



## The Harlot Countess

*Joanna Shupe*

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**Maggie, Lady Hawkins, had a debut she'd rather forget—along with her first marriage. Today, the political cartoonist is a new woman. A thoroughly modern woman. So much so that her clamoring public believes she's a man...**

**FACT:** Drawing under a male pseudonym, Maggie is known as Lemarc. Her (his!) favorite object of ridicule: Simon Barrett, Earl of Winchester. He's a rising star in Parliament—and a former confidant and love interest of Maggie's who believed a rumor that vexes her to this day.

**FICTION:** Maggie is the Half-Irish Harlot who seduced her best friend's husband on the eve of their wedding. She is to be feared and loathed, as she will lift her skirts for anything in breeches.

Still crushed by Simon's betrayal, Maggie has no intention of letting the *ton* crush her as well. In fact, Lemarc's cartoons have made Simon a laughingstock...but now it appears that Maggie may have been wrong about what happened years ago, and that Simon has been secretly yearning for her since...forever. Could it be that the heart is mightier than the pen and the sword after all?

## The Harlot Countess Details

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## From Reader Review The Harlot Countess for online ebook

### Alba Turunen says

3'5 Estrellas, me ha gustado, pero no tanto como el primero. Lo que puedo decir a favor de la escritora es que tiene algunas originalidades, peculiaridades etc., como si fuese una reinventora de la novela de Regencia.

En ésta novela se toca un tema muy sensible, cómo puede afectarle a una mujer inocente una acusación totalmente infundada, y todo el daño que puede hacerle a su vida. Maggie era una joven irlandesa y adinerada con un futuro brillante, pero una acusación engañosa de un noble arruinó su vida, sus congéneres le dieron la espalda, y también el hombre al que ella amaba: Simon. Diez años después y viuda, disfruta de la libertad que su posición y el escándalo le han permitido. Es pintora y dibujante de profesión y se dedica a caricaturizar a personajes de la actualidad política, entre ellos Simon, por el que siente un profundo rencor.

En cuanto a Simon, es el noble perfecto, joven, atractivo, adinerado. Lo único que lamenta fue perder al amor de su vida al saberse engañado, y ahora, para colmo de males es la comidilla de la ciudad porque cierto dibujante se dedica a ridiculizarle. Ahí será cuando Simon se encuentre de nuevo con Maggie y le pida ayuda para desenmascarar al pintor Lemarc (que en realidad es Maggie).

Lo cierto es que he disfrutado más de la primera parte de la novela, me ha parecido más original y entretenida. Por lo demás, pienso que el pastel se descubre demasiado pronto, y podría haber dado más juego. A pesar de ello a la novela no le faltan detalles, hay una trama sobre un chantajista que pretende arruinar a Lemarc, y otro asunto sobre un noble que se dedica a maltratar y asesinar a prostitutas, esto último me da que continuará en el siguiente libro.

En cuanto al romance, me ha parecido algo flojo. Sí, fueron una pareja que se amó en el pasado, diez años después vuelven a coincidir y Simon es el que mayor interés guarda por relacionarse de nuevo con ella. Hay escenas bastante sensuales entre ellos, como en el primer libro, subiditas de tono. Pero no han conseguido enamorarme, dan demasiadas vueltas a lo mismo, demasiados sí, pero no, que me han cansado un poco.

Lo que más me ha gustado, repito, la primera parte, y el desenlace, aunque no me hubiera importado que éste se alargara un poco. Por mi parte tengo muchísimas ansias de saber qué ha pasado con Quint, y estoy deseando que nos publiquen su libro.

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### Viri says

No me gustó tanto como esperaba pero tampoco fue malo. Lo que pasa es que no conecte con ninguno de los protagonistas, no me enamoraron ni me hicieron esperar cada aparición. Como si lo hicieron los extras de esta historia. Ya estoy esperando con ansias el 3 libro. Espero que me guste tanto como el primero haha.

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### Aarann says

I liked this book a lot more than I liked its predecessor (I never went back and updated my review on the first one, but I did finally go back and finish it and... ick. The versions of the Duke and Duchess of Colton we got in this book are *far* superior to the Julia and Nick we got in The Courtesan Duchess). You know how Regency romances are always threatening Ruination on the heroine for events that may or may not be her

fault, so of course she has to get married to the hero at some point and you're always left to wonder, *How bad is this dreaded **Ruin** romance novels always talk about? All the heroines are generally saved from it before you actually see its results -- is it really as bad as it sounds?*

