



Foundling

D.M. Cornish

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Set in the world of the Half-Continent—a land of tri-corner hats and flintlock pistols—the *Monster Blood Tattoo* trilogy is a world of predatory monsters, chemical potions and surgically altered people. *Foundling* begins the journey of Rossamund, a boy with a girl's name, who is just about to begin a dangerous life in the service of the Emperor. What starts as a simple journey is threatened by encounters with monsters—and people, who may be worse. Learning who to trust and who to fear is neither easy nor without its perils, and Rossamund must choose his path carefully.

Complete with appendices, maps, illustrations, and a glossary, *Monster Blood Tattoo* grabs readers from the first sentence and immerses them in an entirely original fantasy world with its own language and lore.

Foundling Details

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Author : D.M. Cornish

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From Reader Review Foundling for online ebook

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

Found this one at the library and picked it up for a listen. I found it quite good. The worldbuilding was thorough, including a lexicon of terms especially adapted to the storyline. It's not quite steampunk (no steam tech), but that's probably as close a designation as I can use. There is some advanced tech, including enhanced humans, and primitive gadgetry, and some mad science type elements that bring to mind the steampunk aesthetic, so there you have it. Rossamund was a really great kid--quite tough for all that he goes through in this book. He had a good heart and an unshakeable sense of conscience that guides him through the murky waters of his journey from being a foundling at a home for orphans to his profession as a Lamplighter in service of the Emperor.

I liked Europe. She was a bit fussy and stuck up at times, but I think that's just her way of dealing with emotional situations that she's not comfortable with. You could tell she grew quite fond of Rossamund, and who could blame her.

Kids being abused and taken advantage of is a huge issue for me, so that horrible Captain Poundage's treatment of poor Rossamund really got my goat. I found this part so hard to deal with, knowing he was taking advantage of a child before Rossamund figures that out. I wanted to jump inside the story and beat the crap out of the guy. He truly deserved a medieval-style beatdown. (view spoiler) It was rough seeing this kid go through the hardships he faced, period, so I was glad that he had some people there to help him when he couldn't help himself, and he turns out to be very good at doing that, for the most part.

The concept of what a monster is leads to some interesting thoughts about right and wrong. Is a monster merely a non-human creature, or can a human be worse of a monster than a non-human creature? I think that this story proves the latter, most definitely. The worst monster of all in this book is a human man--Captain Poundage. And Rossamund is bright enough to see that from early on. He helps Europe to open her mind to see the same. Not that her profession is 100% wrong, but maybe she should think more about who/what she feels is deserving of destruction.

I liked this book a lot. I found Rossamund utterly endearing, and the adventures on which he embarked kept me listening intently, and on the edge of my seat. This is a good story for younger readers and slightly older ones (like me).

Suggested Casting:

Gemma Arterton as Europe

Kodi Smit-McPhee as Rossamund

MJ says

I tried so hard to read this fantasy but it was just a little too "precious." D.M. Cornish had his own illustration--very nice. Boy with a girl's name is raised in Madam Opera's Estimable Marine Society for Foundling Boys and Girls. Lots of made up vocabulary and I just couldn't get into it. This is the first book of several and I think that children of 9-11 with the patience to read "clever" writing might like it a lot more than I did.

katnick says

I really wanted to like this book. The author's illustrations were evocative and he obviously spent a lot of time developing the world. The problem is: I think he spent too much time world building and not enough story building. The whole book reads like one long introduction. The author spends so much time inventing new pseudo-Germanic words for things (including a lot of things, like lanterns and history, that already have names) that a quarter of the book is taken up by the glossary even though many of the terms are also defined within the text. He also spends a lot of time describing everything his protagonist sees (bridges, clothes, people, monsters, etc.) in such exacting detail that I wondered whether he wouldn't have been better off writing a graphic novel – he's certainly talented enough to draw one.

The definitions and descriptions are neat enough but I found myself glazing over while reading them because nothing was happening. They took up so much space that there wasn't much left over for story. Young orphan Rossamund (whose age is never stated but who seems to be around 11) is visited by a lamplighter's agent and given instructions to show up at their headquarters to start his training. Due to plot contrivances and the protagonist's boneheaded mistakes, it takes him the entire book just to get to his new school. It's like if the first Harry Potter book had ended as soon as Harry sat down to supper at Hogwarts.

Maybe the subsequent books are better now that all the introductions are out of the way, but as it stands now I'm not inclined to read them.

