

ELIZABETH PERKINS

IN MOSCOW
(February 1980)

In Moscow, my grandmother appeared, who was Scottish.
It was her white bib-apron, her lap
Comfortable as a cushion, when she sat
To sew or write or shell peas, sometimes
To cuddle grandchildren, strictly in turn.

She worked and read, and smelled of fresh water.
Was not heard to say that she was tired;
And died in her sleep when I was not there.

Her grandchildren rebelled and admired,
Could not accept a life so transparent.
She whistled in the kitchen like her yellow canary.

Her face was plain, lumpy as Scottish porridge;
Her skin fine as the silk that a silk-worm spins.
She was lovely as Red Square under snow at midnight;
Her goodness streamed like a flag;
She had a little box of coloured pins, beautiful as Saint Basil's.