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A Publication History of The Complete Guide to Middle-earth by Robert Foster

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A Publication History of *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth* by Robert Foster

Of the many reference works devoted to the Middle-earth writings of J. R. R. Tolkien, that with the longest history of publication is one which has been consistently well-received:¹ the book now published under the title *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth*, written by Robert Foster. It is effectively a dictionary of Middle-earth characters, places, etc. Christopher Tolkien himself often referred to the *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth*,² and commended it as ‘an admirable work of reference’³—high praise from someone with an encyclopedic knowledge of his father’s works. The following presentation describes the publication history of this ‘admirable work’.

There are two editions proper:⁴

1. *A Guide to Middle-earth*. This first edition proper of 1971 was first published by Mirage Press, and subsequently by Ballantine Books.
2. *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth*. This second edition proper of 1978 incorporated material from *The Silmarillion*, and was first published by Del Rey Books, an imprint of Ballantine Books.

A particularly helpful feature distinguishing the Foster *Guide* from others of similar scope has been—from its nascent privately published form through every published edition—the inclusion of page references for the content of each entry. The first (1971) and second (1978) editions proper were both released during that decades-long period in which the pagination of the Ballantine mass market paperback editions of *The Hobbit* and the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* remained unchanged.

During that period, the Ballantine edition of *The Hobbit* retained the same pagination from its publication in 1965 through the 20th impression of 1987; the text was reset in 1988, and has retained that pagination to the present. The hardcover editions of *The Hobbit* were published in five different settings from 1937 to the present, with the current setting established by the 70th Anniversary

1 See Nelson, ‘Review of Foster’, an anecdotal account by Charles Nelson (Professor [Emeritus now] of Language and Literature, Michigan Technical University) of the positive reception of successive editions of the Foster *Guide* in a classroom setting throughout the course of a long teaching career.

2 E.g., in *Unfinished Tales*, 4; 226 n. 11; 284–5 n. 33; *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I*, 6; *The Return of the Shadow*, 284 n. 9; *The Treason of Isengard*, 164; 288 n. 5; and *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 117 n. 1; 278.

3 Tolkien and Tolkien, *Unfinished Tales*, 6.

4 I use ‘edition proper’ throughout to connote an established and copyrighted text (e.g., for the Foster *Guide* texts copyright dated 1971 and 1978) and ‘edition’ alone to connote a published book of a particular format.

Edition of 2007, itself reflecting the third edition proper settings of 1966–74, (UK and US) and 1978 (US) which amongst themselves were identical in pagination. As the Foster *Guide* was keyed solely to the Ballantine paperbacks for *The Hobbit*, this was not an issue for Foster *Guide* references—even had the hardcover edition(s) of *The Hobbit* been referenced, the pagination was the same when both editions proper of the Foster *Guide* were written.

The Ballantine editions of the three individually paginated volumes of the second edition proper of *The Lord of the Rings* retained the same pagination from their initial 1965 publication through their last impressions of 1991–1992; the text was reset in 1993, then reset again—with an updated text—in 2001, with the pagination and text of the latter being used to the present. Relatedly, the three Houghton Mifflin hardcover volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* with the second edition proper text were first published in 1967, with the pagination unchanged through the 21st impression of April 1991. That pagination was also shared by the UK second edition proper three volume hardcovers first published in 1966 by George Allen & Unwin and last reprinted by HarperCollins in 1991. Blackwelder (*Thesaurus*, [vi]) notes that the trade paperbacks of Ballantine (1970, Hammond no. A5i, *Bibliography*, 144–5) and Houghton Mifflin (1978, Hammond no. A5m, *Bibliography*, 151–3) also shared this hardcover pagination; another Houghton Mifflin trade paperback set of 1988 (Hammond no. A5s, *ibid.*, 163–8) did, as well. Two solutions were provided in the two editions proper of the Foster *Guide* for equating the Ballantine paperback pagination to that of the Houghton Mifflin hardcovers of the three volumes. The first edition proper simply provided aligned tables of contents for each volume of the Ballantine and Houghton Mifflin editions ('Concordance', pp. x–xii, Mirage Press ed.). The second edition proper provided a conversion table, 'Appendix C: Conversion of Page References to Houghton Mifflin Editions' (p. 573 in the US 1978 hardcover; p. 569 in the US 2001 and 2003 eds.) for determining the Houghton Mifflin (hence also the Unwin) hardcover page number by using the Ballantine paperback page number and a simple mathematical process. This table is suprisingly accurate, but is not applicable to post-1988 US hardcover editions or post-1991 UK editions. No such conversion table was devised for the UK editions, which naturally included references to various George Allen & Unwin and HarperCollins editions of Tolkien's works (see below). In the US 2001 trade paperback of the Foster *Guide*—which retain the original references to the earlier Ballantine mass market paperbacks—Foster added new references reflecting the pagination of the Del Rey Ballantine 1993 and 2001 settings of *The Lord of the Rings* volumes, the latter of which are still current, as mentioned above. This combination of the stability of pagination in the Ballantine Tolkien editions and the updating of references in the Foster *Guide* has ensured that the page references in the latter have remained consistently useful to readers throughout its long history.

Following is a summary publication history of the two editions proper of the Foster *Guide* and the various formats in which they were published in US editions—the primary line of publication—followed by the UK editions. (I omit discussion of specialty editions and translations.⁵) Much of the following information on the various editions derives from their respective copyright pages. Images of these, of other significant pages, and of dustjackets and covers, may be viewed online.⁶ The focus throughout is bibliographic: the published editions are described, rather than the revision of the content, though the latter is touched upon.