Merrilee says

I was actually more than a little disappointed by this book. Cornish has built a wonderful world, full of fascinating people and places. Unfortunately he felt the need to share every detail with the reader. This book was not so much a novel as a prologue, and for two-thirds of the book, the main character Rossamund just wanders around, having things happen to him.

When he finally gets a little gumption and the story starts moving, the novel ends. And the last 120 pages are glossaries.

I can see this appealing to a younger person who enjoys spending time with an interesting world. But there certainly wasn't enough story to make me want to read the next book, or want to know more about Rossamund. I wish Cornish had spent more time on the character and less time explaining the world.

Robin Wiley says

Tolkien loved inventing languages, and designed Middle Earth, and wrote Lord of the Rings to have someplace to put those languages.

DM Cornish is an illustrator, and has been drawing characters, creatures and maps for years, and wrote this book to have someplace to put them.

The world, called the Half Continent - is GINORMOUS. The map is roughly 8 x 10, and the book covers about a square inch...of the world, and this is the first book. Lots of potential here.

World of Dickens, with alchemy and iron clads. Humans inhabit walled cities...and the rest is monsters (yes, I am soooo happy). Big ones, and small ones, land monsters, and sea monsters (ooh, did I mention the ocean is made out of toxic acid?). Blood thirsty, lots of teeth and claws.

Characters - a lot of great characters

Magic - more alchemy than magic, but lots of it

Critters - Monsters, monsters everywhere (yay)

Action - a fine amount for a first book, and more to come

Cool Places - it's a haunted, monster covered world - it's all cool

Our hero, Rossamund, is an orphan, who gets enlisted into the service of the Emperor, as a Lamplighter. Keeping the Emperor's road lit and safe for travelers, from all manner of Ooga-Booga's.

I don't think I want to really classify this as a kid's book. This is an incredibly detailed world. Did I mention there is a 120 page Explicarium (Glossary) in the back of the book? Umm...Wow! Don't freak out, you don't have to read it. At the beginning of each chapter, he introduces you to a one new word or phrase, in a tasty, bite-sized dose.

This was just a super, cool book. I'm already on to book 2.

Sue Smith says

There aren't too many books that I come across and get totally surprised by, but this one happened to be one of them. Don't ask me why exactly - I think there were a number of factors that played into the whole.

Firstly, it goes without saying that I love a book with maps. I have this NEED to see where they are and what's around them - regardless if it's real or fictitious. I'm visual and I like to 'see'. Such a silly thing really, but I don't know how many books I've read that I've wished they'd spent the time to develop a map. Somehow, it makes the imaginary worlds much more physical (in my mind's eye), or at least it means that the author has spent some time actually thinking about the world he's created and whether or not it 'works'.

Well this book has not only a map.... it has PAGES of maps!!! I was in heaven! And not just ridiculous ones either - but fully developed with landscape, cities, rivers, lakes, open waters... and all namedand you can tell it would be a 'place', or as real a place as the author saw it to be. And the crowning glory was that the area that this particular story takes place had it's section of the map enlarged for all those map geeks (like

me) to see where exactly our characters adventures were happening at. Very cool.

Then to top it off, the author went to the trouble of putting in an entire section of definitions of words and things he invented for this world. In case - you know - you wanted to geek out further and read more of this particular world this author created.

AND!.... he even drew portraits (of a kind) of the characters that you run into during the course of the story... in case you needed extra help envisioning what they may have looked like. Always helpful when the characters are monsters (I might add).

So needless to say, the story was just as developed. You really only get a glimpse of this world with this first installment, but what a glimpse! It certainly was enough for me to want more. The adventure he got himself into and the characters he met with this one just to go from point A to point B was enough for me to want to go back and see what else he'll be getting into! And now that he's out in the world, I want to see more of what this world is like. All in all, the book did alot of teasing! (not really, but he cast out lures and I took them all).

Of course the main character is an orphaned boy who never knew his parentage (left on the doorstep of an orphanage/school - of a sort), but is watched over by the characters that operate the school. We meet him just before he goes out in the world to start his career as a lamp lighter. Not his first choice, but the only one that gets offered to him. So he's off to another city to start his job - and that's when his story starts, and we get a glimpse that all is not what it seems to be. He lives in a world that's dominated by both men and monsters, so to get to point B, he has to travel through areas that these monsters he's learned about live. It's turns out to be quite an adventure and things happen that weren't always planned. And he discovers things that things he thought were the truth isn't always so. It's quite a revelation - and it leaves you wondering just as much as our character.

