

The Hotel Where Esenin Hanged Himself

by Bill Yarrow

I walk by the hotel where Esenin hanged himself. They remodeled it so foreigners wouldn't have access to his despair. He first tried slashing his wrists. That didn't work. Blood flew everywhere: counters, chairs, sheets. He sopped it up with his hands, wrote eight red lines on the walls. Then he smashed the mirrors. This was in 1925. He was thirty years old.

Dawn in St. Petersburg looks a lot like midnight.

It's four years later. Mayakovsky has been writing poems to counter Esenin's, "to make Esenin's end uninteresting." Of course, he fails. Then he looks square at the world and decides it's not for him either; leaves a note: "Against the everyday has crashed of love my boat," pulls a pistol and shoots himself. The bullet ricochets off the ceiling and breaks his heart.

When writers look in mirrors, they stare at ghosts.

