

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2782

Cross, Zora Bernice May

(1890 - 1964)

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| Born | 18 May, 1890, Brisbane Queensland Australia |
| Died | 22 January, 1964, New South Wales Australia |
| Occupation | Actor, Author, Journalist, Poet, Print journalist, Teacher |

Summary

Zora Cross was, among other things, a poet and author of children's verse. She wrote for the *Brisbane Daily Mail* as a freelance journalist, and was drama critic for the magazines *Green Room* and the *Lone Hand*.

Details

The daughter of Australian-born parents, accountant Ernest William Cross and his wife Mary Louisa Eliza Ann (née Skyring), Zora Cross was educated in Sydney from 1905. She began work as a primary school teacher, but left the profession to give birth to a daughter who died as an infant. She married actor Stuart Smith in 1911, but insisted upon living separately. The marriage was dissolved in 1922. Zora gave birth to a son, Norman Garvin, in 1914, after a 'mysterious love affair' (ADB), and later had two daughters – Davidina and April – to her *de facto* husband, *Bulletin* 'Red Page' editor David McKee Wright. The eldest, Davidina, predeceased her mother in 1941.

Zora's first book of poems, *A Song of Mother Love*, was published in Brisbane in 1916. That same year she attempted publication of her first novel, on an Aboriginal theme, but was unsuccessful. In 1917 she published a second collection of poetry, *Songs of Love and Life*, comprising sixty love sonnets: 'the first sustained expression in Australian poetry of erotic experience from a woman's point of view' (ADB). A number of poems were published in the *Bulletin*. *The Lilt of Life*, published in 1918, ran along similar lines, but the inspiration behind the poems – Zora's relationship with David Wright, who had four sons to Margaret Fane – was the stuff of scandal. Zora also wrote verse for children, including *The City of Riddle-mee-ree* in 1918, and *Elegy on an Australian Schoolboy*, in memory of her soldier brother, in 1921.

When David Wright died suddenly in 1928, Zora supported herself and her three children by working as a freelance journalist (particularly for the *Brisbane Daily Mail*), teacher of elocution, actor and drama critic. She attempted to write a trilogy of novels on a Roman theme, but never completed the work. She died of heart disease in the home she had shared with Wright at Glenbrook, in the Blue Mountains, and was buried at Emu Plains.

Events

1930 - 1960

Published resources

Book

The City of Riddle-me-ree, Cross, Zora, 1918

Daughters of the Seven Mile: the love story of an Australian woman, Cross, Zora, 1924

Elegy on an Australian Schoolboy, Cross, Zora, 1921

The Lilt of Life, Cross, Zora, 1918

Songs of Love and Life, Cross, Zora, 1917

The Hectic Age, Cross, Zora, 1944

Edited Book

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Resource Section

Cross, Zora Bernice May (1890 - 1964), Green, Dorothy, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080175b.htm>

Archival resources

State Library of Victoria

[Papers, 1800-1936. \[manuscript\].](#)

Author Details

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