I really enjoyed this book - it was such a welcome change to the usual stuff out there. I'll definitely be continuing the series - I mean - I need to know!!

Betsy says

By this point I think the nation's readers of children's fantasy novels have hit a kind of boredom plateau. You get a new fantasy on your desk and you have to tick off the requirements. Alternate world? Orphaned hero or heroine? School for the extraordinary? To a certain extent, a lot of these tried and true stand-bys are essential to a good book. There's a reason they exist, after all. But after reading a bunch of them, reviewers like myself get a little jaded. Kids think everything's new, so they're more inclined to love the newest sparkly cover that comes down the pike. For us, finding something that is truly original and truly unique is almost impossible. I mean, it's not as if Harry Potter was the first boy to go to wizarding school even. So imagine my surprise when I encountered a truly rare and amazing fantasy world. A place so thoroughly thought out, planned, meticulously recorded, and imagined that it feels less like a fantasy novel and more like the factual memoirs of an alternate world. I'm not exaggerating here. Aussie D.M. Cornish has spent (according to his bookflap) "the last thirteen years bringing the Half-Continent to life." The result is a book that feels like the first true successor to Tolkien I've ever found.

His name is Rossamund Bookchild. Bookchild because he is an orphan raised by a Marine Society and given the same last name of all the children there. Rossamund, normally a girl's name, because that was the name pinned to him when he was left on the steps as a babe. Growing up reading exciting pamphlets recounting daring deeds, Rossamund has a dream of someday becoming a sailor (or vinegaroon) on the vinegar seas where high adventure awaits. He dreams of someday seeing the vicious monsters that constantly do battle with man around the country and must always be kept at bay. Yet instead of a glorious life on the seas, Rossamund is told that he is to be apprenticed as a lamplighter, lighting the roads of the Half-Continent. It's a disappointing blow, but on the way to his new job Rossamund hops the wrong boat and finds himself facing monsters, rever-men, teratologists, bogles, leers, wits, and a host of other characters and dangers. Moreover, has Rossamund always been told the truth about the monsters people fight, or is there more to some bogles than meets the eye?

Normally when an author wants to introduce you to a new fantasy world, the hero is a kid from our mundane universe who is pushed through extraordinary circumstances into a peculiar realm. Rossamund, however, inclines far more closely to the Bilbo Baggins mode of adventuring. He has led a nice sequestered life in Madame Opera's Estimable Marine Society and his journey turns out to be very much a series of adventures, both good and ill, that are new to him simply because he has only read about the wider world and has not yet lived in it. Yes. Fine. Our hero is an orphan as per a million fantasy novels before. But never have I had such a clear sense that a character's parentage is not the point of the series. Phew!

Really, Rossamund is a great hero. Like Taran in Lloyd Alexander's *The Black Cauldron* series he yearns for adventure. But unlike Taran he's not a brash young man with a braggart's tongue and a desire to enter battle. Rossamund seems to want adventure without wanting to ever hold a weapon in his hands. He's a rather gentle kid. He'd sooner say nothing than say the wrong thing, a tendency that causes the people around him to open up unexpectedly. Which, from a narrative perspective, is keen. Rossamund's growth in this book is not complete, a fact noticed by the sweet bogle that considers telling him the secret of his name. Still, you have confidence in this hero. He is kind and good and that goes a long way when you have to spend a whole book with him.

Another difference from your normal run-of-the-mill fantasy is Cornish's use of female characters. Strong female characters, that is. At first I figured that this would be yet another boy-boy-boy book. But then you meet the character of Europe and it's all up in the air. Europe is the fighting fulgar that meets Rossamund early in his travels and inspires both his respect and his disgust. She kills monsters for a living, which wouldn't be so bad if the first one Rossamund encounters with her weren't such a sweet but stupid fellow. Her moral complexity mixes with a personality that has enough pep and zazz to keep you guessing about her intentions for most of the book. Fighting women in fantasy novels tend to have no sense of humor, but Europe is quite the wit (inside joke) when her innards aren't trying to reject her new organs.