This book answers that question to a certain extent. It's pretty bad. After nearly being raped and then having her almost-rapist tell everyone that she was a Big Ho, everyone turned their backs on Maggie, including Simon, the hero. Maggie is still scandalous, but she was married off to an ancient Lord, who considerably died ten years later, so she's a somewhat acceptable scandal and a combination of her marriage and her **Ruination** is even enough to give her a certain amount of freedom other women don't have. She throws bawdy parties, paints at all hours of the day or night, as she feels like it, selling them under a fake name, and, along with Pearl Kelly (Julia's rather awesome tutor in the first book) she secretly helps prostitutes who have been brutalized by their clients. Still, she's understandably pissed off at Simon for turning his back on her and she vents some of her hurt by making a joke of him under her assumed artist identity. Simon, of course, learns of the artist making fun of him and decides to hunt down the man's identity to make him knock it off. He runs into Maggie in the early stages, and from there, just can't seem to stay away.

I liked Maggie -- she seemed like a real person, faults and all. She had been through a lot and had to build a tough shell to put up with the barbs and snipes uttered about her by so-called "polite" society. This made her pretty awesome. This also made her a little frustrating because even when Simon was at his most earnest, she wouldn't allow herself to trust him, but I kind of loved that about her too because it made her seem real. I had some issues with Simon, considering he spent a good chunk of the book making not-so-veiled references to her ho-bag reputation (I'm sorry, sir, are you a virgin? No? Then STFU), but I thought he redeemed himself... somewhat. He started to fall for her while still believing she was a big ho, rather than *after* the truth about her past was revealed (sorry, not only virgins are worthy of love and I, like many readers, get tired of the double standard in romance novels that a woman can't have sexual partners, but a man can be one partner away from syphilis and still be a stud), so that helped him out a little for me. He also had some good reasons... I guess... for believing the lies about her (although seriously? This whole book could have been resolved by a quick, "Yo, what the fuck, Maggie?" after rumors of her alleged ho-baggery were spread).

My biggest complaint about the book was the lack of epilogue. I would have liked to see some of the ramifications of their relationship, how Simon's political career is affected in the end, or what happens with Maggie's painting. I would have liked to see how they were with a kid or two running around because the idea seemed to scare Maggie (that could easily have been a result of her thinking of what society would do to her and a bastard as a result, but she didn't seem like she particularly wanted children throughout the book). Since there is a third book, I suppose I'll get to see additional glimpses into their lives, so I probably shouldn't complain too much, but the ending still seemed somewhat abrupt for me.

Still... For all the awesomeness that was in this book, I (and don't ask me why) didn't love it. It's not the book's fault, I just left the book wondering "Why didn't I like that more?" It was *good*, don't get me wrong, but I just didn't walk away with plans to go buy a copy (this was a library read) and while I thoroughly enjoyed it, I don't have any plans for a re-read.

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## Sombra says

Si algo tienen estos libros es la originalidad dentro de las historias típicas de regencia y eso es algo que gana muchos puntos conmigo, además de hablar más abiertamente de temas que otras autoras no profundizan tanto.

En cuanto a la trama, me ha gustado mucho sobre todo a partir de la segunda mitad, cuando ya el pastel es

descubierto y empieza una carrera contra reloj para poder llegar a una meta concreta. No digo más para no spoiler. Si de algo me tengo que quejar, es que todo se ha solucionado en apenas 10 páginas y el antagonista ha tenido un final demasiado suave para mi gusto.

Sobre los personajes, me han gustado mucho, pero había veces que me habría gustado darles un par de capones a ambos por tercios.

Los secundarios ya les conocemos del libro anterior, y aunque ya no me acordaba muy bien del primero, no han hecho que echara en falta nada.

Definitivamente seguiré leyendo esta serie y espero poder leer el de Quinn, el amigo de Simon y Colton muy pronto.

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## **Sammy Loves Books says**

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### **sraxe says**

I guess if you like the heroine suffering and sacrificing for the slut-shaming douchebag "hero," while also succumbing to the power of his magic stick, then this is the book for you! The characters are inconsistent and their actions and words correlate not at all, saying one thing and then proceeding to do something completely different. This book was the very definition of:

And, one of the most annoying aspects is that heroine started off so well. Maggie was still angry with Simon when she saw him again. She drew caricatures of him, mocking him publicly. She also displayed a bit of smarts when she wondered why Simon and Quint had purchased her artwork. However, that all quickly fell to the wayside as soon as she reunites with Simon. I guess that's understandable considering Simon:

(view spoiler)

In the beginning of the book, we see Simon literally turning his back on Maggie. I was hoping he'd grovel during the book, but that doesn't happen. At all. Instead, he never apologizes for what he did all those years ago and just tries to woo her.

The author sold Maggie out so badly during the entire book, making her suffer again and again while Simon is just a-okay. Maggie is nearly sexually assaulted, but she escapes. Her attacker, Cranford, flips it and says she came onto him. Everyone turns their back on her, including Simon, and she's ruined in the eyes of society. Simon doesn't ask her side of it. She ends up marrying a man who's around fifty years old. What does Simon do?

