



DECOLONIZING VIETNAMESE LITERATURE: VOICES FROM WITHIN

An Interview with Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, Author of *Dust Child* (2023)



Fig 1. Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai
(Courtesy of the writer)

While serving in the American War in Việt Nam, thousands of American soldiers fathered children with Vietnamese women. Now in their seventies and eighties, some veterans, who have long struggled with the trauma of war and kept their past a secret from their families, are eager to reunite with the children they never knew. The topic has gained media attention¹ in recent years, following an increase in visits by American veterans to Việt Nam, where some of them sought to reconnect with their chil-

dren and former partners, placing advertisements in the local press. In Western media, Amerasian children born to American fathers and Vietnamese mothers during and shortly after the war received the term “dust of life,” which was popularized by the 1989 musical *Miss Saigon*. In tiếng Việt, however, the term *bụi đời* carries a broader and more general meaning, devoid of racial connotations. Unlike its Western adaptation, where it has been associated with Amerasian individuals, *bụi đời* refers to street children or wanderers—those who drift through life without a clear direction or purpose. The term evokes the image of individuals who, like dust, are an inseparable part of urban life. They may be abandoned and neglected, yet their presence is inevitable and omnipresent, highlighting the realities of marginalization within society.

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¹ See, for example, Jonathan Watts in *The Guardian* (May 2, 2005), David Lamb in *Smithsonian Magazine* (June 2009), Jeff Stein in *Newsweek* (December 2, 2013), and James Dao in *The New York Times* (September 15, 2013), among others.

The experiences of Amerasian children and the enduring impact of war trauma, explored within the framework of movement and transnational migration, are the main topics of Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai's novel *Dust Child*, published in 2023 by Algonquin Books. I had the opportunity to interview Quế Mai in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan—a foreign country to both of us, yet one rich in nomadic history that felt symbolically relevant to our conversation. This setting offered a fitting context to explore the themes of displacement, rootlessness, belonging, reconciliation, and personal connections.

Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai—a Vietnamese writer, translator, and activist—stands out as a distinctive voice to speak about themes of mobility, cultural exchange, and the construction of cultural identities. Her personal and professional life exemplifies a continuous crossing of geographical and linguistic boundaries, reflecting the fluidity of contemporary transnational experiences. Exploring Việt Nam's expanding ties with the United States and beyond, she brings a unique perspective on the interplay between individual and collective memory, and the shaping of cultural identities in a rapidly changing world.

Nguyễn describes herself as a global nomad, an epithet that reflects her life of constant mobility since childhood. Born in a small village in Northern Việt Nam in 1973, she moved with her family to the Mekong Delta at the age of six, where she spent much of her early years. In 1992, she was awarded a scholarship from the Australian government, which enabled her to travel outside Việt Nam for the first time. After four years of study in Melbourne, she graduated at the top of her class with a degree in Business Management and Business Administration from Monash University.

Returning to Việt Nam, Nguyễn dedicated herself to sustainable development through roles with international organizations, including various UN agencies. She also founded Chắp Cánh Ước Mơ, a voluntary group supporting children with cancer, and established two scholarship programs to help disadvantaged Vietnamese children continue their education. While she has spent most of her life in Việt Nam, her career has taken her to Australia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Belgium, and Indonesia. Currently, she divides her time between Việt Nam and Kyrgyzstan.

In interviews, Nguyễn has frequently emphasized her lifelong passion for reading and writing, describing how she often found hope and solace in literature. Although dreaming of becoming a writer since childhood, she pursued various jobs before returning to her passion at the age of thirty-three. With the support of scholarships from Lancaster University in the UK, she began her Master's in Creative Writing

in 2012 and earned her PhD in Creative Writing in 2020. During these two programs, she completed two novel manuscripts, both of which became the foundation for her subsequent novels. Nguyễn is the author of thirteen books, including five in English and eight in Vietnamese. Her English-language works include the poetry collection *The Secret of Hoa Sen* (2014), the novels *The Mountains Sing* (2020) and *Dust Child* (2023), the children's book *Earth Cakes and Sky Cakes* (2023), and the forthcoming poetry and essay collection *The Color of Peace* (2025). Nguyễn's publications in Vietnamese span poetry, short fiction, and non-fiction. In addition, she has translated eight books between tiếng Việt and English. As Nguyễn expressed in a social media post, writing in both languages provides her with fulfillment and when faced with challenges in one language she frequently finds inspiration in the other: "I love writing in Vietnamese and English. If I get stuck in one language, I switch to another one."²

