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The Young Die Old

By Nguyễn Bình Phương
Translated by Khải Q. Nguyễn
Edited by Joshua Black

Mysterious, unsettling, but darkly poetic, this magical realist novel echoes the timelessness of García Marquez and Faulkner.

Key Selling Points

- Critically acclaimed author and novel in Vietnam, yet to appear in English
- Challenges dominant Anglophone representations of Vietnamese literature, which centre on war seen from the outside
- Speaks urgently to the Vietnamese post-war condition: the author belongs to a generation of writers who came of age after the war, grappling not only with inherited trauma but with the cultural suppression of interior life.

About the book

Set in a village haunted by legend, desire, and silence, the novel examines how individuals and communities live with the aftershocks of war—not through explicit confrontation, but through absences, obsessions, and the strange distortions of memory.

Two feuding families vie for control of a mysterious treasure said to lie beneath the land, while a former soldier wanders the village, driven by fractured memories, and unfulfilled desires. Time folds in on itself, and reality blurs with hallucination, as spirits, doppelgängers, and collective guilt haunt the living.

Like a fragmented but lyrical nightmare, Nguyễn Bình Phương evokes the disorientation of a society grappling with the aftershocks of war, repression, and silence. The title speaks to a generation whose youth was lost before it began—children who age prematurely under the weight of unspoken histories.

Nguyễn Bình Phương, born in the northern mountain of Thái Nguyên, is a prominent novelist and poet, whose writing is a blend of magical realism exploring themes of memory, identity, and post-war trauma, having served in the military himself. In recognition of his literary achievements, he received the Vietnam Writers' Association Award in 2021 and the Southeast Asian Writers Award (S.E.A. Write Award) in 2022.

Khải Q. Nguyễn's writings appear in literary journals in Chile, Indonesia, Nigeria, Singapore, and Venezuela. His English translations of Vietnamese novels published by Major Books include *Parallels* (2025), and *The Young Die Old* (2026).

Joshua Black is a graduate of SOAS, University of London, where he earned degrees in Southeast Asian Studies, Languages and Literatures of Southeast Asia, and a PhD researching queer identities in Vietnamese literature of the early 2000s.

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