



## Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards

Kit Brennan

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## **Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards** Kit Brennan

A wild and sexy romp through history based on the real-life adventures of the audacious Lola Montez. It is 1842, London, and the gorgeous, ever-capricious 22-year-old Eliza Gilbert, (aka Lola Montez) is in deep trouble and seeks escape from a divorce trial. Desperate to be free, Lola accepts an alluring offer of a paid trip to Spain, if she will only fulfill a few tasks for Juan de Grimaldi—a Spanish theatre impresario who is also a government agent and spy for the exiled Spanish queen, Maria Cristina. Lola soon finds herself in Madrid, undercover as a performer in a musical play. But when she falls dangerously in love with the target, General Diego de Léon, Lola becomes a double agent and the two hatch a plot of their own. Disaster strikes when the plot is exposed, Diego is captured, and Lola is forced to flee on horseback to France, with a dangerous group of Loyalists in hot pursuit.

## **Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards Details**

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## From Reader Review Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards for online ebook

### Kristen says

I wasn't sure exactly what to expect with this book. It was a different setting, a different era, and a different kind of story from my usual historical fiction. Fortunately, it was a full-on gallop of a fabulous, exciting story, with an "in-your-face" kick-ass heroine.

Lola Montez, a real historical person, who began life as Englishwoman Eliza Gilbert, was not your typical retiring violet of a woman. As a result, her determination to grab every bit of life, love and experience she could possibly get, without care or regard for what her society told her "should" be her life, she had some dangerous, painful, but also exhilarating and joyous adventures. This book is a fictionalized possible story about a period in Lola's life when there is no information about where she was, or what happened to her before she resurfaced in England.

The story literally grabs you by the throat in the first few pages, and doesn't let go until the end. I could not put this down once I started it, and finished it in just a couple of days as a result. I just loved Lola from the moment I met her! She was a spirited, intelligent, demanding, headstrong woman, who knew what she wanted and didn't shrink from going after it and getting it, what society dictated about how she ought to live be damned. She lived, loved, schemed, fought and survived through some incredible experiences, many times coming close to death in this fictional account of her possible adventures.

The story is wonderfully written, and highly entertaining, with everything a historical fiction fan would enjoy. We have travels to different countries, risking death by spying, loving multiple men [there are a few sex scenes, but nothing lengthy or explicit], fleeing from people wanting to kill her [again, some scenes of violence but nothing at all excessive for this genre] and above all, Lola's absolute determination to not only live her life as she sees fit, but to thrive and create situations to suit her, rather than the many people who try to tame and control her.

I'm excited that this is a series, because I will DEFINITELY read other books about Lola's continuing adventures. I also want to read some of the biographies about Lola Montez, whom I find an absolutely fascinating historical woman.

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### Melissa says

Whip Smart was a very quick and enjoyable read. The main character is a woman whose attitude is, in many ways, ahead of her time. She is independent and assertive. At the same time she has the failings of all humans: a desire to be loved, a wish to be taken care of, fears and hopes. I can't say that I always liked her very much. At times I wished that I could reach through the pages and shake her. But I think that makes a character more real somehow.

I am not familiar with the place and time in history that this book is based on. Therefore I cannot speak to its accuracy. I didn't find anything glaringly and obviously incorrect and for a light historical fiction novel, that's good enough for me. The places were described well enough that I could picture them in my mind. A cast of varied characters flit in and out of view. There are turns and surprises that kept me guessing at who was

meant to be the black hat of the story.

I read this book over a couple of days but in actuality it took very few hours to get through it. Whether you love or hate Lola, she is a very compelling narrator. I found myself thinking about the book when I wasn't actively reading it and genuinely wondering how it would all pan out. And that's the mark of a successfully written novel, isn't it? To leave you thinking..

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## Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

Lola Montez could be the real-life model for "The Perils of Pauline", except that Lola's perils had much more dire, and more far-reaching, consequences--and not just for Lola.

Lola Montez, nee Eliza Gilbert, may be the originator of the phrase, "feel the fear and do it anyway". Or possibly "fools rush in where angels fear to tread". She certainly doesn't seem to have done much looking before she leapt.

It makes for a wild life. And a wild, adventurous story.