Nguyễn's primary area of research focuses on the enduring effects of war. Her debut novel *The Mountains Sing* is a family saga that explores the devastating impact of war across generations. Set against the backdrop of twentieth-century Việt Nam, the novel spans several decades, beginning with the French colonization, the Japanese occupation during World War II, moving through the First Indochina War, the land reforms under Communist rule in the 1950s, the American War in Việt Nam, and the war's aftermath. The story is told from the perspectives of three generations of women: Diệu Lan, the grandmother, endures the hardships brought on by the First Indochina War and the early years of communist rule, while her daughter, Ngọc, faces the societal challenges of the land reforms and government policies; Hương, the granddaughter, seeks to make sense of her family's past amidst the lingering trauma of war. This generational perspective allows the author to address the broader scope of Việt Nam's historical struggles, from the colonization and war to the shifting social and political landscapes that followed.

Nguyễn's second novel, *Dust Child*, further showcases the author's interest in depicting the emotional complexity of historical trauma. The novel unfolds through a non-linear structure, alternating between the late 1960s and contemporary Việt Nam. The story follows several interconnected characters, each navigating their trauma and searching for redemption. The plotline centers on the lives of two sisters—Trang

² Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai [@nguyenphanquemai], *Instagram*, 5 Aug. 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/DCtqJwRAsBi/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D.

and Quỳnh, who leave their rural village in 1969 to work in Sài Gòn, where they find themselves in a new, complex world of bar girls catering to American soldiers. The narrative also shifts to the contemporary period, where the consequences of the war still resonate in the lives of the characters: Dan, the American veteran, returns to Việt Nam in search of his war-time lover and their child; Phong, abandoned as a child and labeled a “dust of life” because of his mixed race, seeks to uncover the identities of his parents and find a better future in the United States. Nguyễn’s novel sheds light on the complex history of the American War in Việt Nam and its lingering effects on both individual and society, bringing attention to voices and stories that are often overlooked.



Fig. 2 and 3. Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai and Mariya Doğan (from Mariya Doğan's private collections)

Mariya Doğan: You have spent a significant amount of time living outside of Việt Nam in recent years, and your most successful works have been written in English and published internationally. If you were to classify your literary identity, would you consider yourself a diasporic writer, an immigrant writer, or a Vietnamese writer? Or would you suggest that your identity fits into another category altogether?

Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai: My nationality is Vietnamese, and my only passport is Vietnamese. I spend a significant portion of my year in Việt Nam too—at least a third of it. However, I believe nationality should not be the sole factor in determining literary identity. I consider Vietnamese literature to encompass the voices of diasporic writers as well. It is not limited to works written within Việt Nam's borders. Writers from the Vietnamese diaspora, such as Ocean Vương, Viet Thanh

Nguyen, and Thích Nhất Hạnh, contribute richly to this tradition, carrying the Vietnamese heritage with them wherever they are. That, to me, defines us as Vietnamese authors.

MD: You hold a degree in Business Management and Business Administration, have worked with international organizations and contributed to impactful charitable projects in Việt Nam and abroad. Given this background in international work, what inspired you to pursue a career in writing instead? How did this transition come about, and what drew you to focus on literature as your primary pursuit?

NQM: I always dreamed of becoming a writer. As a child, I kept a diary where I would write poems, though it was just something personal, for myself. At the age of ten, I secretly entered a writing competition in Hà Nội and won a prize. But when the letter arrived informing my parents that I had won, they were shocked. Given the challenging history of writers in Việt Nam, they didn't want me to become a writer. Even though writing was always my passion, life took me in other directions. My family encouraged me to pursue a stable career, so I ended up studying business instead. Much later, after I got married, my husband and I moved to Bangladesh. While there, I worked in a library, and that experience completely changed my perspective on life. I spent a lot of time reading and loved being surrounded by books. When we returned to Hà Nội, I decided to reconnect with my dream of writing and began composing poetry again.

MD: In your interviews, you often speak of your deep connection with books and the written word, noting that books were your only friends during several years of your childhood. You also mention that your school years were shaped by poverty, and you had to work as a rice farmer and a street vendor to support your family. Could you elaborate on how, as a young girl selling cigarettes on the street and vegetables at the town's market, you cultivated this bond with literature?

