre to have her first child. Her first novel, *Harriet Said...* was written around this time, although it was rejected by several publishers who found it "indecent". Her first published works were *Another Part of the Wood* (1968) and *An Awfully Big Adventure* (1970), and many of her early novels retell her Liverpoolian childhood. A number of her books have been adapted for film, most notably *An Awfully Big Adventure*, which is set in provincial theatre and was made into a film by Mike Newell in 1995, starring Alan Rickman and Hugh Grant. She later turned to more historical themes; such as the Scott Expedition in *The Birthday Boys* (1991), a retelling of the Titanic story in *Every Man for Himself* (1996), and *Master Georgie* (1998), which follows Liverpoolians in the Crimean War. Her no-word-wasted style and tight plotting have won her critical acclaim and a committed following; Beryl's books are regular Book Club selections, most recently *Every Man for Himself* in the *Guardian* (2009).

Her latest novel, *According to Queeney* (2001), is a fictionalized account of the last years of the life of Samuel Johnson, and was published to considerable acclaim. Beryl regularly contributed articles and reviews to the *Guardian*, *Observer* and *Spectator* (amongst others), and she was the *Oldie's* longstanding theatre critic. In 2008, she appeared at number 26 in a list of the 50 most important novelists since 1945, compiled by the *Times*. At the time of her death, Beryl was working on a new novel, *The Girl in the Polka Dot Dress*.

Recent books:

The Girl in the Polka Dot Dress (Little, Brown)

The Birthday Boys (Abacus, reissue: 2009)

According to Queeney (Abacus: 2002)