Biljana D. Obradović

Evil Omens: On the Four Nines' Day

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The moment I heard the Serbs signed surrender
　　　　to NATO, accepting the peace,
the capitulation of Yugoslavia, agreeing
　　　　to pull their troops out of Kosovo—
I began bleeding. My period delayed several days,
　　　　longer than usually, by a sciatic nerve inflammation
as in the case of expectant mothers. Now
　　　　all hope is lost, can't keep that egg any more,
that part of me, but neither can Serbia. It is lost.
　　　　I bleed bright red Serbian blood
like the poppy blooms on the fields of Kosovo.
　　　　Bombed 77 days into submission, compliant,
all we can look forward to is tomorrow's invasion.
　　　　Outside my window a cat on top of the air-conditioner
frightens a sparrow. It screeches, frantically flapping
　　　　its wings, protecting its mate, its nest. I shoo
the cat away, wishing someone could do the same for me.
　　　　In the morning, the cessation of bombing begins,
the phone rings. My brother tells me our father has died
　　　　at the Dragiša Mišović hospital, bombed
only a few weeks ago, dead of yet another cancer,
　　　　not even six months after Mother's.
Father's 67 years of life reduced to collateral damage.

Biljana D. Obradović, originally from Yugoslavia, is a Member of the Association of Writers of Serbia and Assistant Professor of English at Xavier University of Louisiana, in New Orleans. She has two collections of poems: *Le Riche Monde*, a bilingual edition (Belgrade, Raška Škola, 1999) and *Frozen Embraces*, a bilingual edition (Belgrade, Center of Emigrants from Serbia, 1997), which won the Rastko Petrović Award for the Best Book of 1998 (now in a second edition; fall of 2000). Her poems also appear in *Three Poets in New Orleans* (Xavier Review Press, 2000),

and she has a Serbian translation of John Gery's *American Ghosts: Selected Poems*, a bilingual edition (Belgrade, Raška Škola, 1999). Her work has appeared in such magazines as *Poetry East*, *Bloomsbury Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Plum Review* and *Književne Novine*. She reviews books for *World Literature Today* and others.