

July 2024

## History's Fascination with the Mona Lisa

Every year, ten million people visit the Louvre to view her.

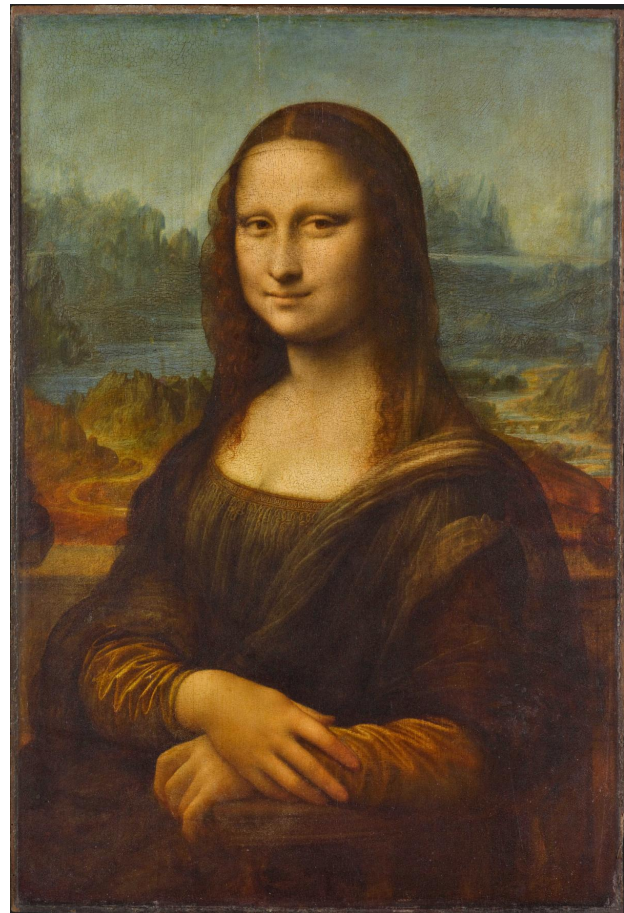
She has been the subject of countless academic articles, the source of controversy over how many versions of the portrait can be attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, and the obsession of art scholars questioning her true identity. Her smile has even been analyzed by Sigmund Freud.

Several years ago, as I was delving into the history of the Italian Renaissance for my novel *Love That Moves the Sun*, I came across a tantalizing nugget of Mona Lisa lore in more than one scholarly source.

Among the many lovely women who might have sat for this extraordinary portrait by Leonardo was a certain "Neapolitan lady," Costanza d'Avalos, the Duchessa of Francavilla.

Costanza plays an influential part in the life of Vittoria Colonna, my heroine in *Love That Moves the Sun*. She is a role model of wisdom, political insight, and courage, who not only defends her island by taking up arms herself, but also fosters a vibrant intellectual and artistic environment that shapes Neapolitan culture.

I was captivated by the idea that Costanza might have been the Mona Lisa.





*An image of Costanza d'Avalos from a fresco in a Neapolitan church*

One of the joys of writing historical fiction is that it is *fiction*. I could take that nugget of supposition proposed by art historians and imagine an encounter that produced a portrait that has enthralled the world for centuries.

And so, dear reader, I present to you the gift of *A Thing Miraculous*—one possible story of Mona Lisa's creation.

With my compliments, click the button below for a free copy of the novella.

With warmest wishes,  
Linda

## A THING MIRACULOUS Leonardo da Vinci and Costanza d'Avalos



Costanza d'Avalos is a woman of her time—an educated, astute Neapolitan duchess, managing her estates, navigating the complicated political milieu of 15th-century Italy, and conducting herself with discretion and propriety.

Until she meets Leonardo da Vinci.

When she first beholds a da Vinci painting of the Madonna in a Milan chapel, it overwhelms her with its power—inciting not her piety but her compelling need to understand the genius who created such an enthralling vision.

In seeking out Leonardo on a reckless whim, she succeeds only in alienating him and mortifying herself, until a chance encounter offers them both an opportunity to begin again.

But in order to join him in an exploration of the profound understanding she seeks, Costanza must decide whether to defy duty, the constraints of society, and her own discomfort with a longing she has never experienced before.

The story of an artist's passion to give the soul expression and the woman who inspired one of the world's most iconic portraits.

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## Upcoming Events

**August 24, 2024**

12:00 – 5:00 p.m.

East Longmeadow Brew Fest

*Come for the beer and the books!*

Brew Practitioners Brewery and Tap Room

45 Baldwin Street

East Longmeadow, Massachusetts

**September 28, 2024**

1:30 - 3:45 p.m.

Memoir Workshop

*Bring your memories for an immersive, hands-on seminar*

St. Joseph's Hall

31-35 Prince Street

Boston North End

Boston, MA 02113

*Program sponsored by National Organization of Italian American Women*

[Contact me](#)



if you would like more information about either of these events

## Libraries!

A few weeks ago I was excited to learn that the Brooklyn Public Library had purchased several of my titles. It was a reminder to me about how vital libraries are to making not only my books available to a wider audience but also insuring that books that might be restricted in other venues will always have a home.

I encourage you to reach out to your library:  
Request my books and thank your librarian.

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Linda Cardillo | P.O. Box 60341 | Longmeadow, MA 01116 US

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