US EDITIONS

THE PRECURSOR: ‘A GLOSSARY OF MIDDLE-EARTH’

A notice of prior publication appears on the copyright pages of all editions of the Foster *Guide*. The most common form of the note begins: ‘Portions of this book have appeared in different form as follows’. There follows a list, in varying degrees of detail, of issues 16 (1966) through 21 (1969) of the fanzine *Niekas*⁷ edited and published by Ed Meškys⁸. A full rendering of the locations of prior publication reads as follows on the copyright page, this exemplar being from the 1971 first edition, first impression, of Mirage Press (see below):

Niekas 16 (June 30, 1966), © 1966 by Ed Meskys [sic *passim*]
Niekas 17 (November, 1966), © 1966 by *Niekas* Publications

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- 5 In 2003 Easton Press published a leather-bound edition of the Foster *Guide*, apparently using the text of the US 2001 trade paperback (see below). Translations have been published in Spanish (*Guía Completa de la Terra Media*, translated by Elias Sarhan [Editorial Minotauro, 1999; Editorial Planeta DeAgostini, 2003]), German (*Das große Mittelerte-Lexikon*, translated by Helmut W. Pesch [Lübbe, 2002]), Polish (*Encyklopedia Śródziemia*, translated by Andrzej Kowalski, Tadeusz Andrzej Olszański, and Agnieszka Sylwanowicz [Wydawnictwo Amber, 2002]), and Hungarian (*Tolkien enciklopédia A-tól Z-ig: a legteljesebb útmutató a Gyűrűk ura világához*, translated by Szántai Zsolt, Réz Ádám, et al. [Szukits, 2002]). The Easton Press and translated editions are all still in print.
- 6 See *ISFDB.ORG* and *TOLKIENBOOKS.US* in *Works Cited* for links to pages on the US editions of the Foster *Guide*.
- 7 See *FANAC.ORG* in *Works Cited* for a link to images of all *Niekas* issues.
- 8 Meškys, for those unfamiliar with the name, is pronounced /meš'kīs/ (š = English ‘sh’), with the rhythm of ‘mesquite’. He defines ‘Niekas’ as Lithuanian for ‘nothing’ in *Niekas* 1: 2, and (quirkily) gives its pronunciation as ‘nye-kus (ye as in yes, us as in we, accent on first syllable)’ in 16: 2. His surname properly includes a caron or haček on the medial ‘s’: his signature (*Niekas* 6: 48) indicates his preferred spelling includes it, though it typically appears without the haček in *Niekas*. Lacking a key for it on his typewriter, its addition would have required tedious manual insertion throughout the text of each issue whilst under time constraints; he added it only infrequently by hand. Mr Meškys passed away 25 July 2021 at the age of 85.

Niekas 18 (Spring, 1967), © 1967 by *Niekas* Publications

Niekas 19 (1968), © 1968 by *Niekas* Publications

Niekas 20 (Fall, 1968), © 1968 by Ed Meskys

Niekas 21 (1969) [sic], © 1969 [sic] by Ed Meskys

Niekas 21 was, in fact, published in 1977, and doesn't include any material written by Robert (or 'Bob') Foster; this inclusion of an erroneously dated '*Niekas* 21 (1969)' originates with the Mirage Press first impression of the first edition, and has been reiterated in all subsequent editions of the Foster *Guide*—this, despite the fact that Foster, in the Introduction to very same edition (p. ix), mentions having published material in only numbers 16–20. *Niekas* numbers 16 through 20 contain two articles attributed to 'Bob Foster': 'A Glossary of Middle-earth: The Astronomy of Middle-earth' (*Niekas* 16: 15–17), and the serialized 'A Glossary of Middle-earth: Geography'⁹ (*Niekas* 17: 14–26; 18: 17–22; 19: 14–20; 20: 15–21). The articles provide definitions (and etymologies where construable) based upon Tolkien's writings available to Foster at the time: *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, several letters from J. R. R. Tolkien to his friend Dick Plotz (all listed on *Niekas* 16: 16), and *The Road Goes Ever On* (*Niekas* 20: 21). Page references are provided in each entry to the then-recently published Ballantine mass market paperback editions of *The Hobbit* (either 1965, Hammond no. A3f or 1966, no. A3g; likely the latter) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1965, no. A5d). The relationship of the entries in this 'Glossary' to the published *Guide* is unmistakable. Ed Meškys encouraged Foster—then a high school student—to publish his 'Glossary' once it was finished and, likely in 1966, introduced Bob Foster to Jack Chalker of Mirage Press.¹⁰ After 'four years of slow labor and frequent revision' (Mirage Press 1971 ed., p. vii), the first edition proper of the *Guide* was published in 1971.

FIRST EDITION PROPER

A Guide to Middle-earth was published in 1971 by Mirage Press, a small publishing house in Baltimore, Maryland, specializing in science fiction editions, the Editorial Director of which was the above-mentioned Jack Chalker. There were four impressions of this first edition: two in 1971, a third in 1973, and a fourth in 1974.

9 Both titles are standardized here to reflect the hyphenate form 'Middle-earth', and the subtitle 'Geography' of the second article, which appears only with its final installment (20: 15). The original titles, as published, were 'A Glossary of Middle Earth: The Astronomy of Middle Earth'; 'A Glossary of Middle Earth' [unnumbered parts 1–3]; and, 'A Glossary of Middle Earth: Geography' [unnumbered part 4]. See *FANAC.ORG* at the end of Works Cited for a link to all issues of *Niekas*.

10 Foster, *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth* (US 2003 hardcover ed.), xiii; Ed Meškys, *The View from Entropy Hall* 12.

