Winter 2006

Exercises in Translation

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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.