Maybe it's Cornish's Aussie roots, but he has a knack for language that exceeds the norm. His descriptions are nice and no question, but dialogue seems to be his bread and butter. "Don't give me a reason to remember yer name any further, me darlin' chiffer-chaffer." Or calling someone a "prattling hackmillion". That kind of thing. His easy-going language will strike you as almost cockney at first, but closer inspection of the words and phrases used put a very particular spin on the entire affair. His talent for names is nothing to scoff at either. You'll read titles like *Sloughscab*, *Poundinch*, *Europe*, and *Licurius*, which pour out of the author like mad wild things.

Regarding the sheer complexity of this world, here is my thinking: Cornish is so invested in this Half-Continent he has created, and so clear on every minute and tiny detail involved that you can't help but be swept up in the logic of it all. Even more amazing though is that Cornish describes everyday realities of the

realm without making them sound anything but simultaneously routine AND amazing. Everything we learn about Rossamund's world is extraordinary, but Cornish has it so well-planned that it almost feels routine and logical. Not in the boring sense, of course.

Standing at a handsome 434 pages, this book may appear a bit daunting to your average reader. So you can well imagine my amazement when I hit page 312 and found the story to be over. Finito, as it were. The next 122 pages consisted of an elaborate and enticing Explicarium "Being a glossary of terms and explanations including Appendices". Sounds simple, right? Well, it begins with a explanation of pronunciations for certain terms in this book. Then an explanation of italics. And then a list of faux sources used to research this book (which is always fun). The glossary is extensive and you can basically learn quite a lot about the Haacobin Empire in which Rossamund lives, including history, characters, and different kinds of boats if you've an inclination to do so. Of course, at the same time you'll run across definitions like "muck hill: pile of poo", so make no assumptions. The glossary is followed by a guide to the 16-month calendar of the half-continent, detailed drawings of different occupations and what they wear, every boat from a gun-drudge to a main-sovereign, and enlargements of the Half-Continent terrain that is the most frightening and magnificent map I've ever seen in a work of fiction. Stranger still, all the pictures in this book (and there are many) were drawn by the author himself. Aye, me.

The age level is an interesting question here. Our hero is about fourteen, which puts this book squarely in the middle grade/YA realm. There is some violence (one nasty fellow meets his end by getting eaten alive) but it tends to go quickly. For the most part, I'd say that any kid who could handle the Harry Potter books, the The Amulet of Samarkand series, or any of the The Lord of the Rings would definitely enjoy this series and get into it.

But who thinks of these things? Who imagines a world where people bathe their eyes in chemicals to gain unnatural powers? Or who undergo dangerous surgeries to get superhuman abilities? Who imagines something as tiny and delicate as a spoor, a small shape that is blue or white and burned into the skin to denote a person's occupation? D.M. Cornish, obviously. Basically I just recommend this to anyone who wants something wholly new and never seen before. Cornish's imagination will fuel fans for decades to come, should they find this book. Consider it a little-known gem that you'll end up sucked into. Amazing stuff.

Ages 11 and up.

James Trevino says

This was such a great, different read. It is what YA should be: thrilling, engaging and with mind blowing world building. It is also a dense read. It sometimes felt like a Tolkien book (there are 100+ pages of Appendix at the end and I loved every world of it + several maps!). I will start the next one right away.

colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

[the budding complexity of the nature of the monsters. In the beginning, it's a very basic "monsters =

Terri says

Rossamund, a boy abandoned as a baby, is raised as a foundling in an orphanage. When he gets older, he is recruited to be trained as a Lamplighter. But the boy gets on the wrong ship and the adventures start.

This is the first book in a series and felt very incomplete to me. I realize they are setting the stage for many future adventures and introducing characters (some of which are very interesting like Europe, the monster killer, and Fouracres) But this book really failed to excite me.

Rossamund was very naive and I really didn't understand why the ship captain (evil Monster smuggler) lured Rossamund to his ship and kept him in the first place. Nor when he ran into him again. This seemed rather weak.

Now there are interesting questions about his birth that are to be answered later. And his "enemy" at the foundling home is certain to reappear again in a future book. I think I will give the second book a chance before I decide more on this series

Nathaniel Lee says

This is what "young adult" fiction should be, by all rights. The vocabulary was rich and liberally sprinkled with neologisms that tickled my etymologist's fancy, and the writing was lucid and flowing, keeping me involved with ease.

I was particularly enchanted by the world details that slipped into place; the complex, quasi-magical chemistry; the "vinegar seas" whose acidic waters gave sailors their rugged, pit-faced appearance; the boats powered by "gastrines," basically vat-grown muscles in large boxes. Imagine if Perdido Street Station had been written as an adventure/fantasy rather than a brooding pastiche. That's the best metaphor I can come up with.