Stories told in flashback, like *Whip Smart*, do remove one element of surprise. The reader knows that the teller of the tale has survived every single hair-raising adventure. It doesn't matter in Lola's tale of self-invention. The whole thing is one grand death-defying romp through the back stages and bedrooms of Spain's very real civil unrest in 1841.

But Lola became a spy because she wanted to escape England while her divorce was taking place. Then she got blackmailed by the Spanish spymaster. The sheer amount of foolish skullduggery on the part of the ringleaders would have been laughable, if it wasn't so inept as spycraft. And it made Lola the perfect "patsy" when the plot failed. Which, of course, it did.

But, rather like another historic character that Lola resembles, the "unsinkable" Molly Brown, Lola escapes from the tragic death of her lover, the insane plotting of a double-agent, and finishes the story running off to another adventure, never looking back.

Escape Rating B+: *Whip Smart* reads like the best kind of melodrama, which in some ways, it is. There is never a dull moment in Lola's life, because that's the way she wants it to be. She invents herself, and she always looks ahead. It's a life without much introspection, but she was running too fast for that.

Lola outruns the consequences of her actions. It's the only way she stays alive. Of course, as the narrator of her own story, she may not be strictly reliable, but that's what makes things interesting. She was a spy, albeit an unwitting one. She was also a courtesan, and an adventuress. And she loved being the center of attention. Of course she tells the story in such a way as to put herself in the best light.

Whether Lola's part in the history of Spain in 1841 really happened, is not clear, but Lola Montez certainly did exist. It is certainly reminiscent of things that she did, and fits with her established biography. Lola may even have been the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes' Irene Adler and the incidents in *A Scandal in Bohemia*.

Guessing where the fiction and the history blends just makes the story that much more fascinating. Lola would have loved it.

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### **Marcie says**

Whip Smart is a story about Lola Montez a.k.a Eliza Rosanna Gilbert. There's a period in Eliza's life that little is known about her. That's where Kit Brennan's story begins. Lola is a fascinating character. I think whip smart is an accurate description of her. Eliza was the kind of women that led life on her own terms. In today's society that's not such a big deal, but in 1842 it was huge.

Eliza was looking for adventure, and she desperately wanted to be a dancer. When an opportunity opened up to go to Spain to achieve her dream, she grabbed it immediately. Eliza was very free-spirited, and very spontaneous. Before she knows it she's caught up in a political uprising. She has to be on her toes, and watch her back constantly. However the heart wants what the heart wants, and her heart wants the dangerous Diego de Léon. This decision leads her into a luscious affair that is rewarding but perilous.

I didn't know a lot about Lola Montez before I read this novel. About 1/3 through this book I had to find out more about her. Brennan seems to capture the spirit of the real Lola Montez between these pages. Lola is quite a personality. The story line is entertaining. It has adventure, suspense, and, of course, romance. I was cheering Lola on the entire story. Although this book is fiction I think the author really does Lola Montez justice. In real life she lived life on her own terms just as she did on these pages.

Read more at <http://www.2readornot2read.com/2013/0...>

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### **Christine Staszko says**

When I read this book was based on a real person, but with a fictional re-imagining of how she became who history knows her to be, I got really excited. It seemed so Philippa Gregory, what with the enticing cover (which is the best, in-your-face book cover I've seen in a while), romantic old world time period, clash with major historical events and people, and the promise of some steamy scenes here and there; I was definitely in for this read. The story is constantly on the move, which makes this a quick and easy read. Some of the revelations within the book are not that impressive, but they are interesting enough to keep you reading and they do keep the pace moving. I really enjoyed this book because the main character is not some Spanish princess or exiled Spanish princess or member of nobility like so many historical romance books are from this time period. It's great to see a female character with attitude who makes her own way in the world as a spy and performer or any other mask she wears to make her way up in the world.

Unfortunately, the character of Lola Montez is not completely irresistible. In the beginning and end of the book she comes off as a spoiled child who can't understand why she can't instantly rise to fame and fortune. The character is a young woman and this could be the author playing off of youth's sometimes prideful innocence, but I just found it annoying. In the thick of the story, Lola does get bolder and more in tune with herself and how the world sees her. However, she never becomes the completely strong, independent woman I wanted her to be after going through all of her trials and tribulations. She still irks her responsibilities and relies on tricks and charms as her bread and butter in the end.