And so he'd licked his wounds like any respectable twenty-three-year-old would: the day of her hasty wedding, Simon got stinking drunk in one of London's most exclusive brothels. He'd stayed for three days, hiring enough women to keep him entertained round the clock.

Wait...sorry...am I supposed to feel sad for him because he went on a three-day fucking spree?

I really don't give a shit about your man-pain.

Over the last decade, Maggie has sex with two men: one is her sick, fifty year old husband (who ignored her most of the time to be with his mistress) and the other is some Frenchman in Paris. However, "both experiences had been disasters" and she actually comes to hate being intimate with men. Simon? Oh, he was just fine! Not only did he have that three day orgy above, but he also currently has a mistress, who we get to meet, and she's "an enthusiastic and adventurous lover." But worry not because "there haven't been that many women in recent years and none who meant anything substantial." (They never do mean anything, do they? Oh, but only when it's the man...when it's the woman who's promiscuous, then it's okay to slut-shame her for it, right?)

Maggie, who is known as the "Half-Irish Harlot" throughout society, is actually able to gain none of the benefits of being a "fallen woman." Despite the fact that she's an outcast, she's talked about behind her back and to her face, her father died disappointed in her, her mother believes the lies about her and the man she loved didn't bother asking her side...and she's not even allowed to enjoy sex. The author has her play up the role and doesn't even bother to give her the benefit of sexual freedom. While Simon's been having great sex for the last decade, she isn't even allowed to have ONE great sexual experience! What happens then? Simon ends up being her sexual salvation.

In fact, the very first time they have sex is fifteen minutes after he slut-shames her.

"Surprising, since you certainly prefer crowds for everything else."

Oh, and this meeting follows on the heels of the previous night...where he'd also slut-shamed her. The previous night he said:

“I only play games when there aren't quite so many players. I do not care to be one of many.”

In both of these he's trying to shame her for the rumours of her being with many men, by saying she prefers "crowds" and that there are "many players." And she has sex with him. Holy fuck, woman. This is the same man who literally and figuratively turned his back on you and is now slut-shaming you. Love yourself even a little bit!!

Simon literally never apologizes to her for turning his back on her. He claims to love her and that he wanted to marry her (even though from Maggie's POV we're told he never courted her??? so he loved her and was ready to marry her--even approached his mother about it--but he never actually courts her...?!) but he listens to what Cranford tells him. Instead of approaching the woman he claims to love and was ready to marry, he believes another man's words and then publicly cuts her, along with the rest of society. It's not even that he didn't know her! Their mothers were friends from their own debut and he and Maggie grew up together. And, still, he believed her to be a deceitful whore.

When she tells him that not only was everything a lie, what Cranford said and the image she's played up, he NEVER EVER apologizes to her -- not for ditching her when she needed someone the most, not for cutting her publicly, not for never asking her side of things, not for slut-shaming her after they meet again, not for continuing to believe the lies...not for ANY of it. He's sleeping with her and he still believes she was a deceitful whore. He even has the audacity to act the victim and tell her at one point that he has "forgiven" her. Fuck him.

It makes no sense that he acts so protective and possessive of Maggie now when he didn't give a shit before, not even enough to ask her himself. It makes absolutely no sense that he claims to have loved her but couldn't even be bothered to talk to her about the gossip or accusations. He waylays her when he thinks she's meeting Markham and all but chases the man out of Maggie's house...and this is the same guy who claimed to love her but didn't even bother to ask her side of things?

The author uses subplots in order to prop up Simon rather than just making him a decent person. He slut-shames Maggie...but then helps assault victims and drafts bills for rape victims? Like...where is the consistency here? Why put these things in to make Simon seem like a better person? Why not...I dunno...MAKE him a better person, instead? A rather radical idea, huh? I feel the author just put this in there so Maggie would "forgive" him and he wouldn't have to apologize for his behaviour and be forced to grovel. He turned away from her when she needed him--needed SOMEONE--the most. As a result, she married a fifty year old man and was scorned by society. Sorry, but the least of what I'm going to need is a fucking apology.

I honestly don't care that he'd been deceived by those letters or that he was thinking about duelling. At the end of the day, he chose not to approach and ask Maggie about Cranford, choosing instead to believe the lies and cut ties with here. So, again, where's my apology at, you fucker?

Oh, and when she does tell him the truth about Cranford? I was hoping it would be Simon's big turn-around, his OH SHIT moment...but nope. Instead!

He stiffened, his nostrils flaring. "Goddamn it. Why, Maggie? Why did you not tell anyone?"

