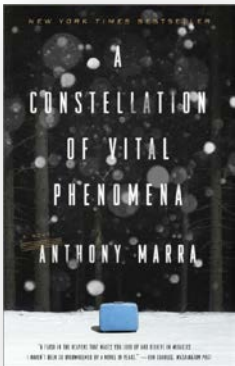


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FLAHERTY-DUNNAN FIRST NOVEL PRIZE SHORTLIST SELECTION
A *NEW YORK TIMES* NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR
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A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA
A NOVEL
By Anthony Marra

Praise for *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*



"Extraordinary.... [A] 21st-century *War and Peace*.... Marra seems to derive his astral calm in the face of catastrophe directly from Tolstoy...."
—**Madison Smartt Bell**, *New York Times Book Review*

"A flash in the heavens that makes you look up and believe in miracles... Here, in fresh, graceful prose, is a profound story that dares to be as tender as it is ghastly, a story about desperate lives in a remote land that will quickly seem impossibly close and important... As the elements of this complicated plot begin to align in ways too tragic and moving to anticipate, the past resolves into focus; the future is freighted with anguish but flecked with hope. I haven't been so overwhelmed by a novel in years. At the risk of raising your expectations too high, I have to say you simply must read this book."
—**Ron Charles**, *The Washington Post*

"A powerful tale... The moment Akhmed walks into the hospital with Havaa... rivals anything Michael Ondaatje has written in its emotional force.... There are many reasons to read *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*. To enter the tragedy of Caucasus history that has been dishonored by the Boston Marathon bombings, allegedly committed by two ethnic Chechen immigrants; to marvel at the lack of fear in a writer so young. To read a book that can bring tears to your eyes and force laughter from your lungs.... But the best reason to read this novel, is that this story reminds us how senseless killing often wrenches kindness through extreme circumstances."
—**John Freeman**, *Boston Globe*

"Amazing first novel... brilliant writing... *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is one of the most accomplished and affecting books I've read in a very long time... Though the lives lived in this novel can seem unbearable, what Anthony Marra has done is to diligently describe them in passionate, extraordinary prose. In *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* they become not only "write-able," but also highly, deeply readable."
—**NPR**, **Meg Wolitzer**, author of *The Interestings*

"A prose writer who resembles the Joseph Heller of *Catch-22* and the Jonathan Safran Foer of *Everything Is Illuminated*. Mr. Marra is a lovely writer about families. He offers what might be the best definition of what one sister means to another that I have ever read. He is, in fact, a lovely writer about many things. ... A mighty effort."
—**Dwight Garner**, *New York Times*

"This beautiful work will matter long after Chechnya has disappeared from our headlines... In his sure hand, the whole of it comes completely to life... The sense of connectedness is as meaningful as the particulars of it. In exquisite imagery, Marra tends carefully to the twisted strands of grace and tragedy. Everything in [it] is dignified with a hoping, aching heartbeat."
—**Ramona Ausubel**, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"With remarkable pathos and a surprising amount of humor, Marra keeps the focus on the relationships, struggles, and tiny triumphs of an unforgettable group of characters... Marra creates a specific and riveting world around his characters, expertly revealing the unexpected connections among them. *Constellation* deserves to be on the short list for every major award. It's an absolute masterpiece."
—**Sarah Jessica Parker**, *Entertainment Weekly*

Anthony Marra's exquisite debut novel, **A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA** (Hogarth; February 4, 2014) is about the transcendent power of love in wartime. When Hogarth published the book in hardcover in May 2013, it became an instant *New York Times* bestseller—and reviewers across the country weighed in on Marra's incredible literary talents. Even President Obama purchased a copy of the novel during his annual trip to bookstores for American Express's "Small Business Saturday." Marra sets the story in contemporary Chechnya, a republic in southern Russia, which has endured a series of devastating wars, occupations, and insurgencies that began in 1994 and have only recently subsided (Marra has himself traveled through Chechnya). During the years in which the novel takes place, Russian forces abducted anyone suspected of abetting Chechen separatists, a practice which continues to this day.

