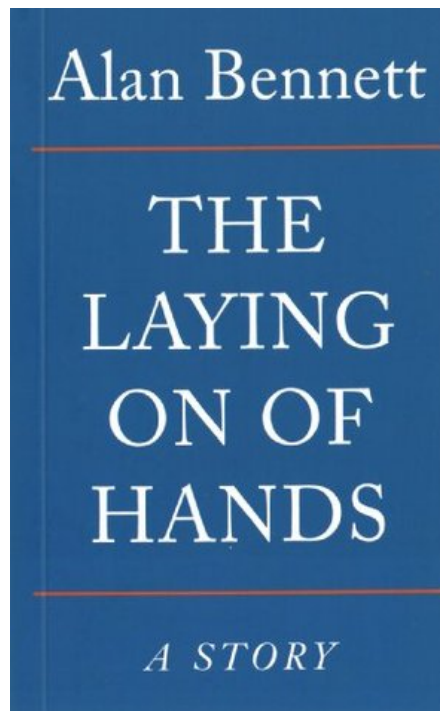




The Laying On Of Hands

Alan Bennett

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The Laying On Of Hands Alan Bennett

Clive Dunlop was a masseur of exceptional talents. His 'services' were much in demand amongst the great and the good and after his untimely death at the age of 34 they - the film stars and politicians, the writers and publishers, the TV pundits and celebrity chefs - are gathered for his memorial service. The conduct of the service is a great worry for the priest taking the service but it proves to be a test for the congregation. This is Alan Bennett at his absolute best with an exceptional satire. It is a perfect work of fiction but it will give readers the extra frisson of pleasure of identifying many of the characters, including even the masseur. This is a small masterpiece.

The Laying On Of Hands Details

Date : Published May 9th 2014 by Profile Books (first published September 3rd 2001)

ISBN :

Author : Alan Bennett

Format : Kindle Edition 112 pages

Genre : Humor, European Literature, British Literature, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Laying On Of Hands for online ebook

Fiona says

My New Year's resolution is to choose, at least once a month, one of the books that has been on my bookshelves unread, in some cases, for years. This was a great choice to start me off.

I love Alan Bennett. Who needs audio books when you can have Bennett reading to you in your head?! This is only a short story of a little more than 100 pages but it made me laugh out loud several times. It's a masterpiece about a memorial service for a masseur that's attended by everyone from politicians to tv chefs to soap stars, all of whom to their surprise had some sort of relationship with the deceased. Presiding is a priest who also knew the masseur. Geoffrey is an ambitious priest but a bit of a drama queen. *"It was unfair to God, he knew, but he'd always felt the deity had a mean side and on one of his reports at theological college his tutor had written, 'Tends to confuse God with Joan Crawford.'"* Excellent!

The service descends into farce and to say any more would be to say too much. If you love AB, you'll love this. An easy 5 stars that's going back on my bookshelf to stay.

Suni says

Il funerale ? anzi, la commemorazione ? di un giovane massaggiatore/gigolò è occasione di grande imbarazzo per i suoi clienti. L'affetto (e la riconoscenza) per il defunto li ha spinti a presenziare, convinti che sarebbe stata una cerimonia per pochi intimi, e invece si ritrovano a comporre una folla di volti noti e celebrità. Perfino il prete che officia la funzione conosceva *bene* il caro estinto.

Da qui prende avvio questo breve romanzo molto divertente, molto caustico, molto british.

4 stelline "soltanto" perché non credo che si possa apprezzare appieno la feroce ironia contro la chiesa anglicana se non si è nati e cresciuti o quantomeno ci si è trasferiti da un bel po' in UK.

LW says

E che cerimonia...

Navata laterale , panche sul fondo della chiesa
celebrazione funebre di un massaggiatore dal caldo tocco, affollata dalla crème de la crème di Londra(e nel programma è incluso un preoccupante assolo di sax...)

Una scrittrice molto acclamata notando le sigarette,sussurro':

" Si puo' fumare ".

Il suo accompagnatore scosse il capo.

" Non credo".

" Non c'è il cartello, è quello là ?"

Cercando gli occhiali, scrutò una targa attaccata ad una colonna.

" Credo che sia una stazione della Via Crucis " rispose l'altro.

" Ah sì? Comunque all'entrata ho visto un posacenere ".

