

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT FLAP)

In *Breaking Bread with the Dead*, a gifted scholar draws us into close and sympathetic engagement with texts from across the ages, including the work of Anita Desai, Henrik Ibsen, Jean Rhys, Simone Weil, Edith Wharton, Amitav Ghosh, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Italo Calvino, and many more.

By hearing the voices of the past, we can expand our consciousness, our sympathies, and our wisdom far beyond what our present moment can offer.



ALAN JACOBS is Distinguished Professor of Humanities in the Honors Program at Baylor University. He has published fifteen books and writes for publications such as *The Atlantic*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Christian Century*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

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Jacket images: *Portrait of Maria Adelaide of France in Turkish-style clothes* by Jean-Étienne Liotard, c. 1753. Artepics/Alamy Stock Photo; (books in a bookshelf) Michael Kai/Getty Images
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Praise for **BREAKING BREAD WITH THE DEAD**

“Alan Jacobs has given us a toolbox stocked with concepts that balance the pop of a self-help book with the depth of a college seminar. *Breaking Bread with the Dead* is an invitation, but even more than that, an emancipation: from the buzzing prison of the here and now, into the wide-open field of the past.”

—ROBIN SLOAN,
author of *Sourdough*

“Alan Jacobs captures the nervous joy of helping students discover that writers of ‘the long ago and far away’ can mitigate the feeling of unmoored loneliness that afflicts so many young people today. Never scolding or didactic, *Breaking Bread with the Dead* is a compassionate book about the saving power of reading and a moving account of how writers of the past can help us cope in the frantic present.”

—ANDREW DELBANCO,
author of *The War Before the War*

“A beautiful case for reading old books as a way to cultivate personal depth in shallow times. *Breaking Bread with the*

Dead is timely and timeless—the perfect ending to the trilogy Alan Jacobs began with *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* and continued with *How to Think*. I’ve stolen so much from these books. So will you.”

—AUSTIN KLEON,
bestselling author of *Steal Like an Artist*

“A provocative self-help book that challenges conventional wisdom about why we read and where it can bring us. We are distracted and today our reading, from link to link, has left us light. We need engagement and, most of all, we need the grounding and weight from knowing our past. This elegant book moved me, especially when it led me to rethink time with my mentors and how they taught me, to paraphrase Wordsworth, what to love and how to love. On so many pages I found things I know I will carry forward.”

—SHERRY TURKLE,
professor of social studies at MIT
and bestselling author of *Reclaiming Conversation* and *Alone Together*

Praise for **HOW TO THINK**

“Absolutely splendid . . . essential.”

—DAVID BROOKS,
The New York Times

“Wise and delightful.”