...

"I would have believed you, Maggie. *Me*. I would have listened and tried to help you. You should have come to me with the truth."

...

"I see," he said, his voice flat. He almost sounded *hurt*. "So Cranford ruins you, you do not trust me enough to confess the truth, and prefer to marry Hawkins instead. So tell me how I am the one turned into a drunken wastrel in your cartoons? What in God's name did I do to deserve it?"

Yes, he blames it on her and tells her she should've come to him, should've told him the truth. When was she supposed to do that, btw? After you cut her publicly? Instead of feeling guilty or remorseful, he pushes it on her, blames *her* for not coming to *him*, going all *WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS???* on her and making it all about himself.

And in the end? I actually downplayed it in my status update. It was more than just Maggie sacrificing her career for his. She literally gave up her entire life's work for the man, crediting it to another man. Oh, and not just any other man! The man she credits her entire life's work and accolades to...is Cranford, the man who tried to sexually assault her and caused her ruination in the first place! Art was all she had when she was ditched by Simon and forced to marry another...and she resigns her life's work for him.

Oh, and there's more! She's signing away her life's work because someone not only started making forgeries of her work that were seditious, and now she might be arrested, but she's also being blackmailed. They find out that the person behind the plot is Simon's brother-in-law, Sir James, and Cranford. Simon chooses not to turn him in because it'll reflect badly on his family. James went after both of them because he dislikes Simon, and Cranford only went after Maggie in the first place (a decade ago, when he assaulted her) because she was with Simon and he was jealous. So, the two men blackmailing her are only doing it because of the other man in her life, Simon.

And, because he wants to protect his useless, blackmailing, swindling brother-in-law, Maggie gives up her name and art because she doesn't want him throwing away his standing in parliament. Oh, and I forgot to mention that **HE DOESN'T EVEN CARE ABOUT POLITICS**. She's doing art because she loves it and it's her passion, while he's doing politics because it's expected of him and he figures he's good at it. The one time we're shown him doing anything political is when he's drafting that fail rape victims legislation, which he fails to gain support for. Her art, on the other hand, is something she's good at and is praised for throughout the book. The author makes her give up her life's work for something he doesn't even particularly care about!!

Simon literally loses nothing in the end, acting like a complete POS throughout the story and just continuing to gain, gain, gain. Maggie, however, is forced to lose time and again by the author, up to and including her artwork and the reputation she's worked so hard for.

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## Wendy says

The Harlot Countess is the second in the Wicked Deception Series by new author, Joanna Shupe and features a couple who reunite after ten years following a traumatic and acrimonious parting.

Maggie has suffered a debutante's worst nightmare - scandal. Through no fault of her own she is shunned by the ton and as a result is rushed off to marry a man 30 years her senior. She is a resilient girl, however, and with resigned acceptance makes the most of a bad lot. Her elderly husband quickly loses interest in her and she, left to her own devices, pursues her love of art and perfects her talent.

Lady Maggie Hawkins reappears on the scene ten years later, by this time a widow and a successful artist, albeit not working under her own name. Using the pseudonym Lemarc, Maggie has begun a campaign to discredit Simon Barrett, Earl of Winchester. She is using her talents, and gaining some notoriety in the process, by drawing political cartoons of the Earl in his younger days and naming them The Earl of Winejester. Simon had been the only person whose opinion had mattered to her in the days of her disgrace, and given she was secretly in love with him, his public cutting of her had gone deep.

Following an unexpected meeting, Maggie and Simon are drawn together again. He is on a mission to hunt down the mysterious Lemarc and to ask him to stop his campaign as Simon's political career is suffering as a result.

Simon notices a beautiful landscape painting in her house, and on discovering that Maggie is the artist he hits on the bright idea of requesting her help in his search for Lemarc. This gives him an excuse to keep her close, while Maggie takes a perverse pleasure in agreeing to his request.

I had a few reservations which caused me to lower my final grade from 4 stars to 3, but on the whole **The Harlot Countess** is a solidly written story with well-defined characters. The writing flows and I can see Joanna Shupe has a future. Her protagonists are interesting and the romance between them is sweet and sensual, if just a little too much on the graphic side for my taste. I did, however, sometimes want to bang their heads together because of the Big – and it is BIG – Misunderstanding that develops between them. Simon makes assumptions about Maggie's past but magnanimously decides he will ignore it - and she is so desperate to be with him that she just lets him think the worst. I liked the secondary characters too, although I wish I'd read her debut novel **The Courtesan Duchess**, as I think it's really necessary to know their background, so involved were they in this story and plot. And speaking of the plot, it was quite confusing and not terribly well thought out at times. I knew who had done what without too much thought, but the one thing I did want to know – which had seemed to be an important plot point - was never disclosed. I was also irritated by the number of Americanisms dotted throughout this story set in Regency England.

