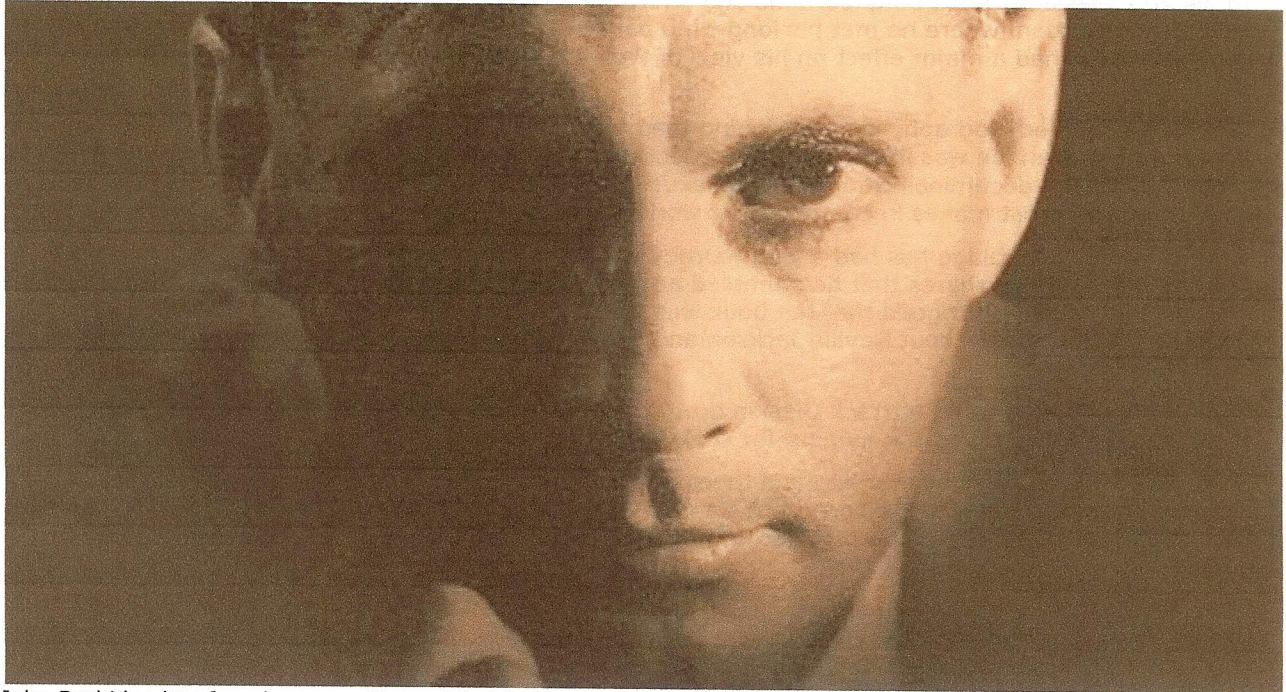


Discovering Gerald Glaskin *by Graeme Watson*

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John Burbidge has found a compelling subject in his new biography 'Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin'.

Glaskin lived much of his life in Perth, was a successful author, although popular recognition would elude him. More importantly, and to be worthy of a biography, Glaskin was a compellingly interesting character.

Glaskin was defiantly openly gay long before it was legally or socially acceptable to be so, and one of his early works 'No End to the Way' was a thinly veiled portrait of queer life in Perth in the mid-1960s. He published the book under the pseudonym Neville Jackson. The book was promptly banned, but the publishers found a loop hole in the law that allowed them to distribute the book in Australia. It was illegal for the book to be shipped in, so they chartered planes.

Glaskin wrote many novels during his life but found a much greater level of success overseas than he did in his home country. Rather than sticking to one specific genre Glaskin was constantly changing the style of his writing and wrote across genres, focussing on a wide variety of subjects. One of the reasons that mainstream success eluded him was probably because an admirer of one of his books would find something completely different if they selected another of his works.

At the recent launch of the book historian Graham Willet described the biography as a work of great importance and interest.

"It's extensively and exhaustively researched," said Willet, highlighting that biographer John Burbidge had taken thirteen years to research his subject travelling to many different countries to track down the authenticity of the many different stories about the author. Glaskin was well known for adding a little embellishment to a story to entertain his friends, giving Burbidge the challenge of sorting fact from fiction.

Rather than taking a purely linear approach to Glaskin's life Burbidge takes us into the writer's life through many different paths. We find out about the author's family and ancestors - each with their

own amazing tales which gives us an insight into Western Australia life not just during Glaskin's lifetime but also from our colonial days onwards.