When I pick up a book with such a saucy cover as this one, the story usually fails to match the excitement I felt when seeing the book for the first time. However, there is a good story here about an interesting woman in history who I had no idea existed until this read. I can't wait to learn more about her and see what this

author does with the character's story compared to Lola's real history. Hopefully by book two, the character will have grown up enough to deserve the title of this first book: whip smart.

\*I received a free copy of this book for this review from the author.

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### **Tara Chevrestt says**

Lola Montez...a woman who is reputed to have been a spy, a dancer, and seductress. This is not the first story I've read that was inspired by her. Though I enjoyed this historical romp laced with humor and gasp-out-loud moments, if I were to compare this to *An Invitation to Dance* by Marion Urch , I'd find it sorely lacking.

It's not that it's not entertaining—it is, and I even learned stuff from it about the situation in Spain during this time and the Royal house and Prime Minister... The problem is I never grew terribly fond of this version of Lola. She's funny, witty, but I fail to see how she's independent or strong. She does one stupid thing after another. She is capable of getting herself out of bad scrapes, but she gets herself into them in the first place. I mean, seriously, after all she's been through—having those she loves murdered, being robbed, stalked, etc, how dumb do you have to be to set yourself up with a crap-ton of publicity and make yourself a huge public spectacle, all the while using a name that your would-be killer knows? And you know he's alive... How dumb do you have to be?

And she does nothing remarkable, unless you consider the fact she manages learn fluent Spanish in just three weeks. (Really?) She just sleeps with men and dances. And runs away from things. Though I did feel bad for her when everyone was so intent on blaming her for the mission's failure. It wasn't her fault.

My other complaint is that her characterization was somewhat off at times. Lola is feisty, I'll give her that, but she lets some horrid woman and her daughter just waltz into her room and take her dresses and jewelry...and yet just days later, this same Lola challenges Dumas to a duel? Sometimes she's the spunky Lola we expect; other times it's like WHERE THE HECK IS LOLA?

But it wasn't all bad. The Royal family, especially Aunt Carlota, were exceptionally amusing and there were many LOL moments throughout the story. These moments kept me reading even when at times I grew tired of Lola's bad decisions and just wanted the story to end. It was also interesting learning about a dance called the Tarantuala. Overall, it was also very fast-paced with conspiracies, theater life, masked balls, fine horses, tickling mustaches, politics, executions... I think I'd have loved it if I had liked Lola more.

I plan to read book two, because I do feel this heroine has potential. If she can just stand on her own two feet a while, without depending on a man, and wise up a bit, I can see this series doing great things.

Read my favorite funny bits: <http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2014/...>

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### **snowplum says**

I expected to be engrossed in the plot of this novel – it is author Kit Brennan's fictional imagining of what the infamous spy/actress/courtesan/liberal reformer Lola Montez might have done in Spain during one of the

only years of her history that is not well documented. Lola Montez was one fierce lady, and her documented exploits and accomplishments are manifold. You'd have to be dull indeed not to imagine something exciting and dramatic to fill a year of her life that was shrouded in mystery.

The plot of this book is as filled with intrigue, social and political machinations, trysts, and drama as you might expect... but I never took to the tone of it. This isn't necessarily due to a failing on Brennan's part – a little research into the real Lola Montez quickly reveals that she was a cheeky woman with quite a temper, whose behavior just as often seemed vulgar or tacky as more artfully seductive or sophisticated. So I don't think that Brennan has crafted an egregiously unrealistic voice for her; I just didn't particularly enjoy what I will call its casual crudeness. Montez would have had to become an extremely pragmatic woman to survive as an actress/courtesan, and Brennan emphasizes that aspect of her character, through, among other things, her language and tone. She tries to make the best of what she has to do in a very matter-of-fact way, ranging from the obvious courtesan business (she finds ways to laugh with her middle aged paunchy protectors and get some pleasure from their time in bed, for example) to the more unique situations such as being blackmailed into spying on the Spanish and forced to seduce one of the most repulsive humans I've ever heard described.