The edition I read included numerous charming woodcut-style illustrations, which added to the charm of the book. For myself, I simply loved the originality and completeness of the world it presented, with a quasi-steampunk vibe to it. Really, the only reason this book is classified as "young adult" is because the protagonist is young himself, and his struggles are the struggles of youth maturing.

Really, my biggest single complaint, as it were, is that it was too short, with a fairly extensive portion of the book dedicated to a Tolkien-esque Appendix of vocabulary, history, maps, and other such frippery.

Courtney Nicole says

2.80

- I messed up with this book.
- Usually when I know I'm going to give up on a book I get ready to search how it ends because although I don't want to spend anymore time reading it, sometimes I still want to know (quickly) how everything turned

out. Well, for this one, before I even decided fully I wanted to stop reading It I had already found myself reading the summary of the book.. Whoops. I guess subconsciously I did end up deciding.

- I at least gave it until 1/3 of the way through! (By the way, the book is really only 312 pages long, the other part is all index and stuff.)

& It seemed like the author tried so hard to world build nicely and get the reader engrossed but to me it felt very info-dumpy.

- I don't hate this book and I don't think it's bad for the age group it's targeting. It was first added to my TBR ages ago, back when I probably would have enjoyed it more but now I just think I've personally out grown some YA books and definitely Middle-Grade books. It just read too young for me.

- Should have read it back when I was younger and I might've had a different opinion in the end.

Mike (the Paladin) says

.....yeah, I gave it 5 stars, huh. Sort of surprised me to.

I didn't go into this expecting a 5 star read. For a while I was even very annoyed with the main character...Rossamünd Bookchild, the boy with the girl's name. (I don't want to spoil the book for anyone especially as I think it's an excellent read, really a great read). Anyway, for a while I was so annoyed with the kid I wanted to slap him up-side the head and say, "think"!

But then I took a deep breath...calmed myself and thought, "how young is this kid?". "Would I have acted this way had I been in his situation at his age?"

Rossamünd is at first admittedly thick. He fails to follow simple direct instructions that would have protected him. He falls for...well "things"...that he should have spotted up front. He's more naïve than seems possible. But the more I thought about it the more it seemed actually plausible.

Not only that, Rossamünd learns from his mistakes. Unlike many YA protagonists he doesn't remain thick and dim in spite of and in the face of experience.

This is a fast moving, involving very well written YA novel. I recommend it highly. It falls into what might be called the "coming of age" story (which usually drives me away...but I find that if one does draw me in it gets into the running for my "favorites shelf"). We follow Rossamünd Bookchild through a series of adventures to a point in his life where he's at "a beginning".

As a final endorsement, I not only recommend it I have already bought the second. This is a good book.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by K. Osborn Sullivan for TeensReadToo.com

MONSTER BLOOD TATTOO is an unusual book. Even before I delved into it, I was struck by some of the ways that it's different from other young adult fantasy novels. For one thing, more than a quarter of the book is taken up with an extensive glossary and other appendices. It is also sprinkled with art - typically sketches

of characters in the novel. So even before reading a word of the story, I was curious. Surely such an unusual book would be either a magnificent, ground-breaking achievement or a disappointing, confusing disaster, right? Turns out that neither of those lofty expectations panned out. Nonetheless, this is a good, entertaining novel with some interesting characters and a unique approach to the human/monster relationship.

The hero of *MONSTER BLOOD TATTOO* is an orphan, or in the language of the book, a foundling, named Rossamund Bookchild. He was raised at an orphanage, or rather, a foundlingery, called Madam Opera's Estimable Marine Society for Foundling Boys and Girls. The only clue the boy has about his parents is that someone had pinned a girl's name, Rossamund, to his blankets before abandoning him years earlier. No doubt that is a story in itself, but it will have to wait for future books.

When Rossamund is old enough, he is selected for a career and sent off to begin life away from Madam Opera's Marine Society. While he is pleased to have been chosen for a job and eager to see the world outside the foundlingery's doors, Rossamund also worries that his career as a lamplighter might not be exciting enough for him. But the boy is dutiful, so he gathers his meager belongings and sets off. Rossamund's journey to lamplighter headquarters should be straightforward enough, but he accidentally ends up aboard the wrong ship and things go downhill from there.