The biography cleverly captures two elements, the authors intriguing life and the work that he created. While Glaskin would not be proclaimed a great writer, although he did appear to have a great self-belief in his writing. The wide range of topics he covered in his works paints an effective portrait of the big issues that Australian society tackled in his lifetime. His books focussed on themes as diverse as homosexuality, Asia, youth suicide and the outback.

Alongside the author's work the biography also captures the life of Glaskin. The author was born in Perth and grew up in Cottesloe, a suburb that he would constantly return to throughout his life. At a time when Perth was an extremely remote and conservative society Glaskin has several sojourns overseas to different cities and different cultures.

In his 20's Glaskin lived in Singapore making a fortune as a stock broker. Later in life he spent time living in Amsterdam where he met his long-time partner Leo van de Pas. Undoubtedly the time Glaskin spent overseas had a major effect on his view of Western Australian society and its conservative attitudes.

Burbidge's detailed biography is an intriguing read for anyone who wants to gain a good sense of what Western Australian life was like in many decades gone by, but also an insightful view into queer life in Perth prior to the decriminalisation of homosexuality. It is also a fascinating look into the processes and choices an artist makes in creating their work.

Biographer John Burbidge has had a long journey in creating this account of Glaskin's life and work. The US based author shares that he stumbled across Glaskin's work when he found a copy of the book 'No End to the Way'. Intrigued that the book was about his own home city, Perth – Burbidge was eager to find out more about Neville Jackson and soon uncovered its author and the nineteen other books he wrote.

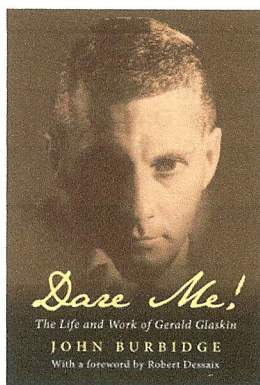
When Burbidge attempted to track Glaskin down on a trip home to Perth in 2000, he searched through the phone book and found the number for G.M Glaskin.

"I made a call on a Sunday morning and there was this strange Dutch accent on the other end of the line and he said to be 'Well I'm sorry, but Gerry died six months ago,'" explains Burbidge. The author spoke to Glaskin's long-time partner Leo van de Pas who invited him over to chat about the late author.

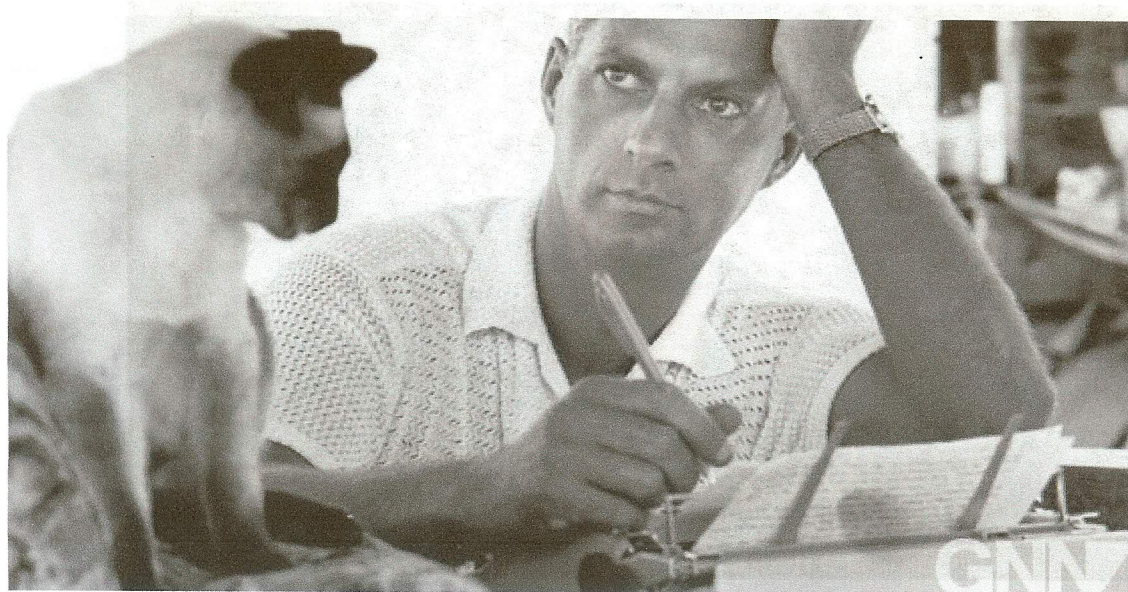
"Five hours later I walked out of Leo's apartment and my head was just spinning," Burbidge said, "All these stories he had told me about this amazing man and his writing. I was left with the question of 'What I was going to do about it?'"

