

# ALAN JACOBS

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## Education

- Ph.D., University of Virginia (1987)
- B.A., University of Alabama (1980)

## Teaching

### Current position and employment history

I am currently (since June 2013) Distinguished Professor of the Humanities in the Honors Program of Baylor University. Before that I was Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English at Wheaton College. I was promoted to Professor in 1999, after promotion to Associate Professor in 1992; I joined the Wheaton faculty in 1984. I am a Contributing Editor of *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society* and a Correspondent for the Technology Channel of *The Atlantic*.

### Other teaching and administrative experience

*Teaching:* Visiting Writer, Seattle Pacific University MFA Program in Creative Writing (2009); Visiting professor, Regent College Graduate School, Vancouver, British Columbia, Summer 2006; Visiting professor, Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) Seminary, Igbaja, Kwara State, Nigeria (Summer 1991).

*Administrative:* Coordinator, Wheaton College Faculty Faith and Learning Program (1999-2006); Director, Wheaton-in-England (summer study abroad program) 2000 and 1996; Co-director, Wheaton-in-England 2011 and 1994.

### Teaching and scholarly interests

Modern British and British Commonwealth literature; Christian theology and literature; literature and religion; literary theory and the history of criticism; technologies of reading, writing, and research.

## Publications: Books

- *How to Think: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Convergent Books, forthcoming 2017).
- *The Year of Our Lord 1943: Christian Humanism and Total War* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2018).
- *The Book of Common Prayer: a Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- Critical edition of W. H. Auden's *For the Time Being: a Christmas Oratorio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
- *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Critical edition of W. H. Auden's *The Age of Anxiety* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). A *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title for 2011.
- *Wayfaring: Essays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
- *Looking Before and After: Testimony and the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
- *Original Sin: A Cultural History* (San Francisco: Harper, and London: SPCK, 2008). Korean and Slovenian translations are forthcoming.
- *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (San Francisco: Harper, and London: SPCK, 2005). Winner of the John Pollock Award for Christian Biography, 2006. Christianity Today 2006 Book Award, History/Biography category. German translation, *Der Mann Aus Narnia* (Johannis Verlag), 2007.
- *Shaming the Devil: Essays in Truth-telling* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). October main selection, the Anglican Book Club.
- *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder and New York: Westview Press, 2001), hardcover and paperback.
- *A Visit to Vanity Fair and Other Moral Essays* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001). Co-Winner, Christianity Today 2002 Book Award, Christianity and Culture category. Audio version (read by the author) produced by Mars Hill Audio in 2002.
- *What Became of Wystan: Change and Continuity in Auden's Poetry* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998). Paperback edition 1999.
- *Must Christianity be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice, and Theology*, ed. with Kenneth R. Chase (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003).

## Publications: Articles in Books

- "Auden's Theology," in *Auden in Context*, ed. Anthony Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013).
- "The Chronicles of Narnia," in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis*, eds. Rob MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 265-280.
- "Chinua Achebe: Storytellers and Interpreters," in *The Force of Tradition: Response and Resistance in Literature, Religion, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Donald Marshall (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 255-268.

- “Afterword,” *Must Christianity be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice, and Theology*, ed. Kenneth R. Chase and Alan Jacobs (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 224-236.
- “Bakhtin and the Hermeneutics of Love,” in *Bakhtin and Religion: a Feeling for Faith*, ed. Susan M. Felch and Paul J. Contino (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2001), 25-46.
- “Auden and the Dream of Public Poetry,” in *Literature and the Renewal of the Public Sphere*, ed. Susan VanZanten Gallagher and M. D. Walhout (London: Macmillan, 2000), 83-105.
- “The Nightmare of History Revisited: Andre Brink’s *An Instant in the Wind*,” in *Postcolonial Literature and the Biblical Call to Justice*, ed. Susan VanZanten Gallagher (University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 183-97.
- “Literature and the Bible: British Commonwealth Literature,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).
- “Adam Naming the Animals,” “Elijah,” “Elisha,” “Joseph the Patriarch,” and “The Transfiguration of Jesus,” in *Dictionary of the Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. David L. Jeffrey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 537-38, 233-34, 235-36, 414-16, 773-75.
- “Psychological Criticism” and “Deconstruction,” in *Christian Perspectives on Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Leland Ryken and Clarence Walhout (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 94-124, 172-98.