The real adventure in *MONSTER BLOOD TATTOO* is the dangerous path Rossamund follows in an attempt to find his new employer. Along the way, he meets both humans and monsters, but it is often hard to tell one from the other. More than once he is forced to wonder whom he can trust. Just because an individual is human, does that mean he can be trusted, while all monsters can't be? And how should Rossamund think about a beautiful woman who can make lightening with her body and kills for a living?

I liked how this book has few simple answers. Rossamund goes into the world expecting all adults to be as helpful and kind as those who cared for him at the foundlingery. At the same time, he expects all monsters to be evil, bloodthirsty beasts deserving of nothing better than a violent death. He soon learns otherwise, on both counts.

My only real complaints with *MONSTER BLOOD TATTOO* were minor. First, I occasionally wanted to scream at Rossamund for being a naive fool. Growing up in a sheltered environment is one thing, but blind stupidity is something else entirely. Like when Rossamund got on the wrong boat. I almost put the book down right then and there, figuring that he was about to get what he deserved. But I muddled through and am glad I did.

My other problem in the book was with names. They are often long, complicated, odd, and hard to pronounce. I hate it when fantasy or science fiction authors do that. It's like they're trying to create a sense of other-worldliness by making up words and creating unusual names. In reality, it just makes things hard on readers and discourages parents or children from reading aloud. I mean, a name like Doctor Verhooverhoven? Is this necessary? If the author has done his job, his descriptions have already created a fantasy world in the reader's mind and he need not resort to ploys like impossibly goofy names.

But, those complaints aside, this was a fun novel. It is an interesting story told from an unusual perspective that kept me entertained. Lovers of the young adult fantasy genre should pick up a copy. Since this is "Book One," our young hero has just begun his string of literary adventures. I will be following his journey with interest.

?????? ????? says

„Monster Blood Tattoo“ ??? „??????????? ? ?????????? ???“ ??? ? ?? ?????? ??? ? ? ???? ?????? ?????, ?? ????????? ???? ? ?????????? ?? ????????? ?????????? ?? ?????? ? . ?????? (??? „MBG Books“). ? ??????? ?? „?????”, ??????? ? ??? (????? ? ? ?????? ?? ????? ?????), ??? ?????? ?? ? ??? ?? ???-????????? ????????? ????????? ?????????, ????????? ??? ?????????? ??????? ? ???! ?????????? ?????? ?? "????? ?????":

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Leanne C says

Just as good the second time!

Cindy says

There are very few teen fantasy titles that come along that I find myself raving to all my co-workers about. And I mean ALL of my co-workers. I don't care if you haven't read a teen novel in years, I'm throwing this one at you.

The unfortunately named Rossamund (yes, he's a boy and we'll call him Rosie for short) is a foundling, raised in an orphanage where he has little hope of any real future but dreams of a life at sea. Fate, however, has other things in store for him--Rosie has been tapped to join the corps of lamplighters, the men and women who wander the emperor's highways lighting the lamps that keep the monsters at bay. For yes, the half-continent is home to many monsters...and monster-fighters, too.

Unfortunately, Rosie misses the boat, literally, and runs afoul of cutthroats and thieves. His apprenticeship is not off to a good start. Through a series of daring escapes, misadventures, and near-death experiences, Rosie eventually finds himself in the company of Europe, a legendary monster-fighter. As he travels with Europe, his initial suspicions are confirmed--not all monsters look like monsters.

Hints at larger schemes, subplots, and secrets abound and there are surely a slew of sequels to come. (Book Two: Lamplighter is already out and is also on my must reads list...)

Cornish has built an amazingly detailed world here. The technology is a mix of pre-industrial with a good deal of magic thrown in. There's class tensions, feuding nations, and warring political factions within the empire itself. The guild and naval structures alone are amazing. And then there are the monster fighter: the fulgars, lazgars, leers, and skolds who've been trained (or altered) to protect the human population, many who wander the land as mercenaries for hire. To explain or enhance the lot, the books contain a lengthy glossary (or explicarium) and beautiful b&w sketches. Cornish has created an exceedingly complex and captivating society, one I can't wait to immerse myself in again.

Go read now.

R.J. says

This is a re-read, as I've been reading the series aloud to my youngest son, who adores all things large, scary and monstrous. The story meanders around a bit at first (rather like its boy hero, in fact!), and the prose can be unnecessarily florid and at times nearly opaque in its lavish use of invented vocabulary. But I've said, and I'll stand by my assertion, that D.M. Cornish is the most comprehensive and immersive world-builder since Tolkien.