Burbidge shares that he couldn't leave it there he had to know what motivated Gerald Glaskin, "I needed to know more, I needed to know what made this man tick. A man who wrote a landmark gay novel in the 1960s."

Burbidge's commitment to researching his subject's life is admirable. In talking to Glaskin's relatives, friends, and professional colleagues he paints a detailed and enthralling portrait. Burbidge shows us that Gerald Glaskin could be inspiring, provocative, grouchy, meddlesome, caring and frustrated. His positive and negative quality are given equal standing, but through it all this tribute to the author leaves us with admiration for his tenacity, creativity and perseverance to his craft.



'Dare Me: The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin' by John Burbidge is available now through [Monash University Publishing](#).



FEB 17

A GAY LIFE: DARE ME! THE LIFE AND WORK OF GERALD GLASKIN

CREATED ON // MONDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2014 AUTHOR // STEPHEN RUSSELL

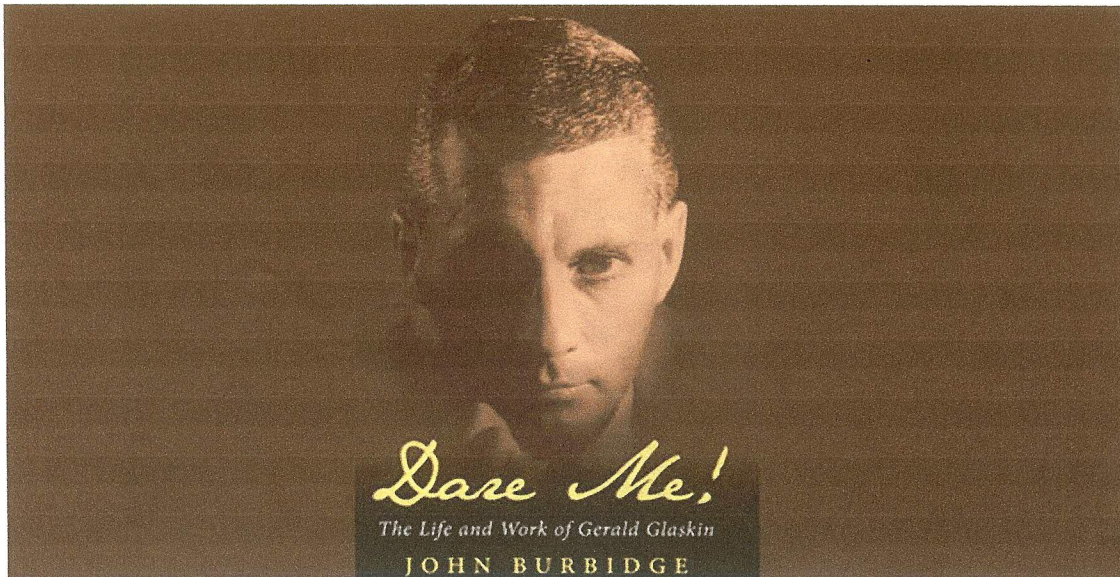
Author John Burbidge's biography, *Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin*, shines a light on one of our most overlooked gay writers. Stephen A Russell finds out more.

Australian author Gerald Glaskin penned the country's first openly gay novel, *No End To The Way*, under the pseudonym Neville Jackson way back in 1965 when homosexuality was not only a taboo subject, but the sexual act was illegal countrywide.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the censors had a fit over the unflinchingly honest portrayal of a gay relationship between Ray, an Australian advertising exec, and his Dutch partner Cor, with the novel initially banned here.

Glaskin, who grew up in Perth's beachside suburb of Cottesloe and served in both the Royal Australian Navy and the RAAF during WWII, published no fewer than 20 books, fiction and non-fiction. With such an infamous title under his belt, it's somewhat surprising he's not a household name in his own country.

John Burbidge, a former communications director of the Institute of Cultural Affairs turned writer/editor, was intrigued when he stumbled upon a mention of *No End To The Way* in an anthology by Australian author and critic Robert Dessaix. "I grew up in 1960's Perth and I'd never heard of the book, nor had I heard of the author," Burbidge says.



[Image] Burbidge's tale of W.A. author Gerald Glaskin.

Managing to track down a copy, he was amazed by its open depiction of gay love, and by a side of Perth he did not recognise, having grown up in the same city at the same time. Fascinated, Burbidge acquired all of Glaskin's works. Now living in the US for over 25 years, as well as stints in Belgium, India and Canada, it was while on a trip back home to Perth in 2000 that Burbidge hit on the idea of looking Glaskin up in the phone book.

"I found one G. M. Glaskin and thought 'that's probably my man,'" Burbidge says. A strong Dutch accent on the other end of the line turned out to be Leo van de Pas, Gerry's partner of 32 years, who informed Burbidge that Glaskin had died just six months previously.