But while her earthy, no-nonsense conversational ways are reasonable for all of the unsentimental recounting that she does of events, they end up making her seem shallow in the moments when I think Brennan most intends her to be deep. Everything from musing "What is it with men and breasts? Men and bottoms? Men and feet?" to "How could these men believe they enjoyed sex when they suffered so much from it.... I blame religion, any religion that celebrates pain and guilt." The problem isn't the essence of what she's saying, it's that that's *all* she says. She seems more like she's quoting epigrams than thinking profound thoughts.

Oh, and there's also the time when she's been kidnapped by a woman-hating religious madman who is going to take her back to the creepy cult he's in to kill her, and she manages to shoot him in the leg. She was trying to kill him, but she didn't have a second shot to do it, so he's lying there with a bleeding leg and she's grabbing her horse and escaping and she says, "My heart was in a frenzy of haste and fear. Still alive! Oh fuckity fuck!" I am pretty sure that absolutely no real person past, present, or future, would ever say "Oh fuckity fuck" in that situation. If someone did, I'm not sure whether I would think she was daft or ridiculous, but neither of these things is what I think Brennan wants her Lola to be.

The strongest element of Brennan's characterization is that she does a great job of laying the groundwork for the liberal advocate for women that Montez would become. There are countless examples of Montez being treated abominably by men – most of them not in the realm of sexual relations. Her handlers in the world of espionage treat her with a casual disrespect that would make any person boil. They don't think she needs or deserves to know more than half of what she's being sent into or why. The Jesuit with whom she is forced to work treats her like an utter pariah, clearly despising her morals and probably her very existence. While living with the Spanish princesses, she hears men constantly speaking disrespectfully of the crown princess as nothing more than a stupid brood mare to be sold off and appeased with sex (which they talk about in the most revolting terms, as she is a lusty fat girl with a severe skin condition, so the notion of bedding her is admittedly repellent, and no one would be eager to do it were she not going to be queen).

During her time in Spain, Lola meets four people of whom she thinks very highly. One of them is the general with whom she has a passionate affair, but the other three are female. Though she laments many times the way that most women took an immediate dislike to her and did not trust their husbands around her, Lola is capable of intense affection and loyalty for other women, and this is clearly foundational for her moving forward. (In her real life, she was both a mentor to younger women and a volunteer in "rescue work" for women.)

In the end, Brennan has crafted a Lola Montez who is brash, tempestuous, emotional, cagey, earthy, loyal, and above all – a survivor. She is planning to build a franchise on Lola adventure books, and I can see them being very popular with readers of historical fiction, but I don't plan to seek them out – because despite the dramatic and well-paced plot, I just don't like Lola's voice enough to want to hear her curse and not-so-profoundly muse her way across Europe and America. I sure would have liked to meet the real Lola Montez and seen her dance, though!

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### **Victoria Griffith says**

Lola is a thoroughly modern woman trapped in the 19th century, but she still manages to live life on her own terms! This story of political intrigue would be interesting in and of itself, but the fact that it's based on historical events makes it even more fascinating. Kit Brennan's writing moves readers quickly through the scenes of the book and leaves them wanting more. It's a wonderful, sexy spy tale about a character who refused to fit into the roles society defined. She confronts contemporary problems - divorce, infidelity, financial difficulties - within a Victorian framework. I can't wait to read the sequel!

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### **Rosemary says**

Disclosure: I got a preview copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. Fortunately, I really enjoyed the book - it was the best kind of melodrama, full of danger, suspense, passion and interpretive dance.

Based on the real life of one of the 19th century's most outrageous women, *Whip Smart* aims to chronicle the mysterious "lost year" where young Eliza Rosanna Gilbert effected her transformation from aspiring Irish actress to fiery Spanish dancer Lola Montez.

Fresh from a failed marriage and eager to avoid the ensuing divorce trial that would make her name mud in London, Eliza is willing to do anything it takes to make her dreams of stage fame come true - including accepting a shady paid trip to the Continent to continue her training as a dancer.

Once there, she is thrilled to discover she'll finally be treading the boards in a hit show ... and less thrilled to find out she'll be expected to act as a spy for exiled Spanish regent Maria Cristina (the previous spy had his ears sent back in a box, so...ha ha.) What follows is a pretty exciting series of intrigues, nail-biting border crossings, mysterious murders, risky plots, secret rendezvous, a torrid love affair and some really fabulous clothes.

