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Gustav Hasford

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Jerry Gustave Hasford (November 28, 1947 – January 29, 1993), known as 'Gustav Hasford' was an American novelist, journalist and poet. His semi-autobiographical novel *The Short-Timers* (1979) was the basis of the film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).^[1] He was also a United States Marine Corps veteran, who served during the Vietnam War.

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Biography

Early life

Bom in Russellville, Alabama, Hasford joined the United States Marine Corps in 1966 and served as a combat correspondent during the Vietnam War. As a military journalist, he wrote stories for *Leathemeck Magazine*, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, and *Sea Tiger*.^[2] During his tour in Vietnam, Hasford was awarded the Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Valor Device, during the Battle of Huế in 1968.

Early literary career

Hasford associated with various science fiction writers of the 1970s (including Arthur Byron Cover and David J. Skal). He had works published in magazines and anthologies such as *Space and Time* and Damon Knight's *Orbit* series; he also published the poem, "Bedtime Story", in a 1972 edition of *Winning Hearts and Minds*, the first anthology of writing about the war by the veterans themselves.^[3] the poem was reprinted in *Carrying the Darkness* in 1985.^[4])

First novel and film

In 1978, Hasford attended the Milford Writer's Workshop and met veteran science fiction author Frederik Pohl, who was then an editor at Bantam Books. At Pohl's suggestion, Hasford submitted *The Short-Timers*, and Pohl promptly bought it for Bantam.^[5]

The Short-Timers was published in 1979 and became a best-seller, described in *Newsweek* as “The best work of fiction about the Vietnam War”.^[1] It was adapted into the feature film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), directed by Stanley Kubrick, and the screenplay written by Hasford, Kubrick, and screenwriter Michael Herr was nominated for an Academy Award. Hasford's actual contributions were a subject of dispute among the three, and ultimately Hasford chose not to attend the Oscar ceremonies.^[1]

Library books theft charges

In 1985, Hasford had borrowed 98 books from the Sacramento, California public library and was wanted for grand theft there.^[6] Then, in 1988, shortly before the Oscars ceremony, he was charged with theft after campus police from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California, found nearly 10,000 library books in his rented storage locker. At that time, he had 87 overdue books and five years of *Civil War Times* magazine issues checked out from the Cal Poly-SLO library; the materials were valued at over \$20,000.^[6]

Hasford's book collection included books borrowed (and never returned) from dozens of libraries across the United States, from libraries in Australia and the United Kingdom, and, allegedly, books taken from the homes of acquaintances. Among them were 19th-century books on Edgar Allan Poe and the American Civil War.^[6] Hasford had obtained borrowing privileges at Cal Poly-SLO as a California resident, using a false address and Social Security number.^[6]

Hasford initially denied the charges, but he eventually admitted possession of several hundred stolen books and pleaded *nolo contendere* ("no contest") to possession of stolen property. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment (of which he served three months) and promised to pay restitution from the royalties of his future works.^[6]

Hasford claimed that he wanted the books to research a never-published book on the Civil War. He described his difficulties as "a vicious attack launched against me by Moral Majority fanatics backed up by the full power of the Fascist State."^[6]

Second and third novels

In 1990, he published a second novel, *The Phantom Blooper*, a sequel to *The Short-Timers*. The sequel was supposed to be the second of a "Vietnam Trilogy", but Hasford died soon after completing *The Phantom Blooper* and before writing the third installment.^[7] Hasford's final novel is *A Gypsy Good Time* (1992), a hardboiled, noir detective story set in Los Angeles.

Death

Hasford, impoverished^{[8][9]} and suffering from untreated diabetes, moved to the Greek island of Aegina and died there of heart failure on 29 January 1993, aged 45.^[1]

Books

- The Short-Timers* (1979) ISBN 0-553-23945-7
- The Phantom Blooper* (1990) ISBN 0-553-05718-9
- A Gypsy Good Time* (1992) ISBN 0-671-72917-9

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- ↑ Lewis, Grover (June 28, 1987). "The Several Battles of Gustav Hasford: A Candid Conversation With the Co-Writer and Fierce, Real-Life Protagonist of Full Metal Jacket". *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. Retrieved August 2, 2012.
- ↑ Barry, Jan Barry & Paquet, Basil T. & Rottmann, Larry (Editors) (1972). "Bedtime Story". *gustavhasford.com*. *Winning Hearts and Minds*. 1st Casualty Press. Archived from the original on September 1, 2011. Retrieved 2 August 2012.
- ↑ Ehrhart, W.D. (Editor) (1985). "Bedtime Story". *Carrying the Darkness*. Texas Tech University Press. Retrieved August 2, 2012.
- ↑ Pohl, Frederik (January 26, 2010). "Gus Hasford: The Libraries' Very Best Customer". *The Way The Future Blogs*. Retrieved January 26, 2010.
- ↑ ***a b c d e f*** "Book theft articles".
- ↑ Ross, Matthew Samuel (2010). "An Examination of the life and work of Gustav Hasford, Paper 236". *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*.
- ↑ "Jerry Gustave "Gus" Hasford". *Findagrave*.
- ↑ Ross, Matthew Samuel (2010). "An Examination of the life and work of Gustav Hasford, Paper 236". *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*.

Additional reading

- "Author Information for Gustav Hasford". *This Goodly Land: Alabama's Literary Landscape*. Alabama Center for the Book. Archived from the original on 2008-05-13.

External links

- GusHasford.com, the official Hasford home page
- Original version of the Gustav Hasford home page, with the full text of *The Short-Timers* and *The Phantom Blooper* novels included at the Wayback Machine (archived January 31, 2011)
- Original version of the Gustav Hasford website containing an excerpt of *A Gypsy Good Time*

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