



The Birth of Venus by Sarah Dunant

This is a coming-of-age story of a spirited 14-year-old girl during turbulent 15th-century Italy. Watch through her eyes as the city of Florence, a lavish city steeped in years of Medici family luxury, is suddenly besieged by plague, the threat of invasion, and the righteous wrath of the fundamentalist monk, Savonarola, and his “bonfires of the vanities”.

In the Company of the Courtesan by Sarah Dunant

Flame-haired courtesan, Fiammetta Bianchini, and her dwarf companion head for the shimmering beauty of Venice after escaping from the 1527 pillage of Rome. Dunant crafts a vivid vision of Venetian life: the weave of politics and religion; the layers of class; the rituals, intrigue, superstitions and betrayals of the era.

Leonardo's Swans by Karen Essex

Born into wealth amid the political and artistic foment of the Italian Renaissance, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este, sisters and rivals, compete for the attentions of Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan. Central to Isabella's interest in Ludovico is his court artist, Leonardo da Vinci, whose unusual and wide-ranging talent Isabella recognizes. His art, she decides, will be celebrated forever, and she wants her beauty immortalized in one of his works.

The Falconer's Knot: A Story of Friars, Flirtation and Foul Play by Mary Hoffman

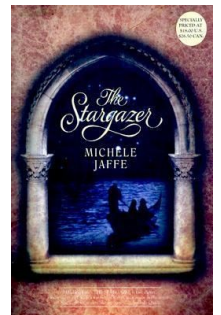
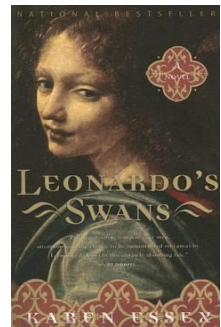
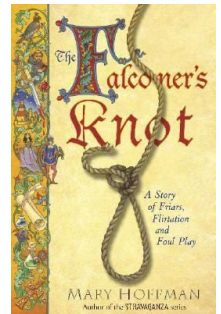
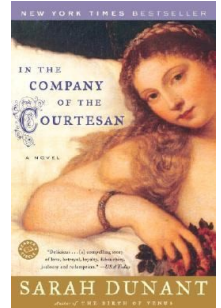
Multiple murders, romance, betrayals, and two sets of star-crossed lovers make up this pageturning young adult mystery set in fourteenth-century Umbria. The book provides a setting rich with details of the time period. Especially interesting are the descriptions of the art of colormaking for the pigments used in the frescoes at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

The Stargazer by Michele Jaffe

The brilliant daughter of a renowned physician, Bianca Salva is thrust into an uneasy alliance with Ian Foscarelli, a handsome aristocrat notorious for his outrageous escapades and romantic conquests, when they masquerade as a betrothed couple to find the murderer of a beautiful courtesan. This novel is a mixture of murder mystery, historical romance, and steamy passion set in Renaissance Venice.