## Publications: Articles in Academic and Literary Journals

- “Ecclesial Plurality,” forthcoming in *Pro Ecclesia*
- “From Projection to Promise: A Small Ethics Towards the Future,” forthcoming in *The Hedgehog Review*
- “Campus Protests and the Mythical Core of Culture,” forthcoming in *The New Atlantis*
- “When Character No Longer Counts,” *National Affairs* 31 (Spring 2017), 92-100.
- “Renewing the University,” *National Affairs* 28 (Summer 2016), 3-19.
- “Attending to Technology: Theses for Disputation,” *The New Atlantis* 48 (Winter 2016), 16-45.
- “Miss Marple and the Problem of Modern Identity,” *The New Atlantis* 47 (Fall 2015), 18-30.
- “The Witness of Literature: A Genealogical Sketch,” *The Hedgehog Review* 17:2 (Summer 2015), 64-77.
- “Fantasy and the Buffered Self,” *The New Atlantis* 41 (Winter 2014), 3-18.
- “Christianity and the Future of the Book,” *The New Atlantis* 33 (Fall 2011), 19-36.
- “Understanding McLuhan,” *The New Atlantis* 31 (Spring 2011), 123-135.
- “The Ambiguous Utopia of Iain M. Banks,” *The New Atlantis* 25 (Summer 2009), 45-58.
- “In the Garden,” *Cabinet* 31 (Fall 2008), 69-73.
- “On Charitable Teaching,” *The Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 11:2 (Autumn 2007), 13-24.
- “Paganism and Literature,” *Christianity and Literature* 56:4 (Summer 2007), 667-80.

- “Principle, Narrative, Commandment,” *Christianity and Literature* 56:4 (Summer 2007), 681-90.
- “Donald Davie: 1922-1995,” *The American Scholar* Autumn 1997, 579-84.
- “Lives of the Essayists,” *Cimarron Review* 112 (July 1995), 115-19.
- “Milbank and the Institutional Situation of Theology,” *Arachne* 2:1 (1995), 116-123.
- “Auden’s Local Culture,” *The Hudson Review* Winter 1995, 543-68.
- “Diagnosing Christopher’s Case: Smart’s Readers and the Authority of Pentecost,” *Renascence* XLVI:2 (Winter 1994), 83-103.
- “Auden at the Opera,” *The American Scholar* Spring 1994, 287-94.
- “Auden and Merton at the Movies,” *English Language Notes* XXVIII:4 (June 1991), 45-56.
- “The Social Life of Lyric Poetry: Davie, Milosz, Auden,” *Christianity and Literature* 40:3 (Spring 1991), 277-98.
- “The Unnatural Practices of Stanley Fish,” *South Atlantic Review* 55:4 (November 1990), 87-97.
- “Beyond Romanticism: Auden and the Choice of Tradition,” *Religion and Literature* 21:2 (Summer 1989), 61-77 .
- “The Values of Literary Study: Deconstruction and Other Developments,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* XVI:4 (July 1987), 373-82.

## Publications: Online Writing

- My work for the Technology Channel of *The Atlantic*: <http://www.theatlantic.com/alan-jacobs>
- My blog, “Text Patterns,” on technologies of reading, writing, and research, at *The New Atlantis*: <http://text-patterns.thenewatlantis.com/>
- A scholarly/creative project made up of texts and images, “The Gospel of the Trees”: <http://www.gospelofthetrees.net/>

## Publications: Essays and Essay-Reviews in Other Periodicals

- “Filth Therapy: A Cunning Word,” *Comment* 35:2, Summer 2017, 28-36.
- “Narrating the City (Past and Present),” *Education and Culture*: <https://thebestschools.org/review/golden-hill/>
- “Automata, Animal-Machines, and Us,” *Education and Culture*: <http://www.thebestschools.org/review/the-restless-clock/>
- “Habits of Mind in an Age of Distraction,” *Comment* 34:2, Summer 2016, 38-46.
- “The Watchmen: What Became of the Christian Intellectuals?” *Harper’s*, August 2016, 54-60.
- “The Centrifugal Experience of Knowledge,” *Books & Culture*, July/August 2016, 35-38.
- “The Two Cultures, Then and Now,” *Books & Culture*, March/April 2014, 35-38.
- “Percy and Sagan in the Cosmos,” *Books & Culture*, March/April 2013, 19-22.

