

Times Square* (1918)

Alter Brody

An August day,
The eddying roar of the Square—
Crowds, stores, theatres, tall buildings
Assaulting the senses together—
And suddenly,
The taste of an apple between my teeth
Suffuses my mouth....
Where did it come from?—
Strong and sharp and deliciously sour,
The taste in my mouth—
Where?

I cross the street
And suddenly,
Crowds, stores, theatres, tall buildings,
The blare and the glare of the day
Fade....
October blows through the market-place
In a town of faraway Russia—
The booths are laden with fruit...
A little boy,
Snub-nosed, freckle-faced, plump,
Dressed in a newly-washed jacket,
Stolidly strolls by the booths
Clutching a coin in his fingers—I know him,
That freckle-faced boy;
I know him.
Proudly he passes the stores of the Row,
Ignoring them all—
Until he reaches at last
The booth of the widow Rebecca:
“What do you want, little darling?”
“Here is a penny;
I want this apple.”
“Take it.”
The tense little fingers unclose to surrender the penny
And close on a big red apple.
And suddenly,
The taste of an apple between my teeth,
Strong and sharp and deliciously sour,
Suffuses my mouth....

The toot of an automobile,
Insistent, shrill,
Jars me back to the Square.

* See McKay, "The Tropics in New York"