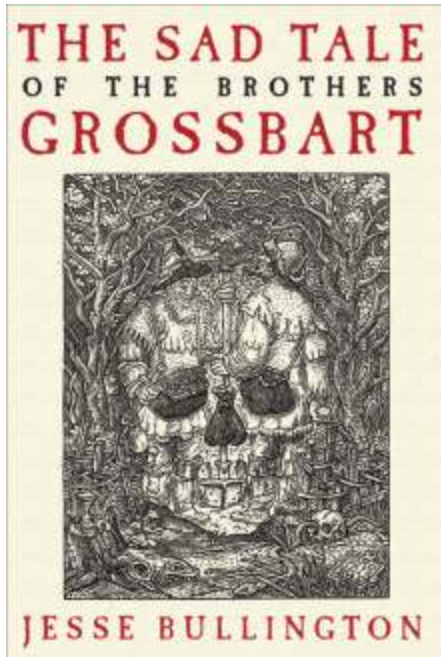


The 7 Question Interview with Jesse Bullington



Born and raised in rural Pennsylvania, Jesse Bullington spent his childhood exploring the surrounding woodlands and reading everything he could lay his grubby mitts across. Before moving with his family and completing his adolescence in North Florida, he spent a formative year living in the Netherlands. His current location is a matter of some conjecture and philosophical speculation. He received a bachelor's degree in both History and English Literature from Florida State University. Upon graduating he immediately set to work on *The Sad Tale of the Brothers Grossbart*, the very debut novel that the reader has so recently completed—excepting those individuals who first inspect an author's website before deciding to invest in a given text. To these sagacious and prudent readers, the author gives a hearty welcome and the assurance that, being a capital liar, his fictions are far more compelling—and far less pretentious—than this biographical sketch might lead one to believe. He is possessed of an excitable, ferret-like temperament, and is fond of good food, quality cinema, enjoyable books, pleasant music, scenic constitutionals, and an occasional spot of your favorite beverage. You and he should be fast friends if only you had met in youth, but now age has rendered you both incapable of the utterly

ingenuous relationships that characterize the innocent. That said, he approves of your sensible politics and the fashion in which you comport yourself. He is a touch scruffy to be considered a gentleman, but it is alleged that he cleans up reasonably well.

His debut novel is:

- *The Sad Tale of the Brothers Grossbart*

His official website can be accessed here: <http://jessebullington.com>

The WritingRaw.com 7 Question Interview

Please let us know who you are and how we might know you:

My name is Jesse Bullington and I'm primarily a writer of fiction. My debut novel *The Sad Tale of the Brothers Grossbart* was published by Orbit in November of last year and made several Best of 2009 lists, including the Amazon Editor's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy of 2009 list, and is currently a shortlisted nominee for the David Gemmell Morningstar Award. My next novel, *The Enterprise of Death*, will be published by Orbit in early 2011. My short fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in such places as *ChiZine*, *Jabberwocky*, and *Brain Harvest*, and anthologies like James Lowder's *The Best of All Flesh* and Ekaterina Sedia's *Running with the Pack*. With the help of my collaborator Molly Tanzer I also run a weekly column dedicated to re-watching older fantasy, horror,

and SF movies called Films of High Adventure, which appears on both of our blogs the first three Wednesday's of every month and on Fantasy Magazine on the last Wednesday of the month.

Any news you would like to share concerning upcoming projects:

I've just had my first look at the cover for my new novel *The Enterprise of Death* and am delighted with it. Although publication is still a little way down the road I'm rather excited with this project, and have been very encouraged by my editor and publisher's support of what is a very different work than my first novel. This one is a bit more serious than *The Sad Tale of the Brothers Grossbart*, and has enabled me to focus more heavily on gender, GBLT, and race issues than my previous work while still keeping high concentrations of action and fantastical elements. The plot revolves around a young slave from Dahomey who finds herself forced into the apprenticeship of a necromancer, and upon escaping his clutches she finds herself in an even worse predicament. I was also able to use more actual historical figures in this one, so the artist Niklaus Manuel Deutsch and the infamous alchemist Dr. Paracelsus both play substantial roles. In addition to the new novel I've also been reading and highly enjoying my fellow contributor's stories in the new werewolf anthology *Running with the Pack* that I have a piece in—the editor, Ekaterina Sedia, has done a great job, and there really seems to be something for everyone in it.