While he never got to meet the man, a subsequent six-hour face-to-face chat with van de Pas left Burbidge's head spinning. He knew he had the makings of a compelling biography, sparking a 13-year project that culminates with the publication of *Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin* this month, which aims to shine a light on one of Australia's most unfairly overlooked authors.

Of Glaskin's major works, 18 were published in the UK, with many translated into European languages, compared to only two in Australia. Glaskin lived in Singapore for almost ten years and then Amsterdam for seven. While Burbidge says this period away, writing on Australia with a critical distance, produced some of his best work, it may well have contributed to his lower profile here.

"People didn't hear too much about him, but when he did come back to visit Perth he was often in the newspapers, not always for his writing," Burbidge reveals. "He would have opinions on every subject under the sun and write letters to the editor."

This somewhat spikey personality may have lost him friends and influence. "He was belligerent, pugnacious and confrontational," Burbidge says. "He was also a caring person, and a rather

funny one too, but at any slight, perceived or real, he would take offence and react both swiftly and relentlessly.”

Pouring over his letters and files, Burbidge was taken aback by the volume of his furious retorts. “Often he had a justified reason, but he just went head on, like a dog with a bone. He chewed out publishers, editors, family members and institutions like writers’ associations. Every group that he joined, he ended up resigning from in some fit of pique.”

The fact he chose such off-limit topics as homosexual love and also incest, as well as picking at the scab of Australian racism with regards to both Aboriginal people and Asian immigrants, probably lost him a few more followers.

“His choice of subject matter would have had the average Australian in the ‘60s running in the opposite direction,” Burbidge says. “These were things most people didn’t want to have to deal with. He wasn’t, on the whole, writing romance novels or great Australian landscape outback stories.”

While Burbidge admits it would be a stretch to hail Glaskin as a literary genius, he says his strong storytelling and outsider status, both physically and literary, provides a provocatively fresh angle.

Plagued by poor health throughout his life and having had several near-death accidents, it’s been over 14 years since Glaskin, who never went to university, having been sent to work at 15 as the eldest of seven children during the depression, died. Burbidge thinks it’s time we took another look at his work.

“We’ve had over a decade to get over him and reflect a bit,” he says. “Even to his dying days, in a private hospital here in Perth, he was tackling the nurses, complaining to doctors. He never gave up, right to the end.”

[Image] ‘Writing companion’. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy Jo Darbyshire.

Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin by John Burbidge is published by Monash University Publishing.

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Stephen Russell is a Melbourne based writer.

This article appeared online in the *Gay News Network*, 17 February 2014.

<http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au/feature/risky-business-12994.html>



Australian Pride Network

A network of Australian Pride Organisations

Dare Me! – The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin



Gerald Glaskin (1923 – 2000) pushed the boundaries of acceptability in what he wrote and how he wrote it. His twenty major publications – novels, short stories, travelogues, memoirs, plays and more – tackled such taboo subjects as homosexuality, incest and parapsychology.

In the aftermath of the Second World War Glaskin challenged white Australians to reexamine their attitudes to Asians and Aboriginal people, and his 1965 novel, *No End to the Way*, initially banned in his home country, was ground-breaking in its frank and honest portrayal of a homosexual relationship.

Outside Australia, Glaskin's books were translated into multiple languages and garnered praise from critics and readers alike. He was hailed as 'the ace of Australian story tellers'. Yet in his home country he was and remains a virtual nonentity.

Why did Australia turn its back on him? Was it his delight in provoking people? Was it his audacious, belligerent and at times overbearing manner? Was he a victim of his country's 'tall poppy syndrome', or of a provincial publishing industry?

This insightful biography probes the life and work of one of Australia's most neglected writers and in so doing, gives Glaskin his proper due.

In Dare Me! John Burbidge has provided an intriguing exploration of the life and works of an almost forgotten Australian writer...Burbidge has done us a favour in bringing an important writer back to the spotlight, and recounting a life that reveals much about marginality in twentieth century Australia. – Dennis Altman

Australian born John Burbidge has lived and worked in Belgium, Canada, India and the United States. For many years, he was Communications Director for the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a non-profit organisation engaged in community and organisational development, before becoming an independent writer/editor.

His articles on a variety of subjects have appeared in magazines, newspapers, periodicals and books in several countries. Alongside *Dare Me!* his current writing projects include a memoir on living as a gay man in India, and an anthology of travel-inspired essays.

Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin is published by Monash University Publishing and available at all leading book retailers. For more information, visit: www.publishing.monash.edu for details.

To learn more about Gerald Glaskin, John Burbidge has developed a dedicated website at: www.geraldblaskin.com

Image: Gerald Glaskin by George Britnell

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