

## Dorothy Dunnett's novels

Dorothy Dunnett wrote two major series of historical fiction set in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Over eight novels in *'The House of Niccolò'* series the author traces the career of her protagonist during the period 1460 to 1483, charting his rise from low status work in a Bruges dye-yard to become a merchant banker in Bruges, Venice and Scotland. In the course of this transformation, many aspects of early renaissance Europe are discussed: overland travel and exploration including pilgrimage; ships, shipping and trade routes; trade (particularly for dyeing, wool and luxury goods) and banking; international relations and espionage; Scottish governance.

These topics are treated in the context of:

Bruges and its relationship with the Burgundian rulers Philip the Good, Charles the Bold and Marie of Burgundy; the last days of the Byzantine empire in Trebizond and the Lusignans in Cyprus; Knights Hospitaller of St John; Italian city states; the slave, gold and salt trades and Islamic scholarship in West Africa; the Scotland of James III, its relations internationally and the interaction between the Scottish crown and the great magnates of the realm; cod fishing in Iceland; the Hanse; pilgrimage to Sinai; the Ottoman empire and the Turcoman White Sheep.

The titles, their dates and settings are as follows:

*Niccolò Rising* 1459 – 1460 Flanders - Italian City States (Milan)  
*Spring of the Ram* 1460 – 1461 Florence - Turkey (Trebizond & Erzerum) - Venice  
*Race of Scorpions* 1461 – 1464 Italy – Cyprus - Rhodes  
*Scales of Gold* 1464 – 1468 Venice – Portugal and Madeira – Gambia – Timbuktu – Sahara - Venice  
*Unicorn Hunt* 1468 – 1471 Scotland – Flanders - Tyrol – Alexandria/Cairo/Sinai – Cyprus - Venice  
*To Lie with Lions* 1471 – 1473 France – Scotland – Iceland -  
*Caprice and Rondo* 1473 – 1477 Poland - Crimea - Iran (Tabriz) - Russia (Moscow) - Flanders  
*Gemini* 1477 – 1483 Scotland – Germany – England

*'The Lymond Chronicles'* is a series of six novels which begins in 1547 and ends in 1558. These concern the polymath second son of a Scottish noble who begins the first book on the run from a treason charge and who, at the end of the last book is back in Scotland. In the interim the hero has undertaken a number of challenging tasks: fighting with the Knights of St John in Malta; commanding a French galley on an expedition to Stamboul; serving as Voevoda Bolshoia (Supreme Commander) in Ivan IV's Muscovy; and in two extended stays in France helping, first, to foil d'Aubigny's plot to kill Mary, Queen of Scots and, second, to prosecute the French war with the English/Spanish.

These topics are treated in the context of: the aftermath of death of James V of Scotland, the infancy of Mary, Queen of Scots and the Rough Wooing; the Queen's move to France; the court of Henri II of France; the influence of the de Guise family; the plot against Mary's life; the Knights Hospitaller of St John; Mediterranean corsairs; the Ottoman empire; Scottish magnates; Muscovy of Ivan the Terrible; The Italian War 1551-1559.

The titles, their dates and settings are as follows:

*Game of Kings* 1547 - 1548 Scotland  
*Queen's Play* 1550 – 1551 France  
*Disorderly Knights* 1551 – 1552 France – Malta – N coast of Africa - Scotland  
*Pawn in Frankincense* 1553 Mediterranean – N coast of Africa - Constantinople

*Ringed Castle 1554 – 1557 Muscovy – Scotland - England*  
*Checkmate 1557 – 1558 France*

Both series feature leadership skills; mercenary armies involved in international conflict; sailing and navigation; music; printing; moneying; medicine; espionage; roles of women; astrology; cartography.

*King Hereafter* is Dorothy Dunnett's interpretation of the legends of Thorfinn the Mighty and Macbeth. It covers the period 1000 – 1057 and sees Viking Thorfinn from childhood, seeking to verify his claim to Orkney from the Norwegian king, through his transformation into Christian Macbeth and his 18 year reign to his death at the hand of Malcolm III.

Its themes are: Viking Orkney and Caithness; early Christianity; kingship and governance; Alba

### **Other information**

The Society has a website: [www.dorothydunnett.org](http://www.dorothydunnett.org).

“The Dorothy Dunnett Companion” and “The Dorothy Dunnett Companion Volume II” by Elspeth Morrison are guides to the history against which the characters in the two series move, and “The Lymond Poetry” is the author's own selection from the hundreds of poems she uses in the Lymond Chronicles.

A sample copy of the “Whispering Gallery” may be downloaded as a pdf from the website of the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, [www.medren.ed.ac.uk](http://www.medren.ed.ac.uk).