



Victoria Cross (1862-1952)

Pseudonym for Annie Sophie Cory

- Her father was in the British Army
- She was born in India
- Wrote 23 novels concerning unconventional marriage, as well as class, race, gender and sexual transgressions

Anna Lombard: Ethridge, an almost ideal hero, plays the part which is so normal to women as never to call for remark, while Anna abandons herself to the force of a passion to which men succumb so often as seldom to call for comment or censure.

∼Review of Reviews, 23 (June 1901): 597



Significant Moments in the Novel

Burmese wives

"I looked down on her with a smile. The idea of love seemed to me ludicrous. What could I do with this little atom of doll-like, child-like life?"

- Lulloo/Anna parallel
- Caterina Sforza

"I took her arm and hastened her down the few stairs to the recess, drew her behind those heavy, friendly curtains and then gathered her into my arms recklessly, half-choking and bruising her [...] With me, whatever pride she might possess she put at my feet. To me she was always yielding, submissive, clinging, loving and simple. This change, this distinction she made for me had in it a subtle and intoxicating flattery."

What do these incidents reveal about Ethridge's desires? How is Anna characterised?



The Racial Other

"The skin was smooth and soft as velvet, of a tint of burnished copper, but glowing and transparent; and eyes full of intellect and pride [...] what a marvel of humanity [...] that beauty was like a sort of magic [...] if I had been a woman, I might have been as faithless to Anna as she was now to me, for his sake."

"What has passed before me had been an idyl of purity and dignity and grace. No kiss could have been given or received with more perfect chastity of look, gesture and action [...] the bending of his kingly head till his lips touched hers would have been an ideal for a painter drawing a monarch bestowing a kiss upon his betrothed. And he was a barbarian who trod the streets of a bazaar with naked dusty feet!"



The Jostle for Cultural Authority

How does Cross problematise cultural authority?

Language

"She lisped softly, "Ashik karti" or "I love you", to show me she too could speak Hindustani."

Secrecy and Knowledge

"Five years! So she knew the exact length of my appointment, probably the amount of my salary and private income to an anna. They know everything, these people."

Morality

"Draupadi is one of the dearest Hindu ideals [...] She is the type of pure, trustful womanhood and faithful wifehood answering to the Greek conception and British acceptance of Penelope [...] strange and to Englishmen perverted idea; yet thousands of cultivated and enlightened individuals through many ages have been able to comprehend it and associate it with an ideal of purity. And was I wholly justified in the revolt and loathing I had felt of Anna when she made her final suggestion to me this afternoon?"



Constructions of Tropicality

European ideas about the tropics, as they developed as a result of exploration, conquest and colonisation since the late fifteenth century, were necessarily diverse, but fall broadly into two categories [...] a landscape of seeming natural abundance and great fertility was also paradoxically a landscape of poverty and disease.

(David Arnold, "Illusory Riches": Representations of the Tropical World, 1840-1950)