" Quella era l'acquasantiera".

Quando si dice dimestichezza religiosa :D

Mara says

Un funerale, un prete, e i segreti dei personaggi dello spettacolo : un racconto brillante, divertente, ma al tempo stesso inquietante, in cui ci si trova sommersi da pettegolezzi, scheletri nell'armadio dei partecipanti al triste evento. Una critica dei riti e miti della società'. Si legge di un fiato.

Karina says

The thing about reading Alan Bennett is that, once you've heard him speak, or recite his stories, anything you read thereafter you hear in his voice. It's most peculiar and quite wonderful to hear his wry Yorkshire tones reading this to me, whilst reading from the pages.

This is a sharp, wryly amusing tale of a young man's memorial service - not promising material I'd have thought, but in Bennett's hands it's a wonder. TV stars, judges, senior civil servants and junior ministers all attend, expecting there to be few attenders, but find it packed both inside the church with other mourners and outside with papparazzi and autograph hunters. All of them wonder what the others are doing there, how they know Clive...and does anyone else guess in what capacity they themselves knew Clive? (Biblical pun intentional)

Just superb.

Stef Smulders says

First story: absolutely hilarious, brilliant timing in revealing the details. Second story: funny, absurd. Third one: more of a tragical story, difficult to get in to, the author switches voices too abruptly, but along the way it gets better.

minnie says

If you like Alan Bennett you'll like these three stories, the second one Miss Fozzard finds her feet being the lightest.

'A woman? I said, 'In chiropody? Isn't that unusual?' 'No,'he said,'not nowadays.The barriers are coming down in chiropody as well as everything else.

She said, 'Call me Mallory.' I said,'Mallory? What sort of name is that? I wouldn't be able to put a sex to it.' She says,'Well I'm Australian.' Strong girl, very capable.And a qualified physiotherapist with a diploma in caring.Its Australian caring but I suppose it'll be the same as ours only minus the bugbear of hypothermia.

The Laying on of Hands ,the first story is about a memorial service for a masseur,when the priest allows the congregation to talk about their departed acquaintance, it all goes cringe inducing, in an Alan Bennett tragicomic kind of way.

Sarah83 L says

Ein kurzer schwarzer Roman über die menschliche Art mit Problemen umzugehen.
Sehr empfehlenswert.

Cecily says

A **very** short story that was originally published in the London Review of Books, and is typically Bennett.

It is set in the moments before, after, and mainly during, the memorial service for Clive, a young man who died in Peru a few months earlier. The fashionable London church is filled with a group of diverse but mostly famous or important friends, most of whom didn't realise Clive was also a friend of the others.

Bennett affectionately and humourously highlights the foibles and hypocrisy of modern society, the church and celebrity culture, particularly the social awkwardness that conflict can trigger. Being Bennett, the underlying themes and revelations are no surprise, but that didn't detract from my enjoyment.

Vignettes from the story:

* A soap had shocked its audience when a main character raped his mother, but the actor assured chat show hosts that he was a pussy-cat in real life, and this was exemplified by the fact that "within minutes of the maternal rape, he could be found on another channel picking out the three items of antique furniture he would invest in were his budget limited to £500."

* Celebrities' "anxiety must be kept private... They must wait to share their worries discretely with friends or, if with the general public, at a decent price from the newspaper concerned".

* The wry advantages of separating the funeral and memorial service: "the finality of death mitigated by staggering it over two stages", and the advantages of calling a memorial service a "celebration": "the marrying of the valedictory with the festive convenient on several grounds. For a start, it made grief less obligatory... [and] also allowed the congregation to dress up and not down, so that though the millinery might be more muted, one could have been forgiven... for thinking this was a wedding not a wake."

* A cleric reminiscing about the old "don't ask, don't tell" approach to gay priests, favoured "dry, ascerbic and, of course, unavowed; A E Houseman the type that he approved of, minus the poetry, of course, and (though this was less important), minus the atheism."

* "Father Jolliffe was Anglican but with Romish inclinations that were not so much doctrinal as ceremonial and certainly sartorial."

* A priest looking at his flock "cast professionally loving glances... on his pink and generous face, an expression of settled benevolence."

* "His faith was real enough, though so supple and riddled with irony that God was no more exempt from censure than the Archbishop of Canterbury."