NQM: Books have always played a crucial role in my life, providing comfort and support during difficult times. My parents' love and appreciation for books inspired me to be a writer. They bought me books even though we didn't have enough to eat. In the 1980s, when Việt Nam transitioned to a market economy, my parents ventured into business but ultimately lost everything. We were deeply in debt, and creditors came to our house, taking everything, including my bicycle and the cassette recorder I used to study English. The only possessions we had left were books, as the creditors didn't think they were worth anything. I clung to those books, reading them for comfort and inspiration. They helped me feel less alone and less afraid, especially when I read about characters overcoming challenges. That's

when I became fascinated by the power of books to transform lives. In both of my novels, I explore this theme, highlighting how writers can create real, positive change through their work.

MD: Your social activism has been recognized through numerous awards, including the Australian Alumni Award for Sustainable Social Development in 2008³ and the Female Vision Award in 2010.⁴ Is social engagement typical for writers in Việt Nam? Is there an expectation for writers to take on socially active roles?

NQM: In Việt Nam, many people aspire to be writers, and there is a large number of poets, but not all of them engage in social activism. For me, however, my involvement in social issues stems from my personal experiences. Having worked with the UN, founded charity organizations, and grown up in poverty, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of giving back. In other words, this decision was deeply personal because I understand the value of receiving and giving to others. I believe that for a writer to truly make an impact, they need to consider society as a whole, not just their own individual experience. That's why I gravitate towards writers who address social issues, explore the future, and offer ways to improve society collectively.

MD: In your essay "Climbing Many Mountains," you describe your work as a response to Western narratives that "continue to see [Việt Nam] only as a place of war and the Vietnamese as people who don't need to speak."

NQM: This is why one of my writing missions is to decolonize literature about Việt Nam, to showcase my homeland as a country of over four thousand years of history and culture. Việt Nam is a nation shaped by its past, but not defined by it. It is filled with dynamic, forward-thinking people who are creating its future. This vision of Việt Nam goes beyond the war narrative, emphasizing its resilience and limitless potential. Over the past fifty years, my country has undergone remarkable transformation. Every time I return, I'm amazed by the speed of its development. Growing up, I witnessed the scars of war—people missing limbs, shattered buildings, environmental damage; I used to travel from North to South by train and saw many bomb craters alongside the tracks.

Now, Việt Nam is a thriving country, full of hardworking, positive individuals. It's a place that never sleeps, always striving for the future.

³ Awarded by the Australian Consulate in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Graduates from Australian Club, and the Australian Agency for International Development.

⁴ Awarded by the Hanoi International Women's Club, an award given to a female leader who has made outstanding contributions to sustainable development.

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Of course, we still face challenges such as unsustainable development, environmental problems, climate change, and social inequality. But I hope that as we continue to enjoy peace, we can rebuild the country and overcome the scars of the past. Through my novels, I want to present a Việt Nam rich in culture, history, and vibrant traditions, as well as a place with immense potential for growth and innovation.

MD: Do you feel that writing offers you a means of contributing to societal change?

NQM: As a writer, my aim is to bring greater visibility to Vietnamese culture and inspire social change through my work. In my novels, I intentionally weave in authentic Vietnamese proverbs, reflecting the richness and complexity of our heritage. I love playing with language, sound, and light while incorporating Vietnamese traditions into my work. I also preserve full diacritical marks in Vietnamese names and language—details that might appear unfamiliar to Western readers but are vital to our identity. This is my contribution to decolonizing literature about Việt Nam and to challenge Western readers to engage with our language—and, at the very least, to see our country beyond the context of war.

The power of literature to foster empathy and cultural recognition is unquestionable. For many years, I have volunteered my time to translate literary works, poetry, and essays, amplifying voices that often remain unheard. Having worked as a translator, I've read widely, corresponded with most writers in Việt Nam, and closely followed the work of both emerging and established authors. I used to facilitate exchanges and conferences between Vietnamese and international writers, aiming to create a bridge between cultures. I also facilitated visits by American veterans to Việt Nam, translating their deeply personal writings and organizing events to share their narratives with the public. Engaging with their stories was profoundly moving—it allowed me to see beyond childhood perceptions of them as enemies and understand their humanity and enduring trauma.

