

## Whip Smart

**Kit Brennan**

Astor and Blue Editions

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*Whip Smart: Lola Montez Conquers the Spaniards* follows the emergence of nubile woman-of-mystery Lola Montez—a little-known historic figure who lived in nineteenth century England. Lola, née Eliza Rosana Gilbert, falls in love, engages in profitable romplings, and generally gallivants across Europe.

A sort of *Flashman Papers* for women, *Whip Smart* opens on the disgraced young Englishwoman casting around for career options: “But I must be something!” she tells a teacher. More than anything, Lola yearns for identity, escape from herself. Then, destiny knocks and Eliza is recruited to be a spy on the Spanish royalty.

Offering a sharp, tight plot that rarely stops surprising, this little novel rises above its category of “historical romance” by dint of masterful writing and a sympathetic, many layered cast. Our heroine comes alive through her observations and outlook. Of the lovemaking with an older patron, she says, “I enjoyed the honesty of his protruding tummy, like that of a two-year-old playing in his washtub.”

Kit Brennan's first novel offers a rollicking good time that mature readers will appreciate for its candid attitudes toward females and sex—attitudes that any woman of substance might admire. The author is an accomplished and award-winning playwright and teacher of writing at Concordia University in Montreal. She is known for her play *Tiger's Heart*.

LEIA MENLOVE (Summer 2013)

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