* "Funeral tears rarely flow for anyone other than the person crying them."

* Some mourners went on to "a new restaurant that had opened in a converted public lavatory". I would like to think this an amusing fiction, but I can't help thinking that such an establishment may already exist.

The only jarring note is that although this is mostly written in the past, several times a sentence starts in the past but slips, weirdly, into the present. It happens often enough that I assume it's deliberate, but I found it distracting and annoying: "First up **was** an actress... who ascends the stairs", and "One of these... **was** Father Jolliffe who **is** professional".

On a more positive linguistic note, I was amused by this (somewhat graphic) anecdote:

"He learned that words mattered, once having been in bed with an etymologist whose ejaculation had been indefinitely postponed when Clive (on being asked if he was about to come too) had murmured, 'Hopefully'. In lieu of discharge, the etymologist had poured his frustrated energy into a short lecture on neologisms which Clive had taken so much to heart he had never said 'hopefully' again."

Connie says

"The Laying of Hands" and two additional short stories were included in this small book. The title story is a satirical piece about a memorial service for a masseur who has died at a young age. The church is filled with his clients, many of them celebrities, who offer special memories of the deceased. I really can't imagine people divulging very personal information at a church service so it didn't seem totally realistic. But it worked well as a humorous story.

"Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet" shows a woman living a boring life working in a department store, and acting as a caregiver for her brother who is recovering from a stroke. Her podiatrist adds some excitement to her life!

"Father! Father! Burning Bright" features a son at his dying father's bedside. The son always felt that he had not lived up to his father's expectations. I didn't like the attitudes of the characters in the family and hospital staff, so I found the story to be more sad than humorous.

3 stars overall.

Pat says

Clive muore in Perù. A Londra la commemorazione. Sono molti a partecipare. Lo conoscevano molto bene, e così lo conosceva anche padre Jolliffe. Sì, allo stesso modo.

Clive già da piccolo aveva le mani che emanavano un prodigioso calore. Se ne vergognava. Poi, scoprì che il suo non era un difetto, ma un dono. Un dono che valeva oro.

Si spendono parole e applausi per il defunto Clive. Di cosa è morto? Meglio non saperlo, perché solo il dubbio che la sua morte abbia un nome fa cadere nell'angoscia più profonda tutti quanti.

Commemorando commemorando, si fa un viaggio intorno al corpo di Clive. Clive dal tocco corroborante.

Clive che non è solo Clive, ma anche Max, Bunny, Alex, Toby, Denis, Philip, e anche Betty.

Miss Wishart, non lo conosce ma è lì perché lei va a tutti i funerali. Non si è mai divertita tanto.

La funzione è finita. Ipocrisia e bassezza immergono le dita nell'acquasantiera, si genuflettono rispettosamente. Cala il sipario e si cambia fondale. Amen.

Ho anche sghignazzato... ma l'amarezza non manca. Perfidia di gran class nella penna di Bennett.

Jacob says

February 2012

A man stands vigil at his dying father's hospital bed, for all the good that does him (or his father). A woman finds a new chiropodist. In the title story, the memorial service of a popular masseuse who provided various other services draws together a rather famous list of mourners--most of whom are *very* keen (and concerned) to find out how he died.

All charming, comical, and a bit sad...and I think "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet" might be the first story I've read about podiatry, so that's something.

Alexander Rolfe says

I actually threw this brand new hardback in the trash when I finished it. Felt good to take even a single copy of this wretched book out of circulation.

Jaroslav Zanon (Adrenalibri) says

Come sempre Bennet riesce a divertire in modo intelligente e accattivante. Se non avete mai letto nulla di suo, fatelo!

Margherita Dolcevita says

I funerali, non si sa bene per quale motivo, hanno sempre un risvolto comico che balza agli occhi degli spettatori non coinvolti. Quando poi non sono proprio funerali ma solo commemorazioni, l'ingombrante presenza della bara viene a mancare e ci si può anche rilassare di più.

100 paginette divertenti, acute, brillanti, la miseria umana viene messa in scena senza alcun pudore e senza alcuna remora; il libro è una come grossa fotografia in cui Bennett si concentra avidamente sui dettagli più insignificanti e meno visibili, *the big picture* siamo capaci di vederlo tutti, concentrarsi sulle minuzie e sulle piccole meschinità non è da tutti, no.