- “Just-So Stories,” *Books & Culture*, January/February 2013, 19-22.
- “The Man Who Delivered the Computer,” *Books & Culture*, September/October 2012, 35-38.
- “So Blessed a Liturgy” (on the Book of Common Prayer), *Books & Culture*, March/April 2012, 9-12.
- “The Ghost Writer” (on Iain Sinclair), *Books & Culture*, November/December 2011, 20-24. German translation, “Der Geisterbeschwörer: Unterwegs mit Iain Sinclair,” in *Merkur*, 2012 Heft 758:630-37.
- “We Can’t Teach Students to Love Reading,” *The Chronicle Review*, July 31, 2011.  
<http://chronicle.com/article/We-Cant-Teach-Students-to/128400/>
- “A Prophet Wrongly Honored” (on Terry Eagleton), *First Things*, June/July 2011, 21-26.
- “Overloaded” (on Ann Blair), *Books & Culture*, May/June 2011, 19-22.
- “The Poet’s Nature Subdued” (on W. H. Auden), *Books & Culture*, March/April 2011, 19-22.
- “The Idea of the Book,” *Books & Culture*, November/December 2010, 35-38.
- “Man of Sorrows” (on Samuel Johnson), *Books & Culture*, January/February 2010, 30-31.
- “Beyond the Wild Wood” (on Kenneth Graeme), *First Things*, October 2009, 32-36.
- “Choose Your Own Adventure,” *Books & Culture*, September/October 2009, 9-10.
- “Blessed Are the Green of Heart,” *First Things*, May 2009, 19-22.
- “Gardening and Governing,” *Books & Culture*, March/April 2009, 18-21.
- “The Way, the Truth, and Philip Jenkins,” *First Things*, March 2009, 13-15.
- “A Religion for Atheists,” *First Things*, February 2009, 20-21.
- “The Poet’s Prose” (on W. H. Auden), *Books & Culture*, January/February 2009, 39-40.
- “Do-It-Yourself Tradition,” *First Things*, January 2009, 27-32.
- “The Life of Trees,” *Books & Culture*, July/August 2008, 14-17.
- “Amis Amiss,” *First Things*, June/July 2008.
- “Too Much Faith in Faith,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2008.
- “The Youngest Brother’s Tale” (review-essay on *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*), *Books & Culture*, September/October 2007, 47-50.
- “On the Recent Publication of Kahlil Gibran’s Collected Works,” *First Things*, November 2007, 19-21.
- “In Search of Eden,” *First Things*, February 2007, 26-30.
- “To Be A Christian College,” *First Things*, April 2006, 22-26.
- “Bran Flakes and Harmless Drudges,” *Books & Culture*, January/February 2006, 23-26.
- “Opportunity Costs,” *Books & Culture*, November/December 2005, 22-24.
- “The Professor, the Christian, and the Storyteller” (on C. S. Lewis), *Boston Globe Ideas* page, December 4, 2005.
- “Into the Wonder,” *Christianity Today*, December 2005. Reprinted in *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2005*, ed. Philip Zaleski (Harper San Francisco, 2006).