On the whole, **The Harlot Countess** is a promising read from this new author and I would be interested to read the next in the series eventually.

I reviewed a review copy from Net Galley

## Giedre says

Read only if you're interested in reading about a hypocritical, self-absorbed ass of a hero, who's choking on his man-pain for most of the book, and an artist heroine, who's great at the beginning but sadly much less impressive for the rest of the book and that's putting it mildly. Beware, this noxious cocktail also includes the Healing Power of Magic Wang—thank God the hero is so good at fucking, because now the "Harlot Countess" heroine knows she's not frigid! Because of course the "harlot" heroine has almost no sexual experience and the only man she's attracted to is the shitbucket of a hero. Why not let the heroine, who's on the fringes of polite society yet accomplished an art career, own her sexuality? But nooo. By the end of the book her life's work is kaput, too. Don't worry, she has loooove. LOL. How about a big, fat NO with a bonus of KILL IT WITH FIRE.

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## Cee (The Mistress Case) says

I like to thank the publisher and the author for kindly giving me an ARC. I sense you understood how badly I wanted to read *The Harlot Countess* and I mean *badly*.

Moving on.

I find it harder and harder every time to like the heroine of a good romance story because they're either too whinny, too stupid, too boring, too exasperating— too something.

With Joanna Shupe's books, it isn't the case. Not only is the first book *The Courtesan Duchess* a brilliant romance story, it has a lovable heroine, whom I am more than happy to label under "kickass heroines." Sure, I hated the hero to his rotten core, but the heroine rescued the book for me. Hence, I trusted Joanna to present another kickass heroine in the second book *The Harlot Countess*. Did I get one?

Oh, most definitely.

Even when her reputation was torn to shreds, Lady Margaret Hawkins held her head high for the last ten years, not allowing anyone to get the best of her. She buried the humiliation and pain, deflected the advances of men, overlooked the snubs of the *ton*, endured the loss of an innocent and happy life. More than that, she buried old "Maggie" when she became Lady Hawkins. She was forced into marriage with a gentleman old enough to be her father, for crying out loud! I know this wasn't an uncommon occurrence back then, but still, I got to give it up to her for not spending the rest of her life feeling sorry for herself.

It's admirable that Maggie has somewhat made peace with her past, although she is still hurt by her friend Simon's betrayal. He turned his back on her, *literally to her*.

So she turned to art. The growing passion helped her to deal with the past and release her buried emotions as another form (can't decide whether it's entirely healthy or not) and I quote one of my favorites: "*No matter what chaotic mess tumbled down around her, there would always be art. Her way of bringing joy and beauty into such a harsh, violent, and oftentimes cruel world.*"

From the beginning, I think I instantly had this connection to Maggie, seeing I have a passion/hobby I turn to that gets me through the bumpy times. I can put myself in her shoes: The crush of a betrayal. Being a young

girl and having your innocence destroyed by someone else's pride and greed. Living in a world where people take pleasure in thinking the worst of you. Knowing no one cares about your story and they only hear what they want to believe.

Stubborn (not infuriatingly stubborn) and tough (not too-stupid-to-live tough), Maggie is one of those individual heroines, who boldly reaches out for what she wants and takes matters into her own hands, instead of playing the damsel in distress. Even though she had permitted the scandal to define her; even if she does hide behind her scorned name "The Half-Irish Harlot" and fill her lonely nights with scandalous parties, she isn't a coward or a widow who needs pity, especially from Simon.

Some people may rage on about why she didn't just tell him the truth and then none of this would have happened, but I'm glad she didn't. Why must she explain herself? Why must she justify her pain to people? Why must she seek forgiveness and approval? Why must she have to work to win her loved ones' trust when they have so obviously relinquished their faith in her?

Besides, if she did explain her side (the truth), she (I) would have never experienced the satisfaction of an "A-ha!" to Simon's face.

If you haven't met Simon yet, he is also a character featured in *The Courtesan Duchess*. He's a close friend of the Duke of Colton and the Duchess. Upon learning Julia—the Duchess, that is—did something to help him in the past, I was terribly desperate to know what. What is this piece of juicy information that even Colton doesn't know of? What of Simon's history can possibly make me dislike him when I'm already very fond of his loyal and laid-back character?