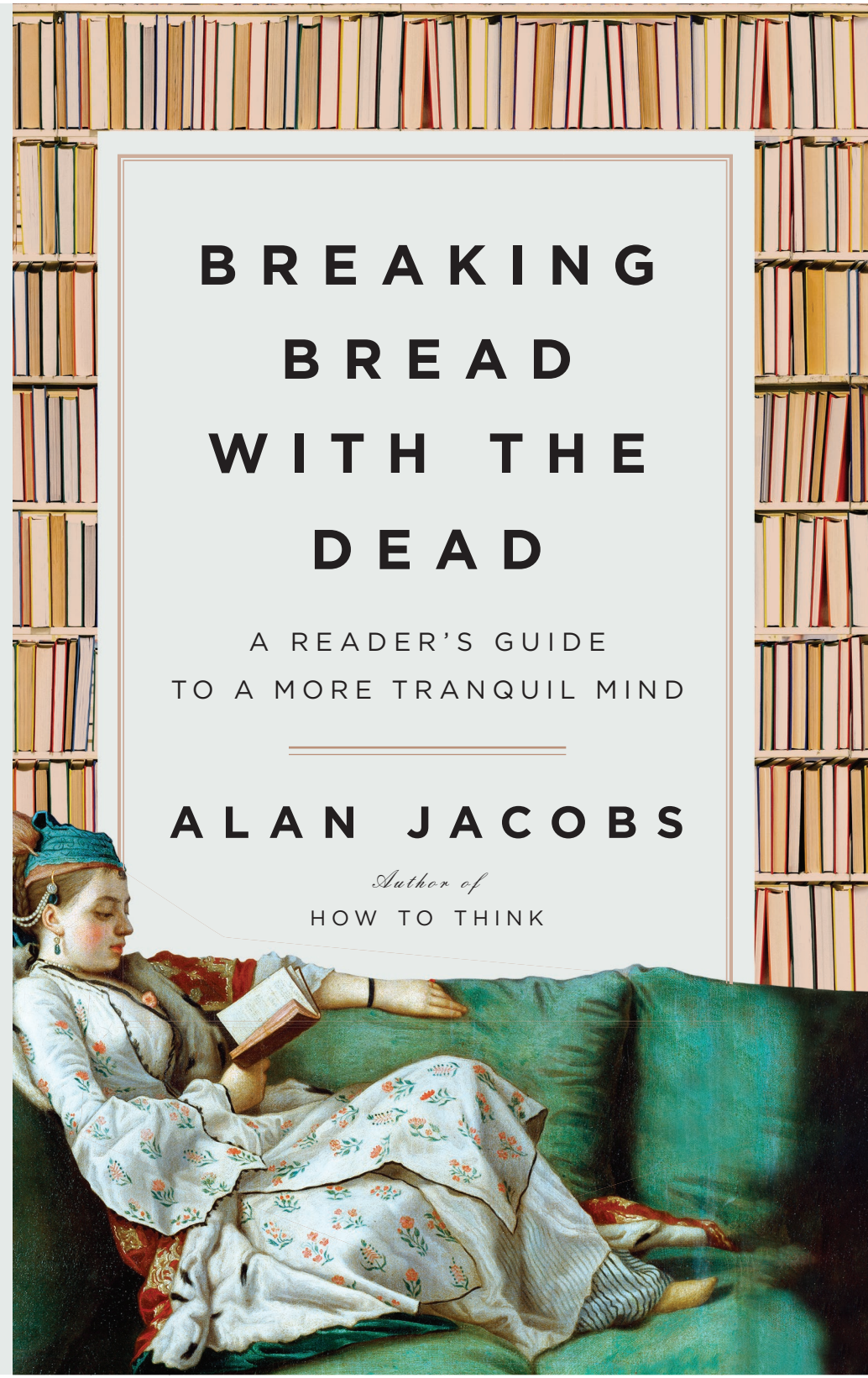
—THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“Wonderful . . . a lively antidote to magical thinking.”

—CHRISTIANITY TODAY



ALAN JACOBS
BREAKING BREAD
WITH THE DEAD



U.S. \$25.00
CANADA \$34.00

FROM THE AUTHOR OF *HOW TO THINK* AND *THE PLEASURES OF READING IN AN AGE OF DISTRACTION*, A LITERARY GUIDE TO ENGAGING WITH THE VOICES OF THE PAST TO STAY SANE IN THE PRESENT

W. H. Auden once wrote that “art is our chief means of breaking bread with the dead.” In his brilliant and compulsively readable new treatise, *Breaking Bread with the Dead*, Alan Jacobs shows us that engaging with the strange and wonderful writings of the past might help us live less anxiously in the present—and increase what Thomas Pynchon once called our “personal density.”

Today we are battling too much information in a society changing at lightning speed, with algorithms aimed at shaping our every thought—plus a sense that history offers no resources, only impediments to overcome or ignore. The modern solution to our problems is to surround ourselves only with what we know and what brings us instant comfort. Jacobs’s answer is the opposite: to be in conversation with, and challenged by, those from the past who can tell us what we never thought we needed to know.

What can Homer teach us about force? How does Frederick Douglass deal with the massive blind spots of America’s Founding Fathers? And what can we learn from modern authors who engage passionately and profoundly with the past? How can Ursula K. Le Guin show us truths about Virgil’s female characters that Virgil himself could never have seen?

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