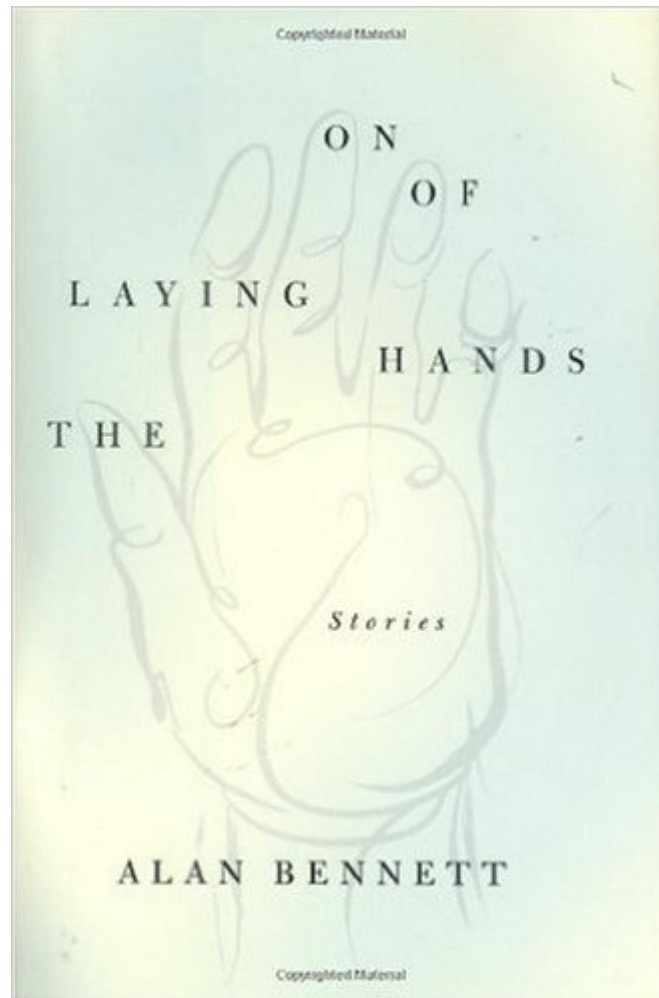


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The Laying On Of Hands: Stories



Synopsis

Three stories in one volume from one of Britain's most admired authors and playwrights. *The Laying On Of Hands* is Bennett at his inimitable best in this funny, and mischievous satire about a society memorial service for a rather special masseur who has died at a tragically young age in Peru. In "Father! Father! Burning Bright" Bennett writes with tragicomic insight about a son's vigil at his father's deathbed where their lifelong battle continues to the end. With his pared down and deceptively simple prose style Bennett unflinchingly describes the random thoughts and haphazard conversations of the family members waiting in the hospital as they face life and death. In "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet" a podiatrist shows a lonely, unmarried department store clerk that there's more to life than looking after her brother. Part of the award winning and critically acclaimed Talking Heads series, "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet" was described in the New York Times as both "touching" and "hilarious."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title story of Alan Bennett's "The Laying on of Hands," a novella that takes up half the book of three stories, demonstrates the playwright's sparkling versatility as a writer. Anyone who has seen or read Bennett's recent Tony-award-winning play, "The History Boys," will appreciate the more subtle humor of "The Laying on of Hands," the focus of which is a memorial service for a highly attractive, skillful, and young (dead at age 34) masseur conducted by a High Anglican priest who, like most of those attending the service, has enjoyed the virile masseur's services, albeit without the knowledge

of the others. Among the attendees is wide selection of mourners, including many of England's wealthy and famous, male and female, a "version of England," as it were. Add a self-righteous Archdeacon, there to report on the conduct of Father Geoffrey Jolliffe, who is conducting the service, and you have the ingredients for a smart, subversive dark comedy revolving around the question of "What did he die of?" To supply the answer would spoil the story. Read it and enjoy it; then read and see the movie version, available on DVD, of "The History Boys" if you haven't already.

Wrestling With Angels: A Tale of Two Brothers
Bare Roots
Loud Whisper

Alan Bennett is the classiest act in literature. His personal style--wry, self-effacing--shades his writing, which manages to be delicate, ironic, and hysterically funny all at once. The title story is destined to be a classic, and if you loved "The Clothes They Stood Up In," it's sure to be something you read and reread. It's genuinely laugh-out-loud funny, and it's quite astonishing how a seemingly lightweight take about the death of an ambisexual masseur can hone in on people's hopes and fears without ever becoming less than a breathtaking feat. The second, also more a novella than a short story, is less impressive but still very funny, sexy, and also sweet. The last is the least compelling--the prat of a protagonist makes it rough going--but this is the shortest of the lot by far. And the first take alone is well worth the price.

I was very pleased with this collection of short stories. Alan Bennett is a delightful and thoughtful writer who pushes the limits of cultural comfort levels with his writing. Although I wasn't quite as enamored with these stories as I have been in the past with "History Boys" and "The Uncommon Reader," I was far from disappointed. If you are already a Bennett fan in search of new material I highly recommend picking this up. If you are new to Bennett and looking for an introduction to his work I highly recommend putting this one on your shelf... but read it *after* "The Uncommon Reader."

I found this work by Alan Bennett to be inviting however with so many possibilities for twists and turns falling short of perfect. There were many places that the story could have gone especially near the conclusion I had hoped one or two might materialize. Witty, fun as ever, and clever, but for me a bit tame in the end. Perhaps after reading "The Uncommon Reader" with its twists and turns I expected more at the finish. All in all a very good read.

The unique and uncomfortable position of every Minister at every funeral as they just have a way of

twisting and turning in the most unexpected directions. As always, sensitive and incredibly deftly nuanced. I'm not sure the author was certain how or where to end it but as always, a delightful offering from Mr Bennett.

Alan Bennett, as always, reveals his depth of understanding of human nature, especially human weakness in *The Laying of Hands*. His observations are so acute that the reader will wriggle with embarrassment and astonishment and possibly hope never to meet the author with the oh so perceptive eye.

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