

A. M. KLEIN
SEASONS

Abraham Moses Klein (1909-1972) was born in Ratno, Ukraine, and moved to Montreal, Quebec, in 1910. In 1915 he attended the Mt. Royal School, and in 1922 he attended Baron Byng High School. He considered going to a yeshiva for rabbinic training but instead entered McGill University, where he studied classics, political science, and economics. He also began to publish poems in various journals, and he co-founded the *McGilliad* literary magazine. He graduated in 1930 and earned a law degree from the University of Montreal in 1933. The following poems were published in the July 1932 issue and included in *The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein* (1974), which was published shortly after his death.

SPRING

The thin and delicate etching of Jack Frost
Is blurred upon the pane; his fingernail
Is broken from the eaves; his argent mail
Is vanished so it is not even dust . . .
Preserve the heavy tuque in cedar; thrust
The mittens in the chest; forget the tale
Heard by the pine-wood fire; all these fail
When April makes the woods a holocaust . . .
Before the cabin-door the robins gobble
Worms from the wet soil; sparrows go and come
Rifling dead leaves, and twigs, and barren rubble.
The maple buds are red and thick with gum.
And barefoot boys display from last year's stubble
The three-leafed and three-petalled trillium.

SUMMER

The ants repair to cooler galleries;
The crickets ply their plaints against the sun;
From grass to weed, from weed to tree-trunk run
Grasshoppers vaulting into shaded ease.
The wayfarer is lowered to his knees.
Even the heat-mad sparrows, one by one,
Seeking the jaundiced leaf, have flown and gone.
Most lazily thick bovine tales chase fleas . . .
The wind ignores this slow, this solar slaughter,
And takes his siesta in the hammock hung
Nowhere. The thought of heat makes heat grow hotter.
While mind is bent on dreams of crystal water,
While fevered Sirius droops his parched tongue,
Merely to breathe now is to scorch the lung . . .

AUTUMN

Autumn, you dement; you wrench from my throat
Plaudits of incoherence, lo, I cry:
You are an oriflamme against the sky;
You are the memory of Joseph's coat;
Vermilion lines that Omar Khayyam wrote;
A molten rainbow; Bergeracian lie;
Jester in motley gibbeted on high;
You are a red hand catching at my throat!
One phrase erupts another. Oh, you paint
The dull brain gaudy as a brilliant totem;
Havoc you wreak with speech. Logic you taint.
Futile is praise before your splendour, Autumn.
Splendour that renders my voice small and faint,
Until I am left mumbling, Autumn . . . Autumn . . .

WINTER

What is this seasonal nonentity?

This pale and shivering shadow? What this white,

This bleached continuance of coloured light?

What is this interlude of leprosy?

Winds from the north rush in most hurriedly

Crying some terrible news, some cryptic fright;

Suddenly die. And suddenly a flight

Of new-born winds speed on and cry their cry . . .

Unto this earth will ashes always cling?

Will the sky always seem of sack-cloth now?

Why this demurring of the days that sing?

And why this loneliness upon the bough?

Has earth forgotten how to stir the Spring?

Give me the magic. I remember how.