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In Russia

Louis Simpson

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"Noontime"—a view of the Battery
with masts passing over the rooftops.

Then the old horse-cars on Broadway,
people standing around in the garment district.

A night view of Manhattan,
light-lines with sweeps of shadow.

"Jumpers"—as they come plunging down
their hair bursts into fire.

Then there are photographs of a door-knob,
a chair, an unstrung tennis-racket . . .

"Still life. Yes, for a while.
It gives your ideas a connection.

And a beautiful woman yawning
with the back of her hand, like this."

LOUIS SIMPSON

IN RUSSIA

I can see my mother's family
sitting next to the kitchen stove,
arguing . . . the famous Yiddish theater.

The sisters return . . . they're breathless,
they've been down to the river . . .
with their arms filled with wildflowers.

Then, later, night has fallen,
and the stars are luminous,
gliding above the trees and rooftops.

There's a love-song, an air.
And then they turn down the lamps
in the old world long ago.