- “A Narnia C. S. Lewis Might Love,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 05, 2005.
- “Robert Alter’s Faithfulness,” *First Things*, August/September 2005, 22-26.
- “City Poet” (on James Agee), *Boston Globe Ideas* page, September 25, 2005.
- “Apocalyptic President?” *Boston Globe Ideas* page, April 4, 2004.
- “A Bible for Everyone,” *First Things*, December 2003, 10-13.
- “What Narrative Theology Forgot,” *First Things*, August/September 2003, 25-30.
- “Leon Kass and the Genesis of Wisdom,” *First Things*, June/July 2003, 30-35.
- “The Devil in Scotland,” *The Weekly Standard*, March 31, 2003, 33-36.
- “The Re-Invention of Love,” *Books & Culture*, March/April 2003, 10-13.
- “Computer Control: The Virtues of Resistance,” *Books & Culture*, September/October 2002.
- “Computer Control: Life among the Cyber-Amish,” *Books & Culture*, July/August 2002, 14-22.
- “Computer Control: Who’s In Charge,” *Books & Culture*, May/June 2002, 16-22.
- “Shame the Devil,” *Books & Culture* March/April 2002.
- “Wole Soyinka’s Outrage,” *Books & Culture*, November/December 2001.
- “Dorothy Osborne,” *The Weekly Standard*, December 10, 2001.
- “Auden and the Limits of Poetry,” *First Things*, August 2001, 26-32.
- “Narrating Ethics,” *First Things*, May 2001, 37-43.
- “The Devil’s Party” (on Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*), *The Weekly Standard*, October 23, 2000, 31-34.
- “The Only Honest Man: Jean-Jacques Rousseau,” *Books & Culture*, May/June 2000, 11-16. Reprinted in *The Best Christian Writing 2001*, ed. John Wilson (Harper San Francisco, 2001).
- “George Eliot: Good without God,” *First Things*, April 2000, 50-53.
- “Harry Potter’s Magic,” *First Things*, January 2000.
- “The God of the Bestseller List,” *The Weekly Standard*, December 5, 1999.
- “An Entangled Thing,” *The Oxford American*, 29 (Sept./Oct. 1999), 13-16.
- “Preachers without Poetry,” *First Things*, August/September 1999.
- “Killer Over the Rainbow,” *The Oxford American* 27/28 (1999), 24.
- “Funeral at Eleven,” *The Oxford American*, 26 (1999), 65.
- “The Editor and the Exile,” *Books & Culture*, November/December 1998, 42-44.
- “The First Indian Nukes,” *The Weekly Standard*, June 1, 1998, 16-17.
- “Narnia Business: C. S. Lewis at 100,” *The Weekly Standard*, April 20, 1998, 31-34.
- “It Ain’t Me, Babe,” *Books & Culture*, May/June 1998, 16-19.
- “What I Was Afraid Of,” *The Oxford American*, 20 (1998), 49-52.
- “God and the Gulag,” *The Weekly Standard*, February 23, 1998, 31-35.

- “Revenge of the Scroll,” *Books & Culture*, January/February 1998, 26-27.
- “A Bible Fit for Children,” *First Things*, May 1997, 22-27.
- “In on the Kill,” *First Things*, February 1997, 17-19.
- “Flags, Traditions, and Charity,” *First Things*, November 1996, 12-13.
- “Martha Nussbaum, Poets’ Defender,” *First Things*, October 1996, 37-41.
- “Camus the Stranger,” *Books & Culture* May/June 1996, 19-22.
- “Mikhail Bakhtin: The Man Who Heard Voices,” *Books & Culture*, January 1996, 24-26.
- “Dowsing in Scripture,” *First Things*, October 1995, 16-18.
- “Give Me That Old Time Hypocrisy,” *The Oxford American*, August/September 1995, 70-71.
- “Still Leaving Birmingham,” *The Oxford American*, May/June 1995, 114-17.
- “Iris Murdoch’s Go(o)d,” *First Things*, February 1995, 32-36.
- “The Second Coming of C. S. Lewis,” *First Things*, November 1994, 27-30.
- “A Tale of Two Stanleys,” *First Things*, May 1994, 12-14.
- “Preferring the Fog,” *Perspectives*, February 1994, 6-8.
- “Signs and Wonders,” *First Things*, December 1993, 5-6.
- “To Read and to Live,” *First Things*, June/July 1993, 24-31.
- “Friendship and its Discontents,” *First Things*, December 1992, 42-46.
- “Suya Wars,” *First Things* May 1992, 17-19.
- “Salman Rushdie Gets Religion,” *First Things*, January 1992, 45-51.
- “David Byrne and the Curse of ‘Lifestyle,’” *First Things*, January 1991, 8-10.
- “Rushdie’s Surprise,” *Reformed Journal*, April 1989, 6-8.