MD: Could you explain how you define the decolonization of English-language literature about Việt Nam and share how you have contributed to this process?

NQM: Colonization takes many forms. Eliminating or distorting aspects of a nation's culture or customs for the convenience of a dominant society is one of them. As a writer, I believe language is power, which is why I have used Vietnamese as a subversive tool, subtly woven into English text. I often leave Vietnamese words untranslated, providing enough context for the readers to infer their meaning, inviting them to embrace Vietnamese culture, learn new words, and appreciate

the richness, color, texture, and rhythm of our language. My hope is for them to arrive in Việt Nam not just with their minds, but also with their hearts.

I believe it was colonization that stripped away Vietnamese of its diacritical marks, catering to the eyes and ears of Western readers. In *The Mountains Sing*, *Dust Child* and *The Color of Peace*, the Vietnamese language stands proudly with its diacritics, unlike most English-language books about Việt Nam, where my mother tongue is stripped down of them. For that reason, I made sure that my name, Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, and the names of twenty-three major and minor Vietnamese characters in *The Mountains Sing* appear with full diacritics. I was rejecting the norms of the English publishing industry, possibly sacrificing the commercial success and popularity of my novel in the process. Yet, removing the diacritics would have been a profound disrespect to my language, as they are integral to the meaning of each word. For example, a part of my name, Quế, means “cinnamon,” but without the diacritical mark, it becomes Que, meaning “a stick.”

In 2023, I was invited to write for *The New York Times* as part of their series “Read Your Way Around the World.” When my essay “Read Your Way Through Hanoi” was published, all of the diacritical marks in the Vietnamese words and names were removed. At the suggestion of my wonderful editor, I managed to insert the following note at the end of the essay: “The Vietnamese words in the original version of this essay used diacritical marks. To comply with *The New York Times* style, the marks were removed before publication. Unfortunately, this practice alters the meaning of the words. In the case of Hỏa Lò Prison, for example, ‘hỏa’ means ‘fire,’ and ‘lò’ means ‘furnace’: the Burning Furnace Prison. Without the marks, ‘hoa’ means ‘flowers,’ and ‘lo’ means ‘worry,’ rendering the term ‘Hoa Lo’ meaningless. I look forward to the day when *The Times* and other Western publications celebrate the richness and complexity of Vietnamese, and of all other languages, by showcasing them in their original formats.” You can still read this note on the *The New York Times*’ website.

Decolonization takes one step at a time, and I hope for gradual but long-lasting changes to take place.

MD: In *Dust Child*, your American character, Dan, stands as an example of how an appreciation of language and culture can shift a person’s ideological perspective. Initially blinded by propaganda and seeing the Vietnamese as faceless enemies, he later recognizes humanity of the people he once fought. Can you elaborate on this character’s transformation?

NQM: In the novel, Dan tried to understand the humanity of his former Vietnamese enemy by reading books about them. This is his reflection: “When he told his vet friends, they were surprised he chose books written by people who had once tried to kill them. Whom they had once tried to kill. But he needed to understand the people he’d dehumanized during the war. In searching for their humanity, he was trying to regain his own.” Reconciliation and forgiveness require acknowledging and understanding all perspectives, seeing each individual as complex and valuable. As a writer, I strive to shed light on those often marginalized—bar girls, mixed-race individuals, or someone like Dan, who participated in atrocities. Delving into his character was key to revealing his inner conflict and growth.

In modern warfare, the distance created by technology often removes the personal connection to those affected. For example, people can now sit in a faraway, comfortable place and use drones to drop bombs onto others, hence they don’t really see the impact first-hand. It’s vital to remember the individuality of everyone involved, irrespective of their choices or ideologies. Sometimes, these behaviors are shaped by propaganda or cultural influences. I hope for a world where compassion bridges divides, fostering understanding across differences. With greater empathy, we might move closer to fewer conflicts and more enduring peace.

MD: You went further than merely humanizing the American veteran, you present part of the tragic story through his narrative voice. How difficult was it for you to look at the process of reconciliation from the point of view of an American veteran?