A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA begins in a snow-covered village where eight-year-old Havaa watches from the woods as Russian soldiers abduct her father in a midnight raid, accusing him of conspiring with Chechen rebels. Not far away their lifelong neighbor Akhmed has also been watching, fearing the worst when the soldiers set fire to Havaa's house. But when he finds her hiding beyond the blaze, huddled beside a strange blue suitcase, he decides to seek sanctuary in the only safe place he can think of: an abandoned hospital where he has heard rumor of one brilliant but troubled remaining surgeon. For the talented and self-reliant Sonja, the arrival of Akhmed and Havaa is an unwelcome addition to the stream of wounded rebels and refugees she treats while desperately awaiting the return of her missing sister. But over the course of five dramatic days, her life will change as a tapestry of compassion, betrayal, and forgiveness emerges to weave together the pasts of these three unlikely companions and ultimately decide their fate.

With *The English Patient's* dramatic sweep and *The Tiger's Wife's* graceful entwining of family and history, **A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA** tells the story of the things in us that survive—the love a parent feels for a child, or the love that develops between two strangers—and the complexities and sacrifices that love demands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **ANTHONY MARRA** is the winner of a Whiting Award, Pushcart Prize, and the Narrative Prize. *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* won the 2014 National Book Critics Circle's inaugural John Leonard Prize and the 2014 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award in fiction, as well as the inaugural 2014 Carla Furstenberg Cohen Fiction Award. Marra's novel was a National Book Award long list selection as well as a shortlist selection for the Flaherty-Dunn first novel prize. In addition, his work has been anthologized in *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*. He received an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University, where he now teaches as the Jones Lecturer in Fiction. He has lived and studied in Eastern Europe, and now resides in Oakland, CA. *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is his first novel. Visit: <http://anthonymarra.net/>.



ABOUT THE BOOK:
A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA
A Novel
By Anthony Marra
Hogarth • On-Sale Date: February 4, 2014 • Price: \$15.00 • 400 Pages
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Website: <http://anthonymarra.net/>
Twitter: @anthonyfmarra
www.CrownPublishing.com

Additional Praise for
A CONSTELLATION OF VITAL PHENOMENA
By Anthony Marra

“Mr. Marra is trying to capture some essence of the lives of men and women caught in the pincers of a brutal, decade-long war, and at this he succeeds beautifully....his storytelling impulses are fed by wellsprings of generosity.... [The] ending is almost certain to leave you choked up and, briefly at least, transformed by tenderness.”

—*Wall Street Journal*

“Remarkable....This is, from first to last, a novel about love as much as war....In the aftermath of Boston, in a world where all our lives are linked more closely than ever before, these are words to hold close.”

—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

“Marra is an author talented way beyond his years...Dazzling.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“Marra delicately weaves together several narratives against the backdrop of this bleak, war-ravaged country.... If you’re a fan of beautifully composed, internationally set fiction like *The Tiger’s Wife* or *The Orphan Master’s Son*, *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is a worthy next pick. The Whiting Writers’ Award selection committee dubbed Marra’s ambitions “Tolstoyan,” and there could not be a better word to describe his all-too-real cast of characters. This is an exquisite debut.”

—*Bookpage*

“Excellent.”

—*New York*

“The most moving book I’ve read in years. By writing so beautifully about a tiny village in Chechnya, this 28-year-old Washington native has produced a timeless tragedy about the victims of war.”

—*The Washingtonian*

“In this dark world there is light, like sun shafts through bullet holes, and understanding, and redemption, and humor, and love, as Marra shifts backward and forward in time with the characters and their world. The writing here is wise and beautiful...and Marra truly sings here in a voice unusually strong and evocative.”