Lola herself is hilarious - passionate, devil-may-care, intensely self-interested and above all, a survivor. Unbound by the sexual mores of the day (it's the 1840s), she knows her smoldering good looks will get her where she needs to go and she's unconcerned about using her wiles on whomever she meets. For all of her passion and artistic inclinations, she's refreshingly practical about how the world works and you just have to admire her chutzpah as she seduces everyone from generals to members of parliament to prime ministers, all while trying to unravel the mystery of the shadowy figure trying to murder her.

Basically, *Whip Smart* had everything I like: corsets, a strong female protagonist who doesn't do idiot things for love, a gripping plot and some sexy times, all set against a fascinating historical backdrop. I really

appreciated Brennan's meticulous research into the Carlist wars and Spanish politics at the time, which was really interesting and all new to me.

Whip Smart is told as a flashback after Lola's first successful performance in London - kidnapped by unknown agents, she's forced to account for her year of adventure in Spain and lays it all out for the reader. It took me a little while to get into the story, but once she leaves England, it became a serious page-turner. I was so into it, in fact, that I found the book's ending a little abrupt - but as Brennan's currently penning a sequel, I suppose she just wanted to leave us wanting more.

Honestly, the ONLY thing lacking for me was context for Lola's outrageous voice and impetuous choices. If I didn't already know she was to become a flamboyant historical figure, her voice would have come off as a titch implausible.

I'm an historical fiction nerd and I'd never heard of Lola Montez before reading Whip Smart - not really knowing who she was to become made it a little harder to appreciate this chronicle of her transformative year(s). I would personally recommend a brief "Wikipedia entry on Lola Montez pre-read" in order to truly appreciate the crazy life she led - and to appreciate how well Kit Brennan seems to have captured Lola's indomitable spirit.

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### **Kathy Davie says**

First in the Whip Smart: Lola Montez historical fiction adventure series. The series begins in 1842 with our introduction to Lola and how she "finds herself".

I received an ARC from the publisher.

### **My Take**

It's a rollicking, exuberant, melodramatic adventure in 1842 Europe with a witless Eliza Rosana Gilbert plunging into everything and anything as she flashes back into the past, remembering how she got to this cell-like room.

I do adore Brennan's descriptions as she vividly conveys Eliza's antics and emotions---you can't help but read with the rhythm of Eliza's liveliness. With another of her characters, I could feel the spittle flying and kept ducking whenever his character spoke!

I'm conflicted. On the one hand, I do admire "Lola" for just diving in and trying her best. As awful as that might be. Then, on the other hand, she's a self-centered, immature, naive, overly egotistical idiot whom I simply want to whack upside the head. She makes me think of naive young girls heading to Hollywood, convinced they are going to become major stars.

She talks about how she doesn't want to be like her mother, and yet, she is so very much her mother. It makes me very grateful that Emma is where she is with her step-relatives.

When you get down to it, "Lola" is a sad person in this story as she plunges into one disaster after another, never learning from any of her experiences. People are using her right and left, and she never picks up on it. At least, not until Diego and his analogy about life and a deck of cards. I think I'm impressed that she survives.

One of the things I do like about this story is that Brennan has chosen a relatively obscure time in European history---obscure only in that Americans don't learn about this period in Spanish history, so it's a treat to learn about a Spain after the Peninsular War.

I'm not buying the Gramaldis' attitude about Eliza. Supposedly they've been involved in this business for quite some time and have some sense of a person's character. How on earth did they think Eliza would perform?? They certainly never gave her any real training or suggestions.

Ohh, I just love the scene where Diego and Eliza decide on her new name.

Be warned. This is a sad story with an oddly sad ending. At least for me---I cried.

### **The Story**

Eliza wants to live, and she is diving into everything and anything, exploring what life has to offer. And offer it does when she is chosen for a special role in a multi-layered performance in Spain.

### **The Characters**

**Eliza Rosana Gilbert** is a twenty-two-year-old lady in name only. She has unintentionally, but with no regret, burned so many of those virtuous bridges, and she intends to live uproariously.

**Major Craigie** is her stepfather; he and her mother live in India. **Aunt Catherine** is Craigie's older sister; she and her husband, **Uncle Herbert Rae**, have taken in **Emma**. **Major General Sir Jasper Nicolls** oversaw Eliza's education.