## Publications: Reviews

Approximately seventy-five reviews in many publications, including *The American Scholar*, *Books & Culture*, *First Things*, *The New Atlantis*, *The Oxford American*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Weekly Standard*.

## Lectures and Talks: a representative selection

- “Reading: A Meditation in Two Parts,” lecture for Faculty Development Day, Wheaton College (Illinois), February 2, 2016.
- “What We Talk about When We Talk about Reading,” lecture at Carleton College (Minnesota), September 22, 2015.
- “The Attentive Reader,” lecture given for the Liberal Arts Consortium for Online Learning, Vassar College (New York), November 21, 2014.

- “Religious Reading,” a seminar for congregational rabbis sponsored by the Tikvah Fund, co-led with Michael Fishbane of the University of Chicago, Glen Cove, NY, June 4-6, 2012.
- “The Pleasures of Reading: a Theological Perspective,” the annual Lee Lecture at the University of St. Thomas, Houston Texas, March 6, 2012.
- “Reading as Play and Rest,” lecture for Humanities Week at the University of Notre Dame, March 21, 2012.
- “Writers Save,” annual Drumwright Family Lecture, Honors College of Baylor University, Waco, Texas, November 17, 2011.
- “Writers Save,” lecture at the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, November 15, 2011.
- “Christianity and the Future of the Book,” Jerusalem and Athens Forum, Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts, April 11, 2011.
- “The Wayfaring Mind,” talk sponsored by the Erasmus Institute, at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, April 10, 2011.
- “Christianity and the Future of the Book,” *Celebratio* Lecture, New St. Andrews College, Moscow, Idaho, September 17, 2010.
- “The End of the Book and the Future of Reading,” Intersections Lecture Series, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, January 25, 2010.
- “What’s So Bad About Original Sin?,” lecture for Socrates in the City, Union League Club, New York City, September 19, 2008.
- The Stob Lectures, Calvin College, November 7 and 8, 2006.
- Presentation on “Christian Witness and the Academic Life,” *Christianity Today* fiftieth anniversary meeting, October 26, 2006.
- “C. S. Lewis and the American Culture Wars,” lecture for the Cambridge Forum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, January 18, 2006. (Later broadcast on National Public Radio and C-SPAN’s Book TV.)
- “Can Charitable Reading Be Taught?,” lecture sponsored by the Kuyers Institute for Teaching and Learning, Calvin College, April 19, 2005.
- “Christology and Eros: Bonhoeffer and the Song of Songs,” paper at the annual Society of Biblical Literature conference, San Antonio, Texas, November 22, 2004.
- Forum on Leon Kass’s *The Genesis of Wisdom* (with Leon Kass, George Weigel, and Leon Wieseltier), Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C., June 18, 2003.
- “The Judgment of Grace” and “The Grace of Judgment,” two lectures at the Trinity Arts Conference, Dallas, Texas, June 5-7, 2003.
- “On the Very Idea of the Symbolism of Evil,” Modern Language Association Convention, New Orleans, December 27th, 2001.
- “Shame the Devil,” lecture at the annual *Image* Conference (Conference theme: “Disturbing the Peace: Provocation and Prophecy in Contemporary Arts and Letters”), University of Chicago Divinity School, November 10, 2001.



- “Auden in Berlin,” lecture at the Chicago Humanities Festival X, November 5, 1999. “Chinua Achebe: Storytellers and Interpreters,” lecture at Loyola College (Maryland), October 1996.
- “Apologetics in Contemporary America,” First Annual Wheaton College Theology Conference, March 1992.
- “The Ethical Limitations of Historicism,” Midwest Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, November 1989.
- “The Traditional Canon” (panel presentation) and “Where We Stand and What We Stand For” (closing address), Christian College Coalition Conference on Literature, Eastern Nazarene College, Quincy, Massachusetts, November 1987.