1971 Mirage Press Edition

A Guide to Middle-earth. Mirage Press, copyright 1971. Indication of the first impression and its date (other than the copyright date) are not noted as such on the copyright page, but it was published prior to November 1971, the date of the second impression. The page count is xiv, 298. The last page of the edition ([292], titled ‘Two Thousand Copies’) describes the edition, and states the impression comprised 750 numbered hardcover in dustjacket copies and 1250 unnumbered trade paperback copies, though only 743 and 1202, respectively, were printed (see below); no softcover copies were printed after this first impression. The copy number was stamped in ink on the ‘Two Thousand Copies’ page in each of the hardcover copies—my copy is number 375, right in the middle. The paper used is described as ‘acid-neutralized, archival quality’, and is still in good condition. The hardcover is bound in black cloth, the spine stamped in gold, from the top: ‘foster’, ‘a guide to middle-earth’ and the publisher’s logo. Both the trade paperback and hardcover have sewn binding. Six genealogical charts are provided on pages [286]–[291], followed by the ‘Two Thousand Copies’ page on [292]. An illustration on page 145—a line drawing of ‘a cat thing’ as a bookseller amusingly described it to me—is also evidence of the first impression. This sole internal illustration is signed with the initials ‘ΜΣ’ (Greek, equivalent to ‘MS’) or ‘ME’; it may have been drawn by the ‘Mike Symes’ credited for illustrations in *Niekas* 20; the illustration found on 20: 44 is similar in its line-work. The internal illustrator is otherwise uncredited in this edition. The dustjacket is described as printed with ‘four-color lithography process’ and the covers of the trade paperback share the same design, featuring a rather striking wraparound illustration by Tim Kirk. He is credited on the back flap, and his signature is also found on the back cover in the lower left corner. No ISBN is given on the copyright page. The Library of Congress Catalog number listed is 72-94777. The listed price for the hardcover is \$5.95, and that of the trade paperback \$4.00, though the prices were not noted on the dustjacket or cover (as described in Chalker and Owings, *The Science-Fantasy Publishers: A Critical and Bibliographic History*, p. 85, which is quoted in full below).

The second impression is indicated on the copyright page, and dated November 1971. The page count is, as in the first impression, xiv, 298. The last page—[292], titled ‘Five Thousand’, replacing the ‘Two Thousand Copies’ page of the first impression—indicates that ‘approximately’ 5000 copies were printed, and that ‘Earlier editions and printings of this book were numbered’, referring to the hardcovers of the first impression, described above. This second impression is characterized by the following traits: the addition of ‘Second Printing: November 1971’ to the copyright page; the page 145 illustration of ‘a cat thing’ is replaced by an entry for the letter ‘J’ (‘Jolly Cotton’); and the presence of the above-mentioned

‘Five Thousand’ page. The dustjacket is identical to that of the first impression. No ISBN is given on the copyright page. The Library of Congress Catalog number listed is 72-94777. The listed price is \$5.95, though perhaps also not listed on the dustjacket, as with the first impression (see below).

I have not found detailed information on the third and fourth impressions; a terse notice of these is included in a general combined bibliography and critique volume which includes mention of this edition (see Chalker and Owings, below). The 1973 third impression comprised a total of 1112 hardcover in dustjacket copies. The 1974 fourth impression comprised a total of 804 hardcover in dustjacket copies. The two impressions are distinguishable solely by the different prices on their respective dustjackets, \$5.95 for the third of 1973, and \$6.95 for the fourth of 1974. The copyright pages do not indicate the impressions or their dates.

The fourth impression was the last by Mirage Press of *A Guide to Middle-earth*, as Ballantine ‘bought the rights’ to the book in 1974.¹¹ From that point, a note on the copyright pages of US editions published before 2001 indicates ‘This edition published by arrangement with Mirage Press’; this ‘arrangement’ note is not included in the US 2001 and 2003 editions. The George Allen & Unwin editions of 1978, on the other hand, include the notice ‘Published by arrangement with Ballantine Books, a Division of Random House, Inc.’ The later UK editions include no such notice.

The information given by Jack Chalker (former Editorial Director, Mirage Press) and Mark Owings (a bibliographer and former editor at Mirage Press) in *The Science-Fantasy Publishers: A Critical and Bibliographic History* concerning the Mirage Press printings of the first edition of *A Guide to Middle-earth* is unfortunately incomplete, imprecisely worded, and partly incorrect; this has understandably led to further confusion regarding the Mirage Press editions. This entry reads:

A GUIDE TO MIDDLE-EARTH, by Robert Foster, 1971, pp. xiii/291, \$5.95 in cloth, \$4.00 in identical trade paper. Cloth, 1202 copies, trade paper, 743 copies. Jacket by Tim Kirk. Points: The first printing can be told if an illustration is on 145 instead of the “J” entry. The reprints can not be distinguished from each other with the jackets removed. Reprint: Clothbound, Mirage, 1973, 1112 copies; again Mirage, 1974, 804 copies, the latter all at \$6.95. Mass market pb., Del Rey, 1978 and after, updated and reworked under editor Chalker for Del Rey as *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth*, which includes *Silmarillion* published after last Mirage printing, hardcover and paperback, 1978 and after. British edition from Unwin, 1978 and after, uniform with their Tolkien

11 Private correspondence from Del Rey, 15 December 2021.

set. *Complete concordance to The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings keyed to the U.S. paperbacks* (Science-Fantasy Publishers, 285).

The above first impression description of ‘Cloth, 1202 copies, trade paper, 743 copies’ is almost certainly a transposition of the numbers related to the 750 hardcover and 1250 softcover copies noted in first impression copies; thus it seems the first impression ran a bit shy of its goal. No mention is made above of the numbered hardcovers, or of the second impression, though copies of both exist. Ballantine—not Del Rey, which only became an imprint of Ballantine in 1977—began publishing *A Guide to Middle-earth* in 1974 as a mass market paperback; the first ‘1978’ above is an error. *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth* was indeed published by Del Rey Ballantine in 1978 (see below). There is no mention elsewhere of Chalker’s involvement in the revision of the text at any point. The above inaccurate description by Chalker and Owings was further misconstrued by the isfdb.org (*Internet Science Fiction Database*) user(s) whose erroneous note on the first and second impressions was repeated on the tolkienbooks.us website, which presents bibliographic information regarding US editions of Tolkien-related works. (See WORKS CITED for the web addresses for those descriptions.) After Mirage Press effectively ceased publishing in 1975, Chalker became a successful science fiction and fantasy author, with numerous books published from 1976 to 2003. Mr Chalker passed away in 2005.