*Eliza's lovers include:*

**Lieutenant Thomas James** was her husband. **George Lennox** is a selfish sod. **Lord James Howard Harris**, the third Earl of Malmesbury, is unabashedly joyful and something in government. **Prince Heinrich LXXII**.

**Fanny Kelly** is an acting coach. **Mr. Hernandez** is a dance instructor and scout. **Alexandre Dumas** and his wife, **Ida Ferrier**, have a cameo. **Benjamin Lumley** is the theatre impresario in London.

**Juan de Grimaldi** is a theatre impresario exiled from Spain with his family. The nasty **Doña Concepción Rodríguez** is his vicious wife with a twin in her daughter, **Clotilde**.

**Father Miguel de la Vega** is a Jesuit deeply involved. **Matilde** serves as the wetnurse and chaperone. **Pedro Coria** is a shadowy figure.

*The Spanish players*

**Señor Ventura de la Vega** is the Father's much more cheerful brother who owns the playhouse. **Antonio Guzmán** is the principal lead.

*The Spanish Court*

Ex-Queen **Cristina**---Maria Cristina of Bourbon-Two Sicilies---gave up her throne and is agitating politically. She quietly married a guardsman, **Agustín Fernando Muñoz**. **Princess Isabel** is Cristina's oldest daughter, and she will be queen when she comes of age. *If she doesn't die from overeating!* **Princess Luisa Fernanda** is her younger, much sweeter sister. **Infanta Luisa Carlota** is Cristina's older sister married to **Don Francisco Argüelles** is the princesses' tutor. **Don Carlos Bourbon** is the late king's brother.

**General Baldomero Espartero** is the current prime minister. **General Diego de Léon** is another exhilarating character whom you can't help but love. *My favorite of all the characters.* He is planning with **General Manuel de la Concha**.

**Juliana de Porris** is a healer out in the country. **Paulos** is her son.

### **The Cover**

Ooh-la-la, the cover is so very Lola! The back of a bright red satin bustier atop a very form-fitting skirt. There's a sense of adventure and sex waiting behind these ties!

The title lives life just as Lola does when *Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards*. Yup, they don't know what hit 'em...

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### **Audra (Unabridged Chick) says**

Lola Montez was a 19th-century adventuress who started in the UK, traveled all over Europe -- at one point, as the mistress to a King! -- then Australia and the US. She was known for a scandalous dance of her own invention, her romantic escapades, and her liberal use of a whip.

In this novel, Brennan imagines the year when Eliza Rosanna Gilbert transformed herself into Lola Montez (what actually happened is fuzzy, so Brennan takes liberties, which she acknowledges in her Afterword).

In 1842, Rosanna -- as she prefers to be called -- is facing a divorce trial from her husband on grounds of infidelity (on her side, scandalously). Virtually penniless, she finds herself a patron, of sorts, and decides to take acting lessons, where she is introduced to Juan de Grimaldi, a dance master for the Spanish court.

The novel is written in Lola's voice, and like her life, the prose is breathless, dramatic, punctuated with exclamation points and a variety of oaths, curses, and wails. I found it playful ("¡*Fabulosa!*!" he'd squeak, and "¡*Deliciosa!*!" I'd gasp back.', p26) and dramatically emotive as Lola punctuates her story with commentary and coy asides.

While reading, I was reminded a bit of Kage Baker and Carol K. Carr, with the mix of banter, snark, and history. There's a very earthy sense of sex and sexuality here -- not explicit, but obvious, if that makes sense -- and I found it hilariously fun. There's a sense of heaving bosoms here, but not because Lola's met her One True Love -- no, Lola is on the run, working her wiles, and trying to come out on top.

I'm super excited for the sequel -- *Whip Smart: Lola Montez and the Poisoned Nom de Plume* -- because Brennan's Lola is a trip.

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### **Cheryl says**

Eliza Gilbert finds herself in a loveless marriage. To make matters worse, her husband has filed for divorce. The divorce will be the ruin of Eliza. She wants to be an upstanding lady and a famous actress. Thus she enrolls in Miss Fanny Kelly's school. It is here that Eliza meets Mr. Hernandez. Hernandez is Eliza's dance

teacher. He offers Eliza a chance to escape her life and her upcoming divorce trial. She is to meet with someone in France and then travel to Spain. Hernandez's acquaintance is named Juan de Grimaldi.