NQM: *Dust Child* includes the voices of mixed-race people born and abandoned during the war, as well as their parents’. This includes Phong, a black American Vietnamese man, two Vietnamese mothers, Trang and Quỳnh, and an American father, Dan. Writing in the voice of Dan—a traumatized American veteran—was immensely challenging. I’m a Vietnamese woman writing in English as my second language, so stepping into Dan’s world meant bridging such a significant gap. It required deep empathy, extensive research, and a willingness to imagine a life so different from my own. Tackling the perspective of a man who was once considered an enemy of Việt Nam was a deliberate choice. I was inspired by my work with American veterans, accompanying them to former battlefields and witnessing their interactions with those they once fought. I felt compelled to include the voices of the fathers of mixed-race children, to explore why they left and what drives some of them to return seeking their children. To bring authenticity to this narrative, I conducted interviews with many

veterans and drew upon extensive research—memoirs, films, and other materials about the American experience in Việt Nam. This process wasn't easy, but it was essential to capture the complexity of these individuals and provide them with a voice in the story.

MD: As part of your research for *Dust Child*, you examined the stories of Amerasian children born during the war. Could you share more about their lives? In particular, what challenges did they face in both Vietnamese and American societies, and how did you approach portraying their personal experiences in your writing?

NQM: We don't have exact statistics on how many Amerasian children were born during the war, and that's a sad reality. But, in my view, the numbers aren't as important as the human stories behind them. Each child is an individual with their own unique struggles. Their trauma often goes unrecognized, brushed aside by both Vietnamese and American societies. The effects of war are long-lasting and can affect generations. While we typically focus on the children born in Việt Nam, similar children were born in the Philippines, Japan, and other countries, often facing harsh treatment as the children of war. What I wanted to do was focus on their humanity, rather than the statistics.

MD: In your novel, you mention the free DNA tests offered to Amerasian children who want to reunite with their American fathers. Could you elaborate on this program? Are these DNA tests still being offered in Việt Nam, and are there other support initiatives for those affected by the war?

NQM: DNA tests are not readily available in Việt Nam. There is no DNA bank to help match people looking for relatives, which is why support from the US is crucial for Amerasians. Typically, the tests are sent to labs in the US, and the results are added to their system for matching. I hope that Việt Nam will one day have its own DNA bank, especially since many people, not just Amerasians, are still missing from the war. Hundreds of thousands of people remain unaccounted for, many of whom were soldiers who never returned, their families still waiting for them. Even today, mass graves are being discovered, but identification is often difficult unless personal items are found with the bodies. It's a deeply heartbreakingly reality.

MD: Do you believe your book helped raise awareness about the current situation of the Amerasian community? Have you received any feedback from Amerasian individuals about their personal stories, and how do you think your work resonated with them?

NQM: In Việt Nam, there are still many Amerasians searching for their family members. Some hope for better opportunities through their American relatives, while others just want to uncover their personal

histories. I became involved in some of these real-life searches, carried out by people looking for each other after more than forty years of separation. Through this, I learned that for many Amerasians born in Việt Nam and abandoned by their fathers, life was very difficult; they couldn't get education and employment, and often felt excluded from society.

For those Amerasians who moved to the US, some have found success through hard work and determination. However, many still face considerable discrimination. There are Amerasians who struggle with unemployment, and some are homeless. The search for their fathers and the trauma they carry is deep and ongoing. I stay in contact with some of these people, and I also have the opportunity to host events with them. Some have contacted me after reading the novel. For example, Trần Văn Kirk, a film director, reached out to me after reading *Dust Child*. He attended one of my events in Washington, DC, and shared that reading the book helped him understand his past. That was a deeply moving moment for me. In addition, I've been contacted by American veterans and their families, who shared that my book helped them confront and reconcile with their trauma.

MD: The topic of the war seems to hold a deeply personal resonance for you. Was your family directly affected by the war, or did any of your relatives take part in it?

NQM: My uncle went to war, traveling through the Trường Sơn Mountain along the Hồ Chí Minh Trail. Sadly, he passed away before I became a writer, and I have always regretted not having the chance to speak with him or ask him about his experiences. After his death, I became deeply curious about what he might have endured. This led me to interview many people, and those conversations inspired the chapter "The Journey South" in my first novel, *The Mountains Sing*.

