

April's Winner

Chorus: *Our Savagery, The Naming of Erzsebet Bathory*

By Sara Toruno

Before Holy Scripture, there was guessing,
Girls looking to the sky,
The stars, and seeing her—

Countess, whiter than ever
Clawing at their throats; this, men named God,
Born out of their savagery,

After hearing the cries for six days and seven nights.
On the seventh, they gave blood, and for the rest of time
Gave wine and sacrificed their virgins, fear

Gleaming in the sunlight, and they named this Atum, the chaos
And order, the opposite sides of her long fingers
Then, the developing ovals of her eyes, filling
The Earth with black; this, they called Yahweh.

Two thousand years later, she bathed
In more blood than all the armies of the west,
Yet they named her God, the father

Bringer of light.

Sara Toruno is of San Francisco. Her winning entry is part of a larger series. She is an English instructor at San Jose City College and poetry review editor for Boxcar Poetry Review, a bi-monthly online literary journal/review.

Honorable Mention

Night in Cyrillic

By Rachel Malis

I didn't come to Odessa to raise our dead.
We have enough to talk about.

Tell me stories about you,
slipping across roofs

at dusk in the summer. Tell me which park benches
did you bring girls to, and what were their names?

How much did you ever win at cards? Tell me
which watermelon stands you liked best.

What did your house smell like,
how were you punished if you broke something inside?

Finally, name the exact green
of your uniform.

The kind of weather on the day
you realized you had to leave.

List those who said goodbye at the train,
what you packed, the color of your suitcase.

I want to know if you held your mother's hand.
The shade of blue her eyes were that night.

Rachel Malis is an MFA candidate at Arizona State University. Two fellowships enabled her to travel to Odessa, Ukraine, her family's ancestral home. "Night in Cyrillic" is from a collection entitled "Call This Odessa."