1974 Ballantine Paperback Edition

A Guide to Middle-earth. Copyright 1971. This first trade edition is a mass market paperback. The format description with impression date reads ‘First Ballantine Books Edition: August 1974’. The first cover design includes an illustration by Tim Kirk, one different than that used in the Mirage Press edition, of what appears to be a hobbit at the bow of a sailing vessel approaching Minas Tirith. The cover design changes at or before the 8th impression of December 1977 to one including the title, etc., on a scroll motif—a long-lasting motif found on all US editions until 2001—and an illustration by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt, copyright 1977 ‘for the 1978 J. R. R. Tolkien Calendar’, elsewhere titled ‘The Return of Gandalf’.¹² The page count is xii, 292. This Ballantine edition comprises at least nine dated impressions, of which several are the 4th (June 1975), 6th (December 1976), 8th (December 1977), and 9th (May 1978). The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-345-24936-4-195. The Library of Congress Catalog number listed is 72-94777, as in the Mirage Press edition. The initial listed price is \$1.50, changing to \$1.95 in June 1975, then to \$2.25 in December 1977 at the latest. Ballantine continued to print this mass

¹² An image of the illustration as printed in the calendar may be viewed here: <https://www.tolkiencalendars.com/BAL1978.html> [accessed 20 December 2021].

market paperback (with a ninth impression of May 1978) even after the publication of the second edition proper hardcover (March 1978), likely to keep inexpensive paperback copies of the work available; a mass market paperback of the second edition proper would not be published until 1979 (see below).

SECOND EDITION PROPER

The second edition proper comprises Foster's thorough revision and considerable expansion of the work, chiefly through the addition of information derived from the 1977 hardcover edition(s) of the first edition proper of *The Silmarillion*. The content is nearly double that of the first edition proper of the *Guide*.

A few statistics relating to the two editions proper will demonstrate the expansion of the content. The first edition proper, found in the Mirage Press and the Ballantine editions, contained a total of 2276 entries. The second edition proper—published in all editions from 1978 onward—contains 3257 entries, 981 of them new. This is an increase of 43 percent in the number of entries. A rough estimate of the content—considering characters per page in two representative editions, the Mirage Press 1971 edition, and the Del Rey Ballantine 1978 edition—shows an increase of 80% in the content of the entries overall. The increase in pages per edition is 93%—this is higher than the estimated increase in content due to the more generous margins in the 1978 hardcover of the second edition proper, as well as the use of the Garamond font, the characters of which are wider than those of the Bodoni font used in the Mirage Press edition. One example of the revision and expansion of a particular entry affected by additional material in *The Silmarillion* is the entry for 'Sauron': the entry in the first edition proper (Mirage Press ed., pp. 226–8) is two pages and four lines in length; in the second edition proper (Del Rey Ballantine 1978 hardcover, pp. 438–42) the entry is three and a half pages in length, a 56% increase in the content of that entry. In addition, the appended material has been expanded. The first edition proper included as appended material only six genealogical charts following the end of the entries (pp. [286]–[291], Mirage Press, 1971 ed.). In the second edition proper represented by the 1978 Del Rey Ballantine hardcover, the content has expanded to include three appendices: a new 'Appendix A: A Chronology of the First Age' (pp. 557–64), 'Appendix B: Genealogical Trees' (pp. 565–[572])—including the six trees from the first edition proper, two of them reworked, and two new trees—along with 'Appendix C: Conversion of Page References to Houghton Mifflin Editions' (p. 573; mentioned above), and an 'About the Author' page (p. 575). These new appendices and author page are included in all subsequent editions of the Foster *Guide*, with the exception of 'Appendix C' being understandably omitted in all UK editions.

1978 Del Rey Ballantine Hardcover Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit to The Silmarillion. Copyright 1971, 1978. This edition is a hardcover in dustjacket, and the first trade edition of this title. ‘The Complete’ in the title—as opposed to the former title’s ‘A’—indicates the new second edition proper, which includes material from *The Silmarillion*, and is included in the title of every subsequent edition. The publisher information reads ‘A Del Rey Book | Published by Ballantine Books’. The format description with impression date reads ‘Revised and Enlarged Edition: March 1978 (hardbound)’. This hardcover—by far the most attractive of the US hardcover editions—is bound in burgundy cloth with gold stamping on the spine, as well as two leaf motifs facing one another stamped on the front cover, with the same two leaf motifs appearing at the head of each letter’s entries—a space between them suggests that the letters themselves were intended to be placed there; the letters are otherwise lacking. The paper is remarkably thick, like a rag paper, and of much higher quality than the Mirage Press or later 2003 Del Rey Ballantine hardcover. My copy has the fore edges untrimmed, though this may simply be an error; torn perforations are visible, so it seems to have been an oversight in trimming the text block, rather than intentional. The dustjacket illustration is credited to Greg and Tim Hildebrandt, copyright 1975 ‘from The 1976 J. R. R. Tolkien Calendar, published by Ballantine Books’, in which it was included as a larger format insert and titled ‘The Fellowship of the Ring’.¹³ This illustration is used in the cover design of all subsequent US editions. On the dustjacket, the wraparound illustration is larger than in later cover designs, roughly four-fifths the lower height of the jacket, with the upper fifth being a pale yellow background. A scroll motif on the front cover—introduced with the 1977 second cover design of the 1974 Ballantine edition—bearing the title, etc., overlaps the yellow background and the upper part of the illustration; some filler text on the back cover is on the yellow background. This appealing jacket design is credited to Don R. Smith and James E. Ramage on the lower back flap. The page count is xvi, 576. The references in the entries of this edition remain keyed to the Ballantine mass market paperbacks of *The Hobbit* and of the three *The Lord of the Rings* volumes; references to *The Silmarillion* are keyed to the Houghton Mifflin hardcover edition (p. xv; Hammond *Bibliography* no. A15c); the widely available UK export edition (identical to the domestic UK edition) by Unwin (Hammond *Bibliography* no. A15a) shared the same pagination. The Ballantine mass market paperback edition of *The Silmarillion* is mentioned as forthcoming in 1979 (p. xv; Hammond *Bibliography* no. A15g) yet is helpfully—and surprisingly—referenced in this edition. This hardcover edition was reprinted more than once; impressions ceased to be noted and dated some time after the second, of April 1978 (to which impression my copy belongs). The ISBN listed on