So, both of my novels draw on autobiographical elements. When I was a teenager, long before I even considered becoming a writer, I began visiting my parents' villages to talk with older relatives and family friends. I wanted to understand what life had been like for my grandparents, who either died or were killed before I was born. At the time, I didn't realize it, but I had already begun gathering material for my novels. Later, I interviewed many more people and also fictionalized some of my own experiences, as well as those of my family. For example, *The Mountains Sing* was my way of honoring my grandmothers and reconnecting with their stories. My grandmother died during the Great Famine of 1945 in a cornfield, and this event inspired the scene in the novel where Diệu Lan, the grandmother of the main character Hương, dies in a similar way. The poem "The Poem I Can't

Yet Name” from my collection *The Secret of Hoa Sen* also reflects my connection to my grandmother.

MD: Have you ever considered writing a memoir?

NQM: I don’t think I will be able to. My story involves many painful and traumatic experiences so I would not want to relive them. With fiction, you can hide behind your characters’ voices, and I use that as a way to tell the story of my family and myself. The truth is still there—I just present it in a different way. Interestingly, I think poetry is also an incredibly honest way to convey the truth. With poetry, you have to bare your soul; there’s no room to hide. I love weaving poetry into everything I write. At events, I often joke that I trick readers into reading my poetry by sprinkling it throughout my novels.

MD: Talking about censorship: In all your novels you address topics that are controversial for Việt Nam. How have your books been received by the readers in your country?

NQM: In Việt Nam, as in many other countries, censorship is a reality. Some books are denied publication altogether, while others must be edited to comply with regulations. This is one of the reasons I chose to write in English—so my work, particularly historical fiction, wouldn’t be subject to such restrictions. Now the rights to both of my novels have been purchased by a Vietnamese publishing company, which is currently working on translating them. I try not to think too much about how they might be censored; once a book is finished, I consider it to have its own life. I focus instead on creating the next story.

That said, I’ve been fortunate to receive a lot of positive feedback from Vietnamese readers, which makes me happy. Additionally, there’s an international team based in Việt Nam working on a screenplay adaptation of *Dust Child*. Of course, moving from scriptwriting to the actual film will take time, so we’ll see how it unfolds. Writing, for me, is about giving voice to stories and characters, and once a book is out in the world, it will have its own, independent life.

Abstract: This interview features Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, an acclaimed Vietnamese author, poet, and translator, whose works explore themes of historical memory, the aftermath of war, and the resilience of family. The conversation delves into Nguyễn’s literary journey and her dedication to decolonizing narratives about Việt Nam. She discusses her novels, *The Mountains Sing* and *Dust Child*, both of which weave historical fiction with personal and national history. The interview highlights her approach to storytelling, blending Vietnamese traditions, autobiographical elements, and poetry, and her commitment to amplifying underrepresented voices. This discussion provides an insight into her creative process and the enduring relevance of her work.

Keywords: Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, Vietnamese literature, *The Mountains Sing*, *Dust Child*, postcolonial literature, Vietnam War narratives, Amerasian experiences, historical fiction, multi-generational storytelling, war and memory

Bios: Dr. Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai is the author of thirteen books in Vietnamese and English, most recently the internationally bestselling novels *The Mountains Sing* and *Dust Child*. Her book of poetry, *The Color of Peace*, is forthcoming in the United States in June 2025. Her writing in Vietnamese has received some of the top literary awards in Vietnam including the Poetry of the Year 2010 from the Hanoi Writers Association. Her writing in English has received numerous international awards including Runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award, the International Book Awards, the BookBrowse Best Debut Award, and the Lannan Literary Fellowship in Fiction. Quế Mai's books have been translated into more than twenty-five languages and has appeared in major publications including *The New York Times*. She is an advocate for Vietnamese literature and is the translator of eight books. She was named by Forbes Vietnam as one of 20 inspiring women of 2021. She has a PhD in Creative Writing with the U.K.'s Lancaster University. More information: www.nguyенphanquemai.com.

Mariya Doğan is a PhD candidate at the Department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Türkiye. She has received Master's diplomas from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine) and Hacettepe University in Ankara. She is a member of International Organization of Folk Art (IOV), Association of American Studies of Turkey (ASAT), and International American Studies Association (IASA). Her interests lie primarily in the area of contemporary American fiction and focus on representations of ethnic identity and memory. Her recent publications include "East-European Brides in the West: a Study of Cross-Border Marriages in the United States," "Aleksandr Ptushko's *Noviy Gulliver* [The New Gulliver] (1935): The World's First Full-Length Animated Film and Pragmatics of Ideological Adaptation," and "Forward to the Past: Narratives of Violence and Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's Novels."

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