Simon, Earl of Winchester, is more complicated than he appears and is equally as stubborn as Maggie. While women are naïve in their youth, men are stupid in their youth. And then some. Simon is clueless about Maggie's resentment for him, and while I can't tolerate harassment and believe everyone should at least know why they're administered to such hatred (no sarcasm intended), it's hard to care about his feelings when I'm too familiar with the feeling of disappointment. Maggie is more than angry at Simon. She is disappointed, and I believe that is even worse than anger when someone you love let you down at the time you needed them most. Simon didn't come to her defense when the scandal broke loose, breaking her heart and forming a drift between them ever since. It doesn't take Simon long to realize he was stupid enough to believe the lies and "proof" presented to him all those years ago and allowed the woman he loves to slip from his grasp.

Maggie is not completely blameless because like Simon, she lacks the common sense to communicate (which is no loss on readers' enjoyment since it gives us a good story). Therefore, she holds onto a grudge against his good character and bullies him through a political cartoon, dubbing him "Winejester." When he asks for her help to uncover the cartoonist's identity, she jumps on the opportunity to set him back on his search and takes satisfaction in deceiving him. Basically, Maggie lives on deception, and as far as she's concerned, no bodily harm has been done to others by being Lemarc and the Half-Irish Harlot.

But where does the deception truly lie?

In making him believe he isn't anything to her before he breaks her heart a second time.

Speaking of harlots and broken hearts, there are a few details bugging me. In other words, these are my downsides with the book:

- The communication.

Miscommunication is a fundamental part of the formula to a romance story. While the misunderstanding is

cleared up for readers as well as the characters in *The Harlot Countess*, it's really not. If you get where I'm going with this . . . For example, there's a scene where Maggie asks Simon why he didn't married and he answers there was once a girl, but it didn't work out. Does he ever confess the girl is her? Of course, he will, but we don't get to see it. Another example is when Maggie learns about Simon's duel from Julia, but the two of them don't ever talk about it and the story comes to an end. Then there's the fact that Simon got pissed poor drunk on the day of Maggie's wedding and didn't leave the brothel for three days. Does she ever learn about that? How will I know? I'll never see her reaction. So many unspoken things are left unsaid and it's fairly unsatisfying.

- Is it just me or does everything has to do with three?

Three offers of marriage. Three people knew of Maggie's hidden talents. Three young ladies entered the shop. Three mermaids. Three men singing. Three men laughing at Simon. Three girls wanted an apprentice. Three new wardrobes. Three years of sucking money dry. Three estates Simon owned. Three days Simon stayed at the brothel. Three young men surrounded the table. Three years of Cora's employment. Three days ago of receiving an update of so-and-so. Three years ago (again) when the errand boy's parents moved from Pruissa. Three locations searched. Three weeks Maggie spent in Paris. Three years since Maggie seen her last lover. Three nights since the masquerade ended. Three hours spent inside a touch. Three men being the number of men Maggie slept with. Three thousand pounds. Three o'clock.

No, I'm not being missish or critical about numbers. An author has the right to use whatever numbers she wishes! I'm merely pointing out an unnecessary observation. One can't help but notice.

- Simon never apologizes. Events aren't explained. (Refer to bullet point #1)
- Will Lady Amelia, Countess Cranford, learn that her husband is a lying douchebag who tarnished Maggie's reputation for his own gains? How will Maggie react? Although I highly doubt Maggie will ever reconcile with old friends like Amelia.
- Simon is another alpha male whose lust outperforms his personality. And that's not a fine quality.
- Maggie never tells Simon she loves him. She doesn't need to, but I just thought to point it out.

More bullet points will be added later on.

In the meantime, let me regard the steam in *The Harlot Countess*. Whoo! What a delicious experience! Page 155 to 156 and beyond: I blushed *hard* and couldn't read for a good few minutes. I don't remember ever reacting this way before. Me? Blush? I haven't blushed since high school. No, no, scratch that. I've read too many romance books to count and I only have the decency to blush now? Dear me.

Oh my, Joanna Shupe, you are stealing my heart with your exquisite writing, powerful heroines, and sensual heroes. You are officially on my "auto buy author list," a list which so far had only one spot reserved for the fabulous Julia Quinn. *The Wicked Deceptions* series belong on my shelf and I can't wait for *The Lady Hellion*. I've been crushing on Viscount Quint since *The Courtesan Duchess*. An intelligent, poorly dressed, adorkable man is my type, I daresay. He's been helpful for the past two books, yet sometimes he can say the most unhelpful and surprising things. His lines are funny and charming, even when he isn't even trying to be.

He's being unapologetically himself and I like that about him.

Here's my review of The Courtesan Duchess if anyone's interested.

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### **Pepa says**

3.5 Reseña completa: <http://masromance.blogspot.com.es/201...>

Sigue mucho la tono de la entrega anterior. Tiene cosas que se pueden mejorar pero a mi esta mujer me entretiene mucho, sobre todo, por la originalidad de las protagonistas y de algunas de las escenas que plantea. Cierto que el vocabulario, a veces, es demasiado trivial, pero no sé si es la autora o la traducción. Y es el mismo que me he encontrado en otras de autoras de éxito anglosajonas.