13 An image of the original painting may be viewed on artist Tim Hildebrandt’s website: <https://timhildebrandt.net/lotr/p7.htm> [accessed 20 December 2021].

the copyright page is 0-345-27520-9. Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data is provided. The listed price is \$10.00, found on the upper front flap. The second edition proper, first published in this edition, is the last significant revision by Robert Foster; after this edition, his updates to the text comprised solely additions to the references in the US 2001 trade paperback edition.

1979 Del Rey Ballantine Paperback Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit to The Silmarillion. Copyright 1971, 1978. This is a mass market paperback. The publisher information reads ‘A Del Rey Book | Published by Ballantine Books’. The format description and impression date of this trade paperback is ‘*Paperback Format* | First Edition: March 1979’. The illustration is by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt, copyright 1975, ‘from The 1976 J. R. R. Tolkien Calendar, published by Ballantine Books’—‘The Fellowship of the Ring’ illustration mentioned above. The first cover design is nearly identical to that of the 1978 dustjacket but for the lack of flaps and the addition of some text to the top of the front cover. The cover design changes at or before the fifth impression in February 1985, replacing the yellow of the background with dark brown and a darker scroll and consequent changes to the colors of the titling, etc. The page count is xvi, 576. There were at least fifteen impressions, though notice of their dates ceased sometime after the ninth (February 1991) and at or before the twelfth (undated). The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-345-27975-1. The Library of Congress Catalog number listed is 77-26825. The listed price was initially \$2.25, changing to \$2.95 with the second impression in September 1982.

2001 Del Rey Ballantine Trade Paperback Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: Tolkien's World from A to Z. Copyright 1971, 1978. This is a trade paperback, the first for this title. Note the subtitle change (see below). The publisher information is ‘A Del Rey Book | Published by Ballantine Books’. The format description with publishing date reads ‘First Trade Paperback Edition: December 2001’. ‘Cover and interior art copyright 1975 by Greg and Tim Hildebrandt’, refers to the above-mentioned ‘The Fellowship of the Ring’ illustration; it is now used internally (in greyscale) on the title page, and as background for each letter of the alphabet in the entry pages. Compared to the 1978 dustjacket, the 2001 cover design includes a reduction of the illustration fitted in full on the lower back cover, while including only the right half of the illustration on the front cover—covering about two-thirds of the lower height of the cover—with the title, etc., reworked and now on a green background, eliminating the scroll motif of previous covers. The cover design is credited to Min Choi. The page count

is xviii, 574. Impressions subsequent to the first are undated. The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-345-44976-2. The listed price was initially \$12.95 through at least the third impression, then \$13.95 from some point between the fourth and sixth impression, then \$16.00 with the seventh; sometime after the seventh it was raised to the current listed price: \$18.00. This trade paperback edition is the only edition of the Foster *Guide* which is still in print.¹⁴ Prices vary amongst booksellers.

A new feature of this edition is the addition by Foster¹⁵ of references keyed to 1993 and 2001 Ballantine mass market paperbacks for the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* and the 1979 Ballantine mass market paperback of *The Silmarillion*, while still retaining the older references to the earlier Ballantine editions. As mentioned above, the 2001 pagination of Ballantine volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* remains the current one. The Ballantine mass market paperback of *The Silmarillion* retained the initial pagination of 1979 until it was reset in 2002, which is the current setting. A reader would need either a pre-2002 Ballantine paperback or a pre-2006 hardcover edition of *The Silmarillion*—both the US and UK first and second edition proper hardcovers were identical until 2006, when the UK edition of the latter was reset—for the references in this Foster *Guide* edition to be useful.

Other than the addition of new references, the text is unchanged from the 1978 second edition proper, even for entries which require correction due to revisions included in the 1999 second edition proper hardcover editions of *The Silmarillion*. For example, see p. 2 in either this 2001 edition or the 2003 hardcover edition immediately below (which are identical but for their binding) for the entry ‘Adûnakhôr, Ar-’, described as ‘nineteenth King of Númenor’. In the 1999 hardcover edition of *The Silmarillion* ‘nineteenth’ was corrected to ‘twentieth’ based upon Christopher Tolkien’s discoveries subsequent to the publication of the *The Silmarillion* in 1977. The rationale behind the corrections relating to various Númenórean rulers is described by him in detail in *Unfinished Tales*, 226–7, n. 11, and further in *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 153, §31. No works of Tolkien (*père ou fils*) published after 1977 are referred to in this edition, though they were available at the time of its editing—namely, *Unfinished Tales* and the twelve volumes of Christopher Tolkien’s *The History of Middle-earth*. It has been said, perhaps justly, that this edition was published in order to ‘cash in’ on the 19 December 2001 release of the Peter Jackson film *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

The 2001 edition cover design has caused some confusion regarding the title, with some calling it *Tolkien’s World from A to Z: The Complete Guide to Middle-*

14 Here is a link to the Random House listing for this trade paperback:
<http://www.randomhousebooks.com/books/54991/> [accessed 17 December 2021].

