

The College at Brockport: State University of New York
Digital Commons @Brockport

Sokol High School Literary Awards

2017

Pho

Kathy Nguyen

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/sokol>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Nguyen, Kathy, "Pho" (2017). *Sokol High School Literary Awards*. 21.
<http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/sokol/21>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sokol High School Literary Awards by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

Phở

I apologize
For the times I couldn't bite back
When they called you squinty-eyed
And they used you to copy your homework
And your white horde of friends settled uneasily in your stomach
And our fierce love was not enough
To shield you from the hurt.
I wonder, do you ever regret Vietnam?
Self-hatred would come easily
If all we wanted
Was to eat our phở. But it's not like that.
It's also appreciating the worn-out chopsticks we use
And hearing our mother fret in her tongue
Do your homework, do good in school
And reassuring her in English.
Do you ever regret Vietnam?
Listen: it was never your fault
That no one could tolerate
Some Asian boy taking up space
And it's not pity you receive
But well-intentioned love that doesn't appreciate
The darkened skin that made us
And think you can give this all up--
Phở and chopsticks and all--
Because they don't know
That we are calloused
That we live off the diaspora
And we always imagine our mother's boat
Stranded in the sea, lost, alone,
Singing

Kathy Nguyen
Webster Schroeder High School
Grade 11