Maggie me ha gustado mucho, una buena combinación de fortaleza y debilidad, candidez y curiosidad sexual... que Simon no duda en aprovechar, Porque hay algunas escenas picantes que sorprenden, no por que sean especialmente fuertes, sino porque no abundan en la histórica.

No es una trama profunda, pero tiene muchos giros ya que es una relación de muchos altibajos.

Quizás el amor se da demasiado por supuesto, como en la mayoría de reconciliaciones.... pero creo que el gran punto fuerte es Maggie y su forma de afrontar los problemas, esa mujer resolutiva e independiente. Tengo muchas ganas de leer la historia de Quick... y la protagonista, que tiene igual pinta que sus predecesoras, una mujer de armas tomar

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### **Amanda Richardson says**

I really enjoyed Maggie and Simon's story. Maggie is a very different historical romance heroine, she is a widow, and she actually works, and enjoys working! Maggie's debut almost 10 years ago was awful; she fell in love with Simon, but was then ostracized by society after a disreputable man ripped her dress. She had to marry an older man to remain somewhat respectable in order to not taint her younger sister's chances of finding a husband. Maggie isn't even unhappy with her first marriage, it gave her time to grow into the artist she wanted to be and her first husband pretty much left her alone.

Maggie is still hurt by Simon from all of those years ago. He didn't stick up for her; he didn't even ask her or give her a chance to explain her part in the scandal. He actually believed that she duped him and that she was carrying on with other men and leading him toward marriage.

Maggie cooks up a great scheme; she uses her art to make a fool of Simon. Simon is desperate to find the artist who is drawing caricatures of him and making him a laughingstock. Simon actually asks Maggie to help him find the artist, while spending more time with Maggie Simon remembers how much he had always wanted her and if she is willing he will take her. Maggie is the Half-Irish-Harlot anyway, but she only uses this to hide her true self behind.

Simon was definitely due to be knocked down a few pegs and I was really rooting for Maggie. He really hurt her and as a reader you know how much he hurt her because she isn't over it after 10 years. The love scenes between these two are explosive and really hot. I really hope that Quint's story is next. I can't wait to read about the woman he falls in love with.

I received a complimentary copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

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## Aspasia says

Más bien serían 3'5 estrellas.

Aunque este segundo volumen de la serie mantiene un nivel (que las lectoras de romántica exigentes siempre agradecemos) la verdad esta novela no me ha llegado tanto como la anterior, la de Julia y Nick.

A ver, encontramos una historia bien construida y con unos personajes bien definidos. Pero en mi modesta opinión le ha faltado un "je ne sais pas quoi". A comparación de "La duquesa cortesana" encontramos quizás más tópicos de la novela romántica. Los tópicos en si mismos no son malos. La pericia de la autora para presentárnoslos y jugar con ellos es lo que nos demuestra la habilidad argumentativa de la escritora.

Maggie, nuestra protagonista, ha soportado en sus propias carnes diez años de habladurías y desprecios por un escándalo que la señaló como responsable cuando realmente fue una víctima. Sumado a que genética medio irlandesa la hace blanco de la hipócrita sociedad londinense tendríamos a una protagonista arquetipo "hundida" y con ganas de venganza. Pero tenemos a una mujer hecha a si misma que ha hecho del arte su medio de vida y su tabla de salvación.

Simon, lord Winchester, creyó que Maggie era culpable de haberlo engañado. Lleva diez años guardando el dolor de la decepción. Ahora es un reputado miembro del Parlamento británico. Es un hombre honesto, con principios y que ha aceptado su papel como conde con responsabilidad y esfuerzo. Por ironías de destino su camino volverá a cruzarse con el de Maggie.

Otro de los tópicos que nos encontramos es que ambos se reencontraran tras años distanciados pero también son diez años de sentimientos guardados y de haber dado por sentadas determinadas "verdades". A partir de este principio tanto Maggie como Simon deberan ir comprobando cuanto de cierto hay en todo lo que han creído. Aunque lógicamente la posición para una mujer en sociedad (y más en el siglo XIX) no es la misma que la de un hombre encuentro que Maggie es mucho más moderna. Ella ha salido de su zona confort: el arte es su trabajo y su pasión. Ha tenido que amoldarse a las circunstancias y ha sabido sacar cierto beneficio para obtener su tesoro más preciado: su libertad.

Simon en este aspecto ha tenido que asumir su papael como cabeza de familia pero él se ha adaptado más bien a unas circunstancias esperadas dadas su condición de conde y su perfil como político en la Cámara de los Lores. De aquí que según mi opinión sea él quien deba descreer todo aquello que ha asumido cierto durante tantos años. Supongo que en parte hay que tener presente el orgullo masculino herido de Simon.