15 Private correspondence from Foster, 19 January 2022. The compilation of new references took him less than a week.

earth. Properly, ‘The Complete Guide to Middle-earth’ is the title and ‘Tolkien’s World from A to Z’ is the *new* subtitle, as seen on the title page, replacing the subtitle of the 1978 and 1979 editions, ‘From *The Hobbit* to *The Silmarillion*’. The confusion arises from the new front cover design: ‘Tolkien’s World from A to Z’ is placed *above* ‘The Complete Guide to Middle-earth’, with the word ‘Tolkien’s’ in larger type than the title itself, in a font matching that for the name ‘Tolkien’ as found on the covers of the 2000 Ballantine paperbacks. Similarly, the gold-stamped text of the US 2003 hardcover spine (see below) reads ‘Tolkien’s World from A to Z’ horizontally across the top of the spine, with ‘The Complete Guide to Middle-earth’ running vertically below, albeit in larger type. The new subtitle ‘Tolkien’s World from A to Z’ originated as filler on the back cover of the US 1978 dustjacket. The subtitle of all UK editions (see below) remains ‘From *The Hobbit* to *The Silmarillion*’. Oddly, ‘From *The Hobbit* to *The Silmarillion*’ remains in the position of a subtitle—quite literally beneath the title—in the front cover design of the 2001 and 2003 US editions, though it is no longer the subtitle for those editions.

2003 Del Rey Ballantine Hardcover Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: Tolkien's World from A to Z. Copyright 1971, 1978. This edition is identical to the 2001 trade paperback save for the ISBN on the copyright page and the binding and dustjacket; it is simply a hardcover format of the 2001 edition. It is quarter bound in black cloth, with black paper over the boards, and gold stamping on the spine (from the top: ‘Tolkien’s World from A to Z’, ‘The Complete Guide to Middle-earth’, ‘Robert Foster’, ‘Ballantine Books’, and the Del Rey logo at the bottom). The front/back pastedown and front/back free endpaper are illustrated with a color map (signed in the lower right corner ‘Shelly Shapiro ‘88’) of the northwest area of Middle-earth, with an inset map of the Shire—both based upon Christopher Tolkien’s maps, though somewhat too baroque in execution and lacking in detail to be useful. The dustjacket design is found in two forms, both similar to the 2001 cover design with the addition of flaps: 1.) nearly identical but for the background of the title on the front cover, which is sky blue rather than dark green; and 2.) identical¹⁶ to the 2001 trade paperback cover design, which represents the dustjacket of a later impression than the first. Copies with the first dustjacket design are much more common. The impression date of this hardcover does not appear on the copyright page, but is verified by Del Rey as ‘September 30, 2003’.¹⁷ In the first impression there is a number line to indicate impressions, and it does seem this edition was reprinted, though how many times

16 The 2003 jacket identical to the 2001 cover may be seen here: <https://tolkienfiend.wordpress.com/2017/08/11/tolkienes-world-a-to-z-the-complete-guide-to-middle-earth-by-robert-foster-hardcover/> [accessed 18 December 2021].

17 Private correspondence from Del Rey, 13 and 15 December 2021.

is unknown: an owner of a copy with the less common dustjacket has noted there is no impression information in his copy (see n. 16)—my own copy of the first impression includes the 10...1 number line and the first dustjacket. Thus, sometime after the first impression, impressions were no longer noted, and the dustjacket changed. The page count is xviii, 574. The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-345-46529-6. The listed price is \$24.95, found on the upper front flap of the dustjacket. While this edition of the Foster *Guide* is now out of print, both new and used copies are available through various booksellers.

This 2003 hardcover was my first copy of the Foster *Guide*, and it was my curiosity—and a mistaken belief—about this edition that ultimately led to this summary publication history. At some point after I bought my copy of the 2003 hardcover—from the appropriately-named ‘The Other Change of Hobbit’ in Berkeley, California, on 8 August 2009—I casually pencilled ‘First Trade Edition: September 30, 2003’ at the bottom of the copyright page, and appended ‘2001’ to the copyright dates. I thought at the time (mistakenly, as it happens) that this hardcover represented a newly revised third edition proper of 2001, in which case my pencilled additions would have been roughly accurate. When I wrote for verification of the details of this supposed ‘third edition’, mentioning the puzzling omission of an expected foreword describing the new edition proper, Random House investigated and forwarded to me a reply from the (unnamed, articulate, and held in awe by the lesser editors with whom I was corresponding) Managing Editor of Ballantine Books:

The first Ballantine edition of the book was published in 1978, thus the 1978 copyright. (In fact, the book is initially copyrighted in 1971, when an earlier version was published.) That the book has since been reissued in other formats and versions and with minor textual updates (including the cross-references the reader is alluding to) doesn't alter the book's initial copyright date. A book gains a new copyright date only if it's been substantially overhauled; that doesn't obtain here. And no preface or author's note is missing. The edition the reader is reading is complete.¹⁸

The references to the Ballantine 1993 and 2001 editions of *The Lord of the Rings* as found in the above-mentioned 2001 and 2003 editions were added by Foster. Editing of the references was also done in-house at George Allen & Unwin for the 1978 first UK edition (see below), replacing references to US editions with references to then-available UK editions. The mysterious Managing Editor's well-

¹⁸ Private correspondence from Random House, 12–13 October 2009

written note makes clear, however, that the US 2001 and 2003 editions certainly do not represent a ‘third edition proper’, copyright 2001, of the Foster *Guide*.

UK EDITIONS

As mentioned above, the UK editions utilize the text of the US second edition proper of 1978, first published by Del Rey Ballantine in 1978. However, with the first UK editions George Allen & Unwin adapted the page references to their then-available hardcover editions and their Unwin Paperbacks editions of Tolkien’s works. The 2003 illustrated edition added new references to several HarperCollins editions of Tolkien’s works, while retaining the references included in the Unwin editions of the Foster *Guide*, despite those referenced editions being out-of-print; this is similar to the addition of new references in the US 2001 edition described above. The subtitle of the UK editions, ‘From *The Hobbit* to *The Silmarillion*’ is that of the US hardcover edition of 1978, as mentioned above.

