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## Lermontov's Room: Moscow, 1995

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KATHERINE E. YOUNG

*Lermontov's Room*

*Moscow, 1995*

*The hollow heart beats evenly.*

—Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841), "Death of the Poet"

No doubt he himself hurried along here,  
up these breakneck stairs, down this corridor,  
heels clack-clacking to the rat-tat-tat of  
mémère's disapproval. Same old story,  
the old and the young: he'll never amount  
to much if he doesn't shape up, she just  
can't understand what his life is about . . . .  
His room's restored, cut out of the clouds  
breathing sullen, mute, this November day.  
A poet's lair—Pushkin above the desk—  
the Caucasus engraved, craggy, fantastic—  
notebooks lying open, tantalizing,  
just far enough beyond the barrier—  
and books, those lovely leather-bound Byrons  
and Schillers and Chéniers spilling across  
shelves like curios in a cabinet.  
If you ask the old woman who sits by  
the door, she'll recite his poems, rocking  
gently with the rhythm, thinking back  
to her days at school, when it seemed the most  
poetic thing, to die young.