Eliza decides to take Hernandez up on his offer for a chance to get away and then come back and take London by storm with her new found independence and skills. Eliza leaves London as just a girl but she returns as a new woman with a new name of Lola Montez.

I had never heard of Lola Montez until I read this book. I had to look her up and get familiar with her story. Of course, I thought that author; Kit did a good job of portraying Lola's story. This book was a surprise in a good way to me. To be honest, when I saw the book cover, I was expecting this book to be like an erotic novel but it was not. It was more than that. It was about a love story and courage. It was not hard to fall for Lola. She had a strong, colorful personality. I am glad that she did find someone to love her like Diego. He was a caring man. For fans of history or someone looking for a new author to read then you should pick up a copy of *Whip Smart* today. It is a quick read. One that you will enjoy reading and it is worth your money.

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### **Bev says**

This is an interesting premise. Kit Brennan bases her novel on the real life of Eliza Gilbert alias Lola Montez). It takes a year of Eliza's life that isn't really covered in the biographies or materials she left behind and imagines what the lovely, adventurous young woman might have been up to. I found the historical period and the descriptions of Spanish royalty very interesting. I can't say that I ever really warmed up to Eliza. I didn't find her to be as "whip smart" as advertised. I do think this will appeal to those who like a bit of the bodice ripper meets historical novel with a bit of adventure and danger thrown in. Three stars for a decent read.

[Review written for my blog *My Reader's Block* and will be published on 2/12/13. Please request permission before reposting. Thanks! Disclaimer: *This book was made available to me as an advanced reader copy. My review policy is posted on my blog, but just to reiterate...The review copy was offered to me for impartial review and I have received no payment of any kind. All comments are entirely my own honest opinion.*]

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### **Jr Simmang says**

***Whip Smart transports us into Spain through the eyes of Lola Montez, the courtesan whose life was lived as much a lie as it was truth.***

Lola Montez, if that's her real name, has made a place for herself in the annals of Spanish history. Through deception, bravery, and her naturally black hair and blue eyes she was able to Spider Dance her way through the political hierarchy of Spain, post-Spanish Civil War. Along the way, she meets some awfully aristocratic spies and fanatical mystics who only want to slit her throat.

In Kit Brennan's *Whip Smart*, Lola Montez takes us on her twisted journey into womanhood and international fame. There is much missing from this courtesan's life, and Brennan eloquently delivers unto us a reimagining of what Lola's life could have been. We begin *Whip Smart* with a beautiful montage: Lola blowing out two of three candles (which I believe corresponds to the identities she held up to that point and a

clever wink) as she stews in oubliette. Through the narrative, I felt as insecure and unsure as Lola did, frantically searching for a place to belong. After all, Lola was only 16 when she fled home. But, as I read, I could see her become an infamous woman. Being a spy for the irritable and irascible Grimaldis probably didn't help to slow the process, but her adolescent mind was racing with remarkable alacrity. There was one character who stuck out most for me: Pedro Coria, the glass-eyed bodyguard. His silence, strength, and gristly end reminded me of Othello, duty-bound, and unfortunately the perfect scapegoat. Overall, the last 100 pages left me breathless as we bounded all over the Spanish countryside, tripping through pools of blood, carrying young mothers on horseback, and desperately trying to piece the puzzle together.

While I thoroughly enjoyed *Whip Smart*, I did often wonder what else Lola had to offer other than her sexuality. She became a spy because of it, so I shouldn't have been surprised to find that her last test would involve it. I was shocked by Lola's forwardness and her ability to fall in love. However, Brennan tempers this love-lust with wit and cleverness.

Even though I would classify this story as historical fiction, it would also appeal to the fem lit lovers in all of us. There's just enough humor to make us old friends, and there's enough grit for the hardened war-lit reader.

There's only one word of advice I'll leave with you: Be prepared to be breathless. There were times when I would sit down to read, look up, and realize that I've had my nose to the pages for over an hour.

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### **vvb says**

Enjoyable account of the beginnings of Lola Montez. You will get a dose of some action, romance and a masquerade as you follow Lola on her adventures in France and Spain during the 1800's. Lola is a heroine-in-the-making in this lively tale.

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