He's also created a fantastic array of distinct and interesting characters, particularly Europe -- both feminine and fearsome, mercurial and laser-brilliant, and with the coolest monster-fighting powers anyone could wish for (zzzzzzzak!) Also, Sebastipole is my Half-Continent boyfriend and I will fight anyone who says otherwise. (This is how you can tell that this is a Very Serious Review.)

Anyway, I do love these books, even when they spend an unfashionable amount of time describing the scenery, the weather, and what everyone is wearing -- as befits the mind of an illustrator turned author who is as much in love with the world he's imagined as any trifling details of plot or action that may happen in it. (But there is a plot, honest, and also a really fantastic twist that I didn't see coming but which is deliciously obvious in retrospect. I can't wait until my son realizes what's going on, because he will LOSE HIS MIND.)

Destiny Harding says

Before I delve in to this review... I admit to being a tad bias. Monster Blood Tattoo has since become one of my favourite series of all time. The rating of this book also depends on the inclinations of the reader... if you are not a fantasy book fan or have trouble immersing in imaginary worlds, you will not like this book.

Having read the entire series through, I feel that despite the hero being a young boy, Monster Blood Tattoo may not be appreciated by the average young reader. Perhaps I am doubting the ability of youth today, but Cornish's world is quite complex, and each book comes equipped with a lengthy 'explicarium' with terms and definitions. Also, the book often splits off into tangents in the midst of paragraphs explaining the incredibly expansive history of this world and its characters.

This book has a learning curve, and I believe that to be appreciated completely, you have to sort of give yourself a crash course and refresh your memory occasionally with that handy glossary included... I'm not joking!

Before you get frightened off, the Half-Continent is a remarkable world and terribly interesting. I found myself just as excited to take little breaks and 'study' the fine details of Cornish's world as I was to continue Rossamund's adventure. This is truly a book for the hardcore fantasy fan with a large imagination to exercise and challenge.

I believe it is because of this that many people feel the book starts off slowly. However, this rings true for any great fantasy novel... much like Tolkien's Middle Earth, part of the enjoyment is discovering how rich the world is that you are entering.

It is also because of this that readers of Monster Blood Tattoo will make a great divide: Those who revel in such expansive reading, and those who might get very, very confused.

Those details aside, "Foundling" is a fantastic introduction into the great adventure of a naive little orphan with a feminine name. Rossamund comes from a sheltered life, and we meet him on the threshold of being thrust into the ominous world of the Half-Continent. This is a land of magic and monsters told in a style I can't quite compare with anything I've ever known before. There is a great deal of history in this world, and the lush and strange landscape is cast before the reader in rich and vivid detail. We spend much time in the mind of Rossamund as he contemplates his purpose and tries to survive. His initial goals are small and sometimes exhaustively simple... but as the story goes on he is introduced to a wild cast of characters that greatly expand what little he knows of this world and its people.

Probably the greatest achievement of Cornish's Monster Blood Tattoo is the character Europa, who is introduced early in Foundling. While remaining vague as to not ruin anything, I would say that Europa is the true hero of this story, whilst Rossamund is more a neutral vessel for the reader to observe all aspects of the Half-Continent and the rest of the characters he encounters. While Rossamund has his own opinions and feelings about things in this adventure, he rarely makes incredible use of his personal capabilities, mostly just trying not to be killed or severely punished. I think it is this stance that gives the story such a unique feel. In fact, the most joy and use our protagonist finds in himself is during his encounters with Europa, who becomes sort of a mother or mentor for Rossamund. It is her curiosity, amusement and faith in Rossamund that seems to give him purpose in his journey.

Europa is all around a strong female lead who evolves wonderfully as the tale progresses without being too demanding of the spotlight.

Foundling is a story about exploration and survival and determining personal morals from the perspective of a child being forced to grow up quickly. Cornish presents us with an amazingly diverse cast of characters, and each new face brings a new level of depth to the world they inhabit. It is a fantasy novel that shines through as a journey more than the destination, and can very well leave you craving for more. I greatly encourage anyone with a big imagination to feed to read this book.

Lisa says

Full review: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2013/1...>

Pretty much, not sure why I gave this book 2 whole stars. It's a gigantic info dump, a character that acts and is treated like a child much younger than I think he was actually supposed to be. It's message is as subtle as a billy club to the face. The concept was the only thing about this book that worked for me.