1978 Unwin Hardcover Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit To The Silmarillion.

This edition is a hardcover in dustjacket. The copyright page contains, amongst other things, the following: ‘First published in Great Britain in 1978’; ‘Published by arrangement with Ballantine Books, a Division of Random House, Inc.’; ‘George Allen & Unwin, Ltd’; and ‘Copyright Robert Foster 1971, 1978’. The binding is blue cloth with gold stamping on the spine. The illustration used in the dustjacket design—on both front and back covers—is an adaptation of J. R. R. Tolkien’s cover design for *The Return of the King* (Hammond and Scull, *Artist and Illustrator*, no. 182), likely designed by an in-house artist at George Allen & Unwin; no artist—not even Tolkien—is credited on the jacket or copyright page. The copyright page is identical in the hardcover and trade paperback editions (see below), listing both ISBNs with that for the softcover differentiated by a trailing ‘Pbk.’ The page count is xiii, 441. Reprints are not evidenced on the copyright page of the hardcover; it may never have been reprinted. The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-04-803002-3. British Library Cataloging in Publication Data is provided. The listed price on the dustjacket is £4.95.

1978 Unwin Trade Paperback Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit To The Silmarillion.

This edition is a trade paperback (B Format). The copyright page is identical to the 1978 Unwin hardcover (see above). ‘Unwin Paperbacks’, ‘Fantasy/Reference’, the ISBN, and the price are found on the back cover, with the Unwin Paperbacks logo

found on the front cover. The charming illustration used in the cover design is by Linda Garland; her signature is visible in the lower left of the front cover as ‘L. Garland’. The page count is xiii, 449. The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0-04-803001-5. British Library Cataloging in Publication Data is provided. The listed price was initially £1.50, and later £2.95. The second impression is dated 1986, and the third is dated 1993; further impressions are unknown.

1991/1993 Grafton/HarperCollins Trade Paperback Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit To The Silmarillion.

This edition is a trade paperback (B Format), initially published 3 December 1991 under the Grafton imprint of HarperCollins; after the Grafton imprint was retired, the edition was republished on 13 September 1993 by HarperCollins with the same ISBN and remained in print into 2007.¹⁹ The copyright page of the 1993 iteration includes, amongst other things ‘HarperCollins Publishers’; ‘First published in Great Britain by George Allen & Unwin 1978’; ‘Copyright Robert Foster 1971, 1978’; ‘Robert Foster asserts the moral right to be identified the author of this work.’ The Tolkien monogram, trademark notice, and the website address ‘www.tolkien.co.uk’ are also present on the copyright page. The illustration used in the cover design is credited to Roger Garland. The page count is xii, 449. The ISBN given is 0261102524. The listed price is £8.99, found with the barcode on the lower back cover.

An unusual characteristic of this edition is that, although published by Grafton in 1991 and HarperCollins in 1993, the text is entirely identical to that of the 1978 George Allen & Unwin editions. Thus, the references are keyed to the same editions of Tolkien’s works listed in the 1978 editions. The latest Unwin Paperbacks of Tolkien’s works were published in 1990, and these were reprinted with the same pagination by HarperCollins in 1992. Readers may not have been aware of this, however, as there is no note of it in this edition. By the last printing of the HarperCollins 1993 Foster *Guide* in 2007, the Unwin editions were all long out of print, and the HarperCollins mass market (A Format) editions had been reset: *The Hobbit* in 1995, and the volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* in 2002. So, by 2007, the references in this edition would have been incorrect for readers with current copies of Tolkien’s works, though the definitions would still have been useful.

2003 HarperCollins Illustrated Hardcover Edition

The Complete Guide to Middle-earth: From The Hobbit To The Silmarillion.

¹⁹ Private correspondence from HarperCollins, 6 January 2022.

This edition is a hardcover in dustjacket. The illustrations are by Ted Nasmith, comprising the dustjacket illustration and 50 interior illustrations. An 8-page commentary on the illustrations is provided, written by Nasmith. The copyright page includes, amongst other things ‘HarperCollins Publishers’; ‘This illustrated edition 2003’; ‘First published in Great Britain by George Allen & Unwin 1978’; ‘Copyright Robert Foster 1971, 1978’. | Illustrations Copyright Ted Nasmith 2003’; ‘Robert Foster asserts the moral right to be identified the author of this work.’ The Tolkien monogram, trademark notice, and the website address ‘www.tolkien.co.uk’ are also present on the copyright page. The paper is coated and of a heavy weight. The cloth binding is a striking red with stamping in gold on the front board (the Tolkien monogram) and the spine (from the top: the Tolkien monogram, author, title, publisher, and logo). The page count is xii, 516. The ISBN listed on the copyright page is 0007169426. The listed price (given on the barcode on the back cover of the jacket and the lower front flap) is £30.00.

This illustrated edition has been well-received for its illustrations, paper, and binding; it is certainly a beautiful book, and is in demand though out-of-print. However, in Christina Scull’s review (‘Description’ 13–14), she notes that for the reader the edition is ‘less convenient’ (*ibid.*, 13) in that it suffers from several serious issues: the relegation of all references formerly in the entries to an appendix; an unfortunate inconsistency in italicization, which is too often not applied where it should be and applied where it should not be; and the removal of internal page references to other entries. In this edition, the italicization—typically used in reference works to refer readers to entries bearing the italicized word as the headword—is so consistently misapplied that it is impossible to know by which of these, if any, one is being redirected to another entry, as the internal page references have all been removed. The text is that of the Unwin editions—i.e., of the second edition proper text as first found in the 1978 Del Rey Ballantine hardcover with the original Unwin references—though the reference apparatus was updated to include editions current in 2003, most of which Scull notes were already out of print by the time of her writing (November 2008). A further note on this out-of-print illustrated edition is that it is now generally offered for surprisingly high prices by booksellers. For example, one site²⁰ lists several offerings of this edition from various booksellers, ranging in price from \$277.51 to \$1,193.02. Patient, repeated searching for a relatively inexpensive copy is recommended for those who would purchase a copy of this edition.

