



[Home](#) > [Monster Blood Tattoo: Book 1: Foundling](#)

Monster Blood Tattoo: Book 1: Foundling

Books Reviewed:

[Monster Blood Tattoo: Book 1: Foundling](#) [1]

Issue:

[165](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Neither the title nor the lurid black and red cover of this novel give a true impression of this first book in a proposed trilogy about an invented world called the Half Continent. Australian illustrator, D M Cornish, had been amusing himself for over a decade with the geography and political and social life of this world of cities on the shores of a vinegar sea, enclosed by a wilderness inhabited by monsters, big and small, before a publisher suggested he might try writing a story about it. Which explains why, of the 400-plus pages here, the last 120 feature a small print ?Explicarium?, an encyclopaedic glossary of Half Continent life which covers anything and everything from calendars to hats and history to religion, and eight maps which require a magnifying glass to decipher.

For me, the most exciting inventions here are the ?teratologists?, or monster hunters, who come in a variety of forms, depending on the methods they use to kill their prey and who are represented in this first book by Europe, who is a ?fulgar? ? a monster hunter who has had her body surgically adapted to be able to store and discharge large amounts of electricity into her adversaries. She is, in consequence, subject to alarming mood swings and needs frequent dosages of a noxious treacly mixture to stay alive. There is certainly enough in the whole of Cornish?s intricately delineated world to fascinate and intrigue the reader, but it is more Mervyn Peake (in both writing and illustration) than Tolkien, and the story itself, regarding the journey of a young orphan called Rossamünd to take up an apprenticeship as a lamplighter on the wilderness roads, proceeds rather sedately weighed down by a lot of detail of setting and character, much of which seems to be preparing the ground for something that will happen later. Perhaps the pace will quicken in the next two volumes.

Running Order:

29

Source URL (retrieved on Jan '20): <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/165/childrens-books/reviews/monster-blood-tattoo-book-1-foundling>

Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/monster-blood-tattoo-book-1-foundling>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/165>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>