



# L'America

*Martha McPhee*

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## L'America Martha McPhee

In the brilliant Greek sunshine of a small Aegean island, Beth and Cesare meet—beginning a transformative love affair that spans two continents, two decades, and two lifetimes. Cesare is a privileged Italian boy, raised in a prosperous town where his family has lived for five hundred years; Beth, an ambitious American dreamer born to hippies and raised on a commune. The events of September 11 serve as a catalyst for the unfolding of their story, in which passion struggles against the inexorable force of patria. The novel of the American in Europe has a long and lustrous pedigree. L'America adds to this lineage, an evocative portrait of the intersection between Europe and America, the old and the new, and the dizzying, life-changing power of first love.

## L'America Details

Date : Published April 9th 2007 by Mariner Books (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9780156032360

Author : Martha McPhee

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Genre : Fiction, Romance, Literature, 21st Century

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## From Reader Review L'America for online ebook

### Rachel says

A long distance love story for the young at heart.

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### Lisa says

the reader knows early on that this love affair is doomed, yet the story of cesare and beth is so compelling, you're willing to invest the time. lush language, beautiful descriptive passages. i want to go to italy and experience its romance and beauty!

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### Carly Mae says

I discovered this book on my own. It is probably one of the best books I've read in a few years. It's one of those that really spoke to me, but I couldn't tell you why or how without some time to think about it. It was just so wonderfully painful, tragic through and through.

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### Cher Johnson says

I wanted to like this more. At times it was quite interesting and insightful, rich and surprising. Some of the settings were quite unusual, and the author explored cultural depths and nuances skillfully. On the other hand, she crammed perhaps too many unusual characters and places in the novel, and they didn't always come to life. Some of the quirky characters seemed either like an author's invention, or perhaps descriptions of people she'd really known who she tried to fit into the fiction. I finished it eventually and was glad I did. I think I would have liked it much more if she'd just told the story in chronological order and not kept jumping into the future or past. I had a hard time enjoying the "present" adventures of a character when there would be an aside in telling us how the character had died young, etc. The timeline was all over the place, and I don't see why that editorial decision was made.

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### Melanie says

I wanted to like this book, but it didn't seem to go anywhere. You know the ending from the beginning. I kept reading thinking that there must be something more...there wasn't.

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### Bookmarks Magazine says

Like Henry James, Martha McPhee, author of *Bright Angel Time* and the National Book Award-nominated *Gorgeous Lies*, asks big questions about European tradition and American "newness," while offering an

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absorbing account of first love. Critics praised McPhee's superb writing, pitch-perfect dialogue, and flesh-and-blood characters. (Only Michiko Kakutani asked why readers should care about such selfish and stubborn creations.) *L'America* circles around itself in a layered, multidecade narrative, which, while adding depth to the story, also diminishes the drama. Some clich\_

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### **Mary-Ellen says**

This is a not-so-sweeping love epic. I picked it up because the story is set in Greece, Italy, France, U.S. etc, and I read to experience things I cannot in my everyday. Having said that, I never really was grabbed by the story. It was difficult to read...unemotional. It's the kind of book that I might try again. Afterall, the first time I read *The English Patient* I just did not like it, the next 3 times I read it, I fell in love with it completely. So maybe I just need to give it another try.

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### **Alicia says**

*L'America* by Martha McPhee has been the most profoundly moving book I have read so far this year. The story of an American woman and an Italian man who fall in love and never can be together, not because of some evil plot or debt of honor but because they both have dreams that cannot blend together, expectations from their families and cultures that hold them tight. The story starts with the man getting a letter from his ex-lover's husband letting him know that she has died. He remembers the beginning of their relationship from the giddy first days to the sad and bitter ending. As the book progresses the reader becomes more and more aware that this will never work. That they are doomed, not only to fail in this love but to also never be able to fully leave it behind. This was a story that hurts to read but is beautiful in the telling.

