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Exercises in Translation

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Kimberly Johnson

Georgics of the Mind

No almanac forecast this cold snap, cracked
pipes, oak buds shocked to black, the paddocked colt
caught without his winter coat. Tack burlap

to the casement, take in the calf—orphaned
fluke, his dewlap stiff with cold—and scrap
your book-wisdom. To everything there is

no reliable season, it seems: the stars
lie, the birds migrate with an animal
indifference, the moon has harlot moods,

all the indices of good husbandry
pure claptrap. We rough mechanicals
ought have our own logic, a calendar

innate, a barometric rise and fall
of blood. Such time spent grappling hand to furrow,
such seasons breeding the flocks to strength

we must have gained fluency in the windfall
without warning, in the volunteer stalk,
the prodigy, the latent trait expressed,

the postscript evidence of things not seen.
How prostrate now the frostbit tilth reproves
our eyes and ears: it knows the studious tract

thrives with spring confidence until sudden
winter brittles it into supplication.