CONCLUSION

20 I searched this edition’s ISBN on bookfinder.com on 18 December 2021.

Thus endeth this summary publication history for that work now known as *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth* by Robert Foster. As is the case with seemingly every other publication history, some interesting details have come to light. Particularly striking is the connection to the *Niekas* fanzine, and the personalities involved in its production: a group of intelligent, inquisitive, artistic, and enthusiastic people—a number of whom later became well-known authors—who were fascinated by the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, as are so many of us today. Robert Foster was one of those people, joining them as a teenager and writing what would ultimately become *A Guide to Middle-earth*, and, with significant revision a few years later, *The Complete Guide to Middle-earth*. His ‘admirable work’ is ample evidence of his sharing the qualities which characterized that group of early enthusiasts of Tolkien’s works in the United States.

POSTSCRIPT

I present here an updated ‘Note on the Author’ for Robert Foster, as those included in the published editions are no longer current.

Robert ‘Bob’ Foster was born in September 1949, in Brooklyn, New York.²¹ He was awarded a PhD in English and Medieval Studies in 1974 from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²² From 1975 to 1978²³ he taught as an Assistant Professor of English at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.²⁴ In 1978 he left academia for a successful career in business analysis and software design in the financial services industry. Since retiring in 2010, he has pursued his interest in family history. He and his wife live in New Jersey, where he tries to persuade the deer, rabbits, and woodchucks not to eat his garden.²⁵

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21 Lanners, *Famille*, 98.

22 Foster, *Guide*, [571]. His PhD thesis is titled *The Romances of the Medieval English Frontier*.

23 Private correspondence from the University of Pennsylvania, 11 August 2009.

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The following websites were particularly helpful in researching this publication history:

ISFDB.ORG

‘The Internet Speculative Fiction Database’ (isfdb.org) is a user-compiler resource presenting information on different editions of the works of numerous authors, some in quite fine-grained detail. The information must, however, be approached critically, as some users, more enthusiastic than discerning, contribute unverified information (i.e., without examination of a copy of the edition in question) sourced from booksellers. Generally, the information on the Foster *Guide* is accurate, but for the above-mentioned misprision regarding the first and second Mirage Press impressions. The entries for the various editions provide images of hardcover dustjackets and softcover front covers. The information for the various editions of the Foster *Guide* may be accessed here:

<http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?181137> [accessed 11 December 2021]

ISFDB page on the Mirage Press second impression: <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/pl.cgi?304054> [accessed 13 December 2021].

TOLKIENBOOKS.US

This is an excellent source of bibliographic information for US Tolkien editions and a number of other related works. Each edition is provided its own page, with quite summary bibliographic details, and links to images of copyright pages, covers (more may be found on the relevant pages on isfdb.org), and important internal pages (not available on isfdb.org). The information for the various US editions of the Foster *Guide* may be accessed here:

<https://www.tolkienbooks.us/ot/gde/gme> [accessed 11 December 2021]

Page with information on the Mirage Press first impression:

<https://www.tolkienbooks.us/ot/gde/gme/a-guide-to-middle-earth-1971-hc> [accessed 13 December 2021].

Page with information on the Mirage Press second impression:

<https://www.tolkienbooks.us/ot/gde/gme/a-guide-to-middle-earth-1971-pb> [accessed 13 December 2021].

FANAC.ORG

The website of the ‘Florida Association of Nucleation and Conventions’, fanac.org, hosts a database of digitized fanzines, including the complete run of *Niekas*, numbers 1 through 46. All the issues of *Niekas* mentioned in this article may be viewed there:

<https://fanac.org/fanzines/Niekas/index.html?> [accessed 12 December 2021]

Niekas includes contributions from a remarkable number of well-known authors, too many to list here. A delightful find are dustcovers drawn by Diana Paxson for the paperback editions of the *The Hobbit* and the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*, produced because readers were (understandably) ‘very unhappy’ with the

Jack Gaughan illustrations on the Ace paperbacks and the Barbara Remington illustrations on the Ballantine paperbacks (Meškys, *The View from Entropy Hall* 12). *Niekas* received the Hugo Award for Best Fanzine in 1967, and was also nominated in 1966 and 1989. See the Hugo Award website, which lists all nominees and recipients of the award by year: <http://thehugoawards.org/hugo-history/> [accessed 13 December 2021]. The last issue of *Niekas*, number 46, was published February 2001. Several further issues were planned but never published.

THE VIEW FROM ENTROPY HALL

This is something of an early blog written by Ed Meškys, the editor of the *Niekas* fanzine, in which he discussed various topics related to speculative fiction and his own role in publishing and fandom. *The View from Entropy Hall* no. 12 of 31 May 1997 is particularly notable for its reminiscences of the early formation of the Tolkien Society of America, and the early publishing history of the *Niekas* fanzine. For now, though I would not count on its existing for too much longer, numbers 1 (6 April 1996) through 37 (28 January 2006) may be viewed online here:

<http://www.geocities.ws/entropyhall/index-2.html> [accessed 13 December 2021]

Numbers 38 (22 October 2006), 53 (August 2015), 54 (January 2016), 57 (November 2016), 58 (December 2017), and 59 (April 2018) may be viewed here: <https://efanzines.com/ERM/> [accessed 14 December 2021].

All other issues appear to be lost.