En lo referente a Maggie ella también debe descubrir que Simon no es como ella creía que era. Y lo creía a partir de cómo se comportó cuando estalló el "escándalo". Pero Maggie es una mujer más bien práctica y realista. Fruto de todos los desengaños sufridos. Quizás lo que Maggie deba ganar sea confianza en si misma como mujer. Algo parecido a lo que le sucede a Julia en la primera novela de la serie.

Reencontramos obviamente a Colton y Julia ahora felizmente casados. También a Quint quien seguramente será protagonista de su propia novela (que esperamos con ansia). El hecho que la personalidad de Maggie sea un secreto ayuda a entender la trama de misterio paralela a la del romance Maggie-Simon. Esta trama ayudará a esclarecer algunos aspectos del "escándalo" de Maggie y cómo de fácil puede ser creer una mentira.

Pese a lo que he escrito antes sobre que la historia Maggie-Simon no me ha llegado igual que la de Julia-Colton (es una opinión personal), no por ello dejaría de recomendaros "La condesa libertina". Es una buena novela, bien escrita y con una buena historia. Joanna Shupe es una autora que pasará a estar presente en vuestra librería de romántica, seguro.

## Inés Izal says

Flojo, muy flojo.

Simon me gustó mucho en el anterior libro y estaba deseando leer su historia, pero ha sido un despropósito total.

Falta de argumentos, enamoramiento instantánea, prejuicios a mansalva, escenas de cama propias de adolescente y un final apresurado.

Si siguiese con la serie, sería por Quinn, pero tampoco quiero arriesgarme y llevarme un palazo como con Simon.

Ay señor, llévame pronto.

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## Vikki Vaught says

My Musings

I am so glad I found this amazing series. I read the first book and had to immediately purchase the second one. The Harlot Countess pulled me into the glittering world of Regency England with the vivid descriptions of the attire and setting.

Maggie, the widowed Lady Hawkins, is an artist known as Lemarc. Her drawings depict members of society in less than favorable light, especially Simon Barrett, the eighth Earl of Winchester, a man who wants to become prime minister someday.

The last thing Simon needs is for his peers to remember his reckless youth, but Lemarc is determined to sabotage his efforts to gain political support for a bill he wants to pass in Parliament, a bill that is near and dear to his heart. Never mind his goals to become prime minister.

When circumstances place him in the path of the woman who broke his heart many years ago, he has to decide whether revenge or love is more important. Can he trust this woman, or should he crush her?

This is a fast-paced, exciting read with great characters, even though, at times, I struggled to like the hero. Ultimately, he is a character I love to hate. He truly fought his feelings to the bitter end, holding onto his firm belief in Maggie's perfidy. Even when faced with the truth, he still wanted to hold onto his resentment. It may sound like I didn't enjoy Simon, but I truly did. He's deliciously flawed in the best way.

Maggie is also a flawed character. She is definitely feisty and independent, but while I understand she was deeply hurt when Simon turned his back on her without even giving her a chance to explain what really happened, her grudge against him seemed a bit too over the top. What about the blackguard who caused her ruination? She left him alone until he comes back into her life. Whether I truly fell in love with her character, I found her deliciously complex.

I listened to the audio version and the narrator is fantastic. I will definitely be looking for other books performed by Carmen Rose. She reads with a great deal of passion without becoming too dramatic, and she does an outstanding job on the male voices. She is a true delight to listen to.

If you like a romance with plenty of angst and passion, then you will enjoy The Harlot Countess as much as I

did. This is a great series, so glad I found it. Happy reading!

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### **MissCherry says**

Otro libro estupendo, entretenido y original de esta autora. Definitivamente va a mi lista de autoras prometedoras. La historia me a gustado, incluso odiandole a él hasta casi el final. Ella es una gran protagonista, su personaje me a encantado, creativa, inteligente, firme en sus decisiones y opiniones. El punto erótico de las novelas de Shupe también son un punto a su favor. Los secundario también muy destacables, tengo ganas de saber la historia de Quint y Sophia. Aunque el "misterio" de la trama para alguien que haya leído bastante de este genero no es nada "misterioso", porque resultaba evidente su resolución, no ha desmerecido la novela. Lo único que me ha enfadado y de lo cual no puedo culpar en absoluto a la autora es la traducción. He encontrado algunos errores garrafales y evidentes que no me han hecho ninguna gracia, espero más de editoriales como Titania. Espero que haya sido un simple desliz con este libro.

En definitiva, al igual que con La Duquesa Cortesana, recomiendo mucho este libro. Una pareja con química y una historia con ritmo.

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