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In Memoriam: Jared Lobdell

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



Abstract

Personal reminiscences of the scholar and author.

Additional Keywords

Lobdell, Jared

NOTES AND LETTERS

IN MEMORIAM: JARED LOBDELL

RICHARD C. WEST

I FIRST MET JARED CHARLES LOBDELL (29 November 1937-22 March 2019) when he turned up at a meeting of the Tolkien Society at the University of Wisconsin-Madison sometime in the late 1960s, he having seen one of this student group's posters in a local used bookstore. I already knew of him from his many contributions to the *National Review* and other magazines: short articles on Tolkien and C.S. Lewis and reviews of books by and about these authors. He became a frequent attendee of our little local group and also of conferences on the Inklings, including many Mythcons in the 1970s and 1980s. He could be quirky in some of his literary criticism; he would argue, for instance, that the Third Age of Middle-earth was a more innocent time when the seven deadly sins were unknown, and I don't think I ever changed his mind that there are plenty of examples of, say, *superbia* (not only Denethor is arrogant) and *avaritia* (not only Dwarves are greedy), and Wormtongue at least shows carnal *luxuria*. But he was always an interesting and forthright presenter and discussant, and in most instances a careful scholar, erudite and penetrating.

While he wrote poetry and fanfic (his short story "Seeking the Lord" is set in the world of Tolkien's "New Shadow"), he will be remembered primarily for his nearly thirty academic books. (He had a B.A. from Yale, M.B.A. and M.S. from UW-Madison, and Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon.) His books are on disparate subjects (mostly on American history), but he more than achieved his ambition to publish at least one major study on each of the three main Inklings. He considered Tolkien's oeuvre in depth in *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Eerdmans, 1981), and revised and expanded this as *The World of the Rings: Language, Religion, and Adventure in Tolkien* (Open Court, 2004). He looks at the broad range of traditions that influenced Tolkien (classical, medieval, and contemporary, especially the Edwardian fiction that Jared himself so loved) in *The Rise of Tolkienian Fantasy* (Open Court, 2005). He examined major works by Lewis in *The Scientifiction Novels of C. S. Lewis: Space and Time in the Ransom Stories* (McFarland, 2004) and *Eight Children in Narnia: The Making of a Children's Story*

(Open Court, 2016). In his first edition of *A Tolkien Compass* (Open Court, 1975), an early collection of essays on Tolkien selected mostly from the first two Conferences on Middle-earth organized by the late Jan Howard Finder, Jared made a coup in obtaining permission to include Tolkien's own "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*" for its initial publication. My own favorite among his books is his compilation of *The Detective Fiction Reviews of Charles Williams, 1930-1935* (McFarland, 2003), since it not only rescues these reviews from newspapers not easy to access, but they are good examples that Williams could write without "clotted glory" when he chose and had excellent critical acumen.

Jared was a strong presence wherever he went, and he will be missed. Condolences to his beloved wife Janie.

RICHARD C. WEST has published many articles on J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and other authors of fantasy and science fiction. He was Scholar Guest of Honor at Mythcon 45. He is now retired from the University of Wisconsin-Madison as Senior Academic Librarian Emeritus.

JARED LOBDELL IN *MYTHLORE* AND OTHER SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Lobdell, Jared. "Detective Fiction as Mythic Comedy." *Mythcon XVI, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, 1985*. Ed. Diana Pavlac. Altadena: Mythopoeic Society, 1985. 146–153.

Overview of the detective or mystery story, particularly its development as a genre during the Golden Age between the wars when Williams wrote reviews, and when other close professional, familial, philosophical, or Oxonian ties existed between the Inklings and British mystery writers of this time. Relates the comedic anagnorisis of the resolution of the mystery to Tolkien's concept of eucatastrophe and concludes that mystery can be seen as "a form of mythic comedy, as presenting the myth of deliverance."

Lobdell, Jared. "Inklings, a King, and an Unsurprising Prize: *The Inklings and King Arthur* [Review essay]." *Mythlore* 37.2 (#134) (2019): 170–186.

Lengthy review/essay on *The Inklings and King Arthur*, edited by Sørina Higgins.

Patterson, Nancy-Lou. "Edwardian, Philologist, Christian, Genius." *Mythlore* 9.2 (#32) (1982): 32–34.

A review of Lobdell's *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings*.

