



**Humouring the English Reader:
Readerly involvement in Alan Bennett's Prose Fiction**

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Although Alan Bennett is better known as a dramatist, his prose has always been regarded as both concise and witty. He indeed manages to conjure up entire fictional worlds with short and striking sentences. To do so, he resorts to two major techniques: presupposition – mostly based on shared knowledge – and the juxtaposition of incongruous elements (see Jeffries, 2010).

Although these techniques can indeed elicit readerly involvement (when readers do indeed share the author's knowledge of the world or if they are piqued by his stylistic dexterity) they may also have opposite effects. Some readers may indeed feel distanced.

In either case, it seems that Alan Bennett keeps the reader hovering between familiarity and estrangement, and this, as will be defended in this presentation, accounts for his unwavering popularity.

Our presentation will be based on of *Talking Heads* and *The Uncommon Reader* with some incursions into some of the author's short-stories; especially *Smut*.

References

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