

# Author's courage, talent revealed

## BIOGRAPHY

### Dare Me! The Life and Work of Gerald Glaskin

John Burbidge

Monash University Publishing, \$34.95

REVIEW DAVID HOUGH

For more than 20 years, G.M. Glaskin was one of Australia's most successful authors, judged by productivity, overseas sales and the number of languages into which his novels were translated. The literary establishment and Australian publishers ignored him.

Between 1955, when *A World of Our Own* appeared and 1974, the year of *Windows of the Mind*, Glaskin produced 10 novels, an anthology of short stories and a travelogue, *The Land that Sleeps*. Barrie & Rockliff published all but two in London.

The novels were translated into seven European languages — and Russian (for which he received no royalty).

Glaskin's only work to make it to film, despite options and negotiations, was *A Waltz Through the Hills*, a telemovie produced by Barron Films.

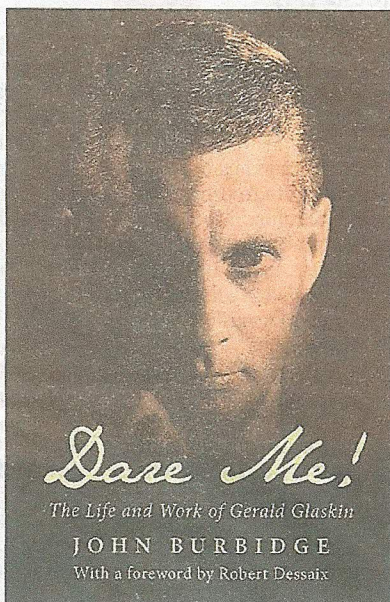
John Burbidge's biography, *Dare Me!* The life and work of Gerald Glaskin, is one of the best yet written about an Australian writer.

A compelling read, it looks to establish Glaskin not as a literary novelist but as a wonderful storyteller who benchmarked a number of themes current in Australian literature.

Glaskin was at the forefront in exploring our relationships with Asia, especially in *A Lion in the Sun* and *The Beach of Passionate Love*, and with the Aboriginal people, in *A Flight to Landfall*, for example.

Only Tim Winton evokes a sense of place better than Glaskin.

Few have understood loneliness or written about it as poignantly. He tackled issues of sexuality head on in *A Minor Portrait*, *O Love, O Loneliness*



and especially in *No End to the Way*, published in 1965 under the pseudonym Neville Jackson.

This courageous novel depicted a homosexual relationship in Perth in the 1960s and is as pioneering as Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*.

Burbidge, like Glaskin, is homosexual. This gives him an insight into many of the complexities of Glaskin's multi-faceted life and work, expressed with a candour that a straight writer might find difficult to emulate.

He tells his story with a muscular energy that Glaskin would have admired. He is scrupulous with his sources and references without overburdening the reader.

Glaskin was his own worst enemy — he fell out with just about everybody and spread himself too thinly. In Burbidge's hands, however, Glaskin emerges as a major portrait. Ⓢ