—*The Buffalo News*

“Moving back and forth through the 1990s and 2000s, Marra slowly assembles the tragic puzzle of how these characters are linked together in far greater ways than they ever realize...[and] the elegant, stomach-dropping, emotional conclusion is one of the most satisfying I’ve recently read.”

—*Lincoln Journal Star*

“Marra’s historical scope, black comedy, and sympathy for victims will remind many readers of Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated*, but his style and vision are very much his own. He should be applauded for providing a memorial for the Chechens who suffered from political disputes originating far from their homes, and for peopling his story with fully realized characters whose twisted souls appear every bit as vital as our own.”

—**Sean Kinch, Chapter 16**

“[An] extraordinary first novel...Marra collapses time, sliding between 1996 and 2004 while also detailing events in a future yet to arrive, giving his searing novel an eerie, prophetic aura. All of the characters are closely tied together in ways that Marra takes his time revealing, even as he beautifully renders the way we long to connect and the lengths we will go to endure.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“Marra’s debut novel places readers in Chechnya during its decade-long conflict with Russia and offers up an authentic, heartbreaking tale of intertwining relationships during wartime....As he shifts in time through the years of the two Chechen wars, Marra confidently weaves those plots together, and several more besides, giving each character a rich backstory that intersects, often years down the line, with the others....[T]he novel’s tone remains optimistic, and its characters retain vast depths of humanity (and even humor) in spite of their bleak circumstances.”

—*Library Journal* (starred review)

“It’s hard to think of an American writer who has so convincingly transported readers into the lives of characters as geopolitically distant as the cast of Chechens whose stories Anthony Marra braids together in *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*. Mr. Marra gives us no anchorage in a familiar point-of-view. Instead, he gives us the natives of a peripheral Chechen village, and makes us imagine the world that is their village so convincingly that we forget how remote it is. The novel is a wondrous machine of many moving parts, all whirring together like clockwork, gracefully guiding us backward and forward in time, events unfolding in an order that feels inevitable. His ambitions are Tolstoyan, and he brings stylistic virtuosity to the prose, giving us lyric passages saturated with intelligence and psychological insight. By the end of the novel, we love the characters and grieve with them, and rejoice with the ‘immense, spinning joy’ that is the novel’s final note.”

—Whiting Writers’ Awards, Selection Committee

“Powerful, convincing, beautifully realized—it’s hard to believe that *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is a first novel. Anthony Marra is a writer to watch and savor.”

—T.C. Boyle, *New York Times* bestselling author of *When the Killing’s Done* and *The Women*

“*A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is simply spectacular. Not since *Everything is Illuminated* have I read a first novel so ambitious and fully realized. If this is where Anthony Marra begins his career, I can’t imagine how far he will go.”

—Ann Patchett, *New York Times* bestselling author of *State of Wonder* and *Bel Canto*

“Remarkable and breathtaking, Anthony Marra’s *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* is a spellbinding elegy for an overlooked land engulfed by an oft forgotten war. Set in the all-too-real Chechen conflict, Marra conjures fragile and heartfelt characters whose fates interrogate the very underpinnings of love and sacrifice.”

—Adam Johnson, Pulitzer prize winning author of *The Orphan Master’s Son*

“Anthony Marra’s novel, *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena*, is both devastating and transcendent. The story of eight people (and a nation) navigating two brutal wars, it’s a novel of loyalty and sacrifice and enduring love. You’ll finish it transformed.”

—Maile Meloy, author of *Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It*

“Anthony Marra’s fine debut novel reaches tenderly, unflinchingly, into the center of the Chechnyan conflict of the late 1990s. This tale has its roots in shocking brutality, and its beauty in the human redemption that can come from unaccountable human kindness. Whimsies of circumstance, fate, and the ties of family and faith serve to guide the reader and the characters through a richly layered and deeply beautiful journey.”

—Vincent Lam, author of *The Headmaster’s Wager*
Wager