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### **Geoff says**

Honestly, I'm sad I didn't like this as much as I thought I would. Seriously, I've given it the lowest rating of the year so far. I bought it in one of my bulk buys at the 2011 Boston Book festival and haven't thought of it since. It came up on my list when I used random.org to select my next book.

Even though I finished it, I just could not invest in this book, and that's never a good sign. It started off slow, and thankfully did pick up a good bit, but still finished slow. Seriously go read the paragraph long sentence that was the final sentence of the novel. Not fun.

[Click here to continue reading on my blog The Oddness of Moving Things.](#)

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### **Holly says**

This was difficult to rate. I really wanted to like this book, and I did love parts of it. But I was extremely bored by others. The story itself is good (Italy! Doomed love affair!) but told in a detached ("dear reader") way so it can be difficult to care about the characters. Plus, the book jumps all over the place, time-wise. I

don't instinctively have a problem with this (I loved *Time Traveler's Wife*), but I don't think it works so well here, partly because big chunks of Cesare's life are left out.

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### **Andrea says**

I'm not sure about this one, the writing is confusing at times. I picked up the book because the premise seemed to make for such a good story. An American girl falls for her Italian friends' love interest while on vacation in Greece. The book is confusing because the person telling the story keeps changing without warning. I was going to put it down around page 30, I hope I'm not going to regret that!

So I kept reading and I'm not happy that I spent so much time reading this book. I'm standing behind the premise of the book which was very good, and I really liked the side stories. The book was just so slow and not in an enjoyable long stroll on the beach kind of way. Nope, just SLOW and dull at times. I wanted to like this book so much, it just kept falling down when I thought it was going to get up and go.

I would read something else by this author because I loved her ideas.

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### **Megan says**

On the surface *L'America* is a love story, but it ends up being about class and national identity, and how both are hard to get around even for love. The writing style is rich and evocative, and the fact that we know from the start that it is not a "love conquers all" story lets you observe more closely the roots of their conflict. The two main characters are Beth, an American who grew up on a semi-commune in rural Pennsylvania (with some polish added in NY, NY), and Cesare, who is the privileged son of a wealthy family from Northern Italy. Neither are without flaw, and at some point you realize that the only thing that really kept the two apart was that they are both a bit selfish. But their rapturous meeting and their long drawn-out breakup are both told in fragments and time skips, interwoven with vignettes that illustrate their essential natures. You know that they are not meant to be. One element that struck me was the lost chances, which are especially poignant as we find out fairly early on that Beth dies in the Towers on September 11. One character points out that only in this kind of out-of-scale tragedy do your loved ones get to see you die over and over again on TV. Both Beth and Cesare have a fascination for their beloved's culture (Beth ends up writing Italian cookbooks), but cannot get over their own background and expectations. Still their sometimes obsessive passion for each other ends up making you wistful and wishing they had taken the chance. That love still defined a huge part of their lives, even if it was ultimately untenable.

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### **Beth says**

Study abroad, Italy, first loves, art history, idealized organic communes... if this book was aimed for a certain demographic, then I fell for it (doesn't hurt that the main character's name is Beth, either). But I did fall for this book. The story of an American meeting her destined love-of-her-life, an Italian heir, is easy to read and convincingly takes readers to Italy in years ranging from the Renaissance to the seventies, and New York in the eighties to post-9/11 with stops in Greece and France. These are compelling characters whom you root for -- most of the time -- and author Martha McPhee isn't challenging readers with larger questions beyond true love and loss. (In fact, the characters are not challenged beyond this as, annoyingly, there's always a rich

grandmother to finance any whim.) L'America is a pleasant way to enjoy a vicarious foreign love affair. I'll also give points to DesignWorks Group for the sexy book cover. When writing about Italy...

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### **Heather says**

Lovely writing - evokes and connects time, place, identity and emotion throughout. The travelogue-esque nature of it will satisfy wanderlust if unable to travel at the moment!

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### **Amy says**

Relived my brief life in Italy and was gripped throughout by the great writing and story.

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