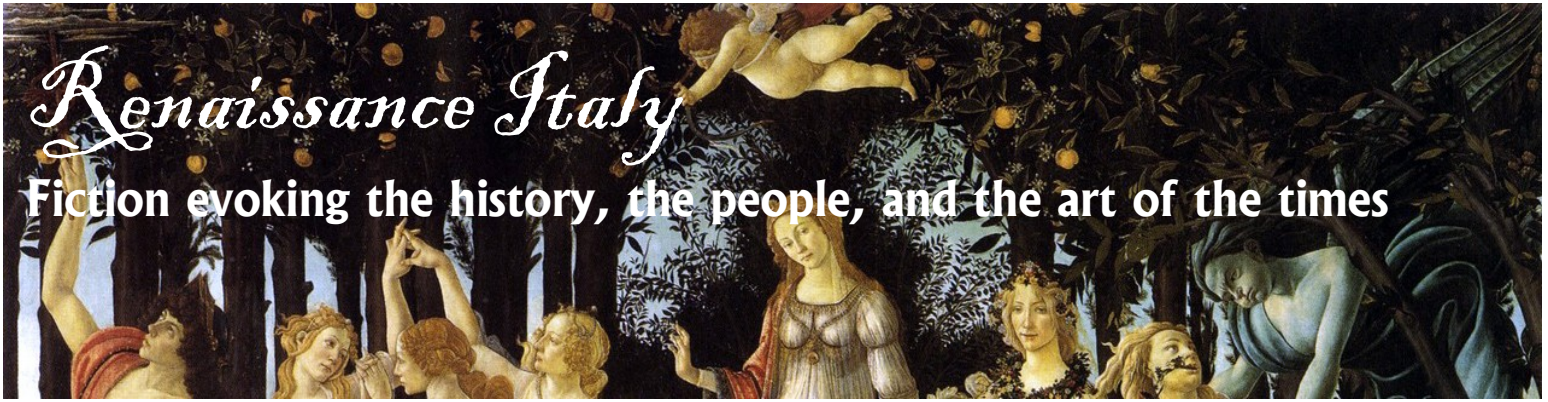
The Borgia Bride by Jeanne Kalogridis

This novel chronicles the story of the ravishing and iron-willed Sancha de Aragon, princess of Naples. Coming to Rome to marry the heir to the Borgia dynasty, Sancha soon finds herself caught up in the complex conspiracies, intrigues, and cruelty of the Italian Renaissance as she enters into a cautious friendship with her sensual and infamous sister-in-law, Lucrezia, and falls victim to the ruthless seductions of Cesare.



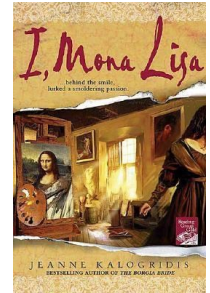
Renaissance Italy

Fiction evoking the history, the people, and the art of the times



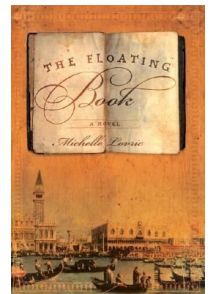
[I, Mona Lisa](#) by Jeanne Kalogridis

Young Mona Lisa di Antonio Gherardini questions the strained relationship that exists between her sad and intelligent mother, Mona Anna, and her politically motivated father, Ser Antonio. Her mother harbors a secret love for Lorenzo de Medici's brother, Guiliano, while her father is a staunch supporter of a Savonarola, a monk who preaches the overthrow of the Medici and urges the populace to burn pagan works of art. When Lorenzo asks Leonardo da Vinci to paint her portrait, the commission is a labor of love for the artist, who holds the key to the mystery surrounding Mona Lisa's parentage.



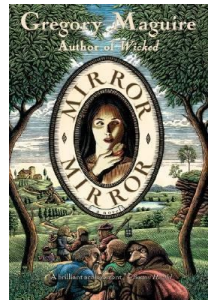
[The Floating Book](#) by Michelle Lovric

The colorful, sometimes violent history of printing serves as backdrop for this novel of 15th-century Venice. When the von Speyer brothers travel from Germany with their printing tools, they hope to capitalize on the bustling commerce in Venice. Marrying Venetians, they become intertwined with a Jewish doctor and his promiscuous wife; an editor whose sister, a nun, practices witchcraft; and a debauched Venetian scribe. As the popularity of printed books grows, their business is threatened by increasing competition, mistrust of printed books by the church, and their printing of such controversial works as the erotic poetry of the ancient Roman Catullus.



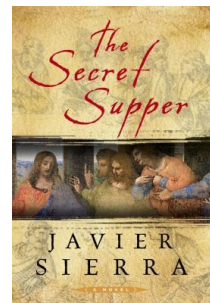
[Mirror, Mirror](#) by Gregory Maguire

A retelling of "Snow White" set in Renaissance Italy draws a link between the original fairy tale and the Borgia family's infamous practice of poisoning its enemies.



[The Secret Supper](#) by Javier Sierra

In Sierra's first book translated into English, he uncovers the secret hidden in Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in a novel set in 1497 Milan. Friar Agostino Leyre, a Dominican inquisitor, has been sent from Rome to determine the identity of the informant who has been sending messages to the Pope implicating Leonardo in spreading heresy, particularly through his latest masterpiece. Leyre takes up residence at the monastery where *The Last Supper* is being painted and discovers secrets on many levels, in both the monastery and Leonardo's fresco.



[The Passion of Artemisia](#) by Susan Vreeland

Narrated in the first-person by Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi, the novel tells the story of her life and career. Publicly humiliated and scorned in Rome after being the defendant in a rape trial in which the accused is her painting teacher (and father's friend), Artemisia accepts a hastily arranged marriage. While not a love match, the marriage proves at first to be affectionate, and the arrival of a daughter, Palmira, strengthens the bond with her husband. But rifts soon develop as Artemisia begins to have some success: she wins the patronage of the Medici and is the first woman to be elected to the Accademia dell'Arte—before her husband. Studio and home become the battlefields of Artemisia's life, and Vreeland chronicles 20 years of the painter's struggles while raising her daughter alone.