Thoughts concerning the current state of the literary world:

I think the popularization of online fiction markets has done wonders for the industry, even though it's obviously impacted print markets. With online submissions it's easier than ever to get short fiction in front of an editor, but of course that means the competition is fiercer than ever, too. In my personal experience, both agents and publishers seem to be increasingly more involved with the online community, both in terms of fiction markets and blogs, which can hardly be a bad thing. The downside of the literary world embracing the internet is that there are increasingly more sites and markets that prey on the insecurity's of novice writers, but sites like duotrope.com offer a free and easy alternative to that old, weighty standby *Writer's Market*—that's a website that should be bookmarked by anyone interested in becoming a writer, providing as it does all the information one could want about a potential market.

Who is/are your favorite author/s and why?

I always have a tough time with this question, as I love a great many authors and have a hard time narrowing it down to a reasonable number. I suppose I could make things a little easier on myself by talking about the why—a sizable portion of my favorites I love not just for their stories, which are first rate, but for their self-awareness as writers, and the ways they experiment and play with the how of the story, as well as the what.

Calvino, Borges, Umberto Eco, Angela Carter, hell, even Roald Dahl was beautifully subverting and toying with the idea of children's books. Of course, I also quite enjoy beautiful language for its own sake, but it helps when it's in the service of great stories and styles, from authors such as Jack Vance and Clark Ashton Smith, who are unfairly dismissed as being simple pulp, to more modern works like Orhan Pamuk's *I Am Red*, Iain Pears's *Dream of Scipio*, and Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. Some of my contemporaries that I'm enjoying at the moment include Philip Palmer, Jeff VanderMeer, Joe Abercrombie, Amanda Downum, Paul Tremblay, Stephen Graham Jones, Robert Jackson Bennett, and Marc Laidlaw.

Have you written a book you love that you have not been able to publish?

I've certainly written books that I loved as I was writing them only to realize in the drafting process that they were decidedly less deserving of my affection as I had previously thought. On the other hand, there is a novel that I collaborated with a friend on that I do love yet have not been able to publish, but that's our fault, not the book's—it still needs quite a bit of work, but at this early point in our careers we decided it would be better to concentrate on our own individual projects and leave the collaboration on a backburner until we were both a bit more solidified, which in turn should make the road to publication a little smoother when we do return to the project.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

Thank you, first and foremost, and I hope it's half as much fun to read my stuff as it is for me to write it. I've wanted to be a writer from the time I was a child, and suppose I've been one just as long, but to have my work published and read at my comparatively young age has been as unexpected as it is wonderful. I'm always happy to hear from readers at my website www.jessebullington.com.

How do you feel about what WritingRaw.com and other literary sharing sites are attempting to do for new writers?

A place like WritingRaw.com seems to be a great resource for new writers looking for support and a sense of community—anyone who writes will tell you it's a lonely business at times, and its only structure is what you bring to it, so having an online place to pick up suggestions, writing exercises, meet writers with similar interests, etc. seems most beneficial. So in terms of social networking I think it's great, but while I'm sure all hearts involved are in the right place, I honestly feel that new writers should be very careful about what "for the love" markets they submit to—many markets and publishers will not consider stories or novels that have been previously published, even if it was "only" on a free website. When you sign a contract, be it for a short story or a novel, you're asked if the work has ever appeared elsewhere, and while some places allow reprints, other places decidedly don't. If you don't have any interest in publishing your work beyond

FTL markets or your own blog than what I'm saying here is a moot point, but if the goal is to have your work published elsewhere I think it's something to consider.

Of course, I'm not representing any short story markets or book publishers here, and there are always exceptions, and of course new writers should submit anywhere they like, but again, caution should be exercised. Submitting to a paying market may seem daunting, but in most cases it's no harder than submitting to a non-paying one, and often paying markets can afford to pay for a very simple reason—they have the circulation to afford it, and consequently such credits will help bump you out of future slush piles, whereas most FTL credits, frankly, will not. To paraphrase my friend Molly Tanzer, who's assistant editor at Fantasy Magazine, you'll never know what your story could have done unless you start at the top and work your way down—writing is one of those disciplines where there will always be people who think they're far more talented than they actually are and other people who are actually a helluva lot better than they give themselves credit, and to not submit to a market for fear of rejection is to sell yourself, and your writing, short before it's even had a chance.

Obviously, my take on this is just that, and it's certainly not my intent to be discouraging. Again, I'm all in favor of writers submitting and publishing wherever they like, I just think it's important for the choice to be an informed one. After last year's "RateFail" I think the question of where to publish should be seriously considered by all aspiring writers—for those unfamiliar with the debate in question, author Jason Sanford has a great cliff notes version/set of links at his blog here:
<http://www.jasonsanford.com/jason/2009/12/cliffsnotes-to-the-great-short-story-rate-fail-debate.html>

WritingRaw.com would like to thank Jesse Bullington for taking the time out of his busy schedule for this interview.