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Three Poems: Charges Against a Newborn; Unanswered; For the First Generation

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Creative and Literary Works

Three Poems

Do Nguyen Mai

Charges Against a Newborn

How guiltless an infant, before she

Starved an entire nation.

Snapped soldiers' ribcages open into
blossoms of dust in the light.

Razed ten thousand acres of heartbeat.

Gutted a bloodline.

Buried her grandmother in a hospital room
like it wasn't already lined with white.

Scorched her grandfather's limp corpse
until roots ran unhindered through his skin.

Taught her mother the sound
of bullet to spine.

Cried out her first breath.



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Unanswered

After Joshua Nguyen

Em oi,

don't look back

when my spine snaps
against the cold click
of the trigger,

when my lungs flood
with the fullness
of the night sky,

when my body drops

headfirst

when the ocean folds
its palms over my chest,

when my ribcage whistles
with the waking shore,

when the water ripples,

when the boat tips over,

when I become the sea
swelling beneath your swaying ship –

em oi,

I will carry you

to shore.

For the First Generation

We entered the world

gun – fire – work,
metal, burning, bleeding.

we, born screaming
keep our mouths shut
(our mothers safe)
we fear a fire
bodies scorched

to quiet rage is to die without grave
another corpse unnamed

we fear a fire
we, already alight
not the soot,
but the ash:
rise, rise
afraid, a blaze.

About the Author



Do Nguyen Mai, is a Vietnamese American poet and researcher from Santa Clarita, California. She completed her associate degrees in history and liberal arts and sciences at College of the Canyons, and she currently researches elections and policy for Courage Campaign. Among other awards and distinctions, Mai is a 2017 Frost Place Chapbook Contest Semi-Finalist, a 2017 Rose O'Neill Literary House Jacoby Endowment Grant recipient, a 2018 Goldstein Program in Public Affairs Experiential Learning Grant recipient, and a Junior Chamber International Santa Clarita Valley 40 Under 40 Class of 2018 honoree. Her first book, *Ghosts Still Walking*, is available from Platypus Press and her second book, *Battlefield Blooming*, is forthcoming from Sahtu Press in spring of 2019.



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