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Clinton F. Larson

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Rue the Scholar

Clinton F. Larson

Essence winnows through his existential bones
 And separates the unknowns from the knowns
 As he reads. It is delicate mind recusing
 That he affects, not holy passion infusing
 Thought, nor even logic not of his choosing.
 For he has it comatose, carefully glossed
 And fixed in abstract history, or embossed
 In his mindlight's regimen and encyclical.
 He iterates from a podium the shadowy call
 Of scholarship, to get it said and written,
 Strenuously falling from fact hard-bitten
 To find its brittle strength. O antiquity,
 If you could have lived as he, in propinquity,
 As he delivers you! Any mastodon writhing
 In a field of ice might envy such striving
 For preeminence! Later, in temperate clime,
 Students also might, writhing as his rime
 Encrusts awareness. How can they attain it
 And, if attained and cozened, maintain it?
 Never will supplicant, knitting with his mind,
 Learn a language quite so facilely or find
 Surcease by working like an abject Turk
 To save his soul. Mohammed himself would shirk
 Such shrift and then, weakly louring, deplore
 Tares browning three feet high at his door
 And languid termites grazing through his wood,
 While he tosses ashes to exacerbate his mood.
 And surely Rue can talk at will, and will,
 To genera of enlightenment. The old mill
 One subtly runs must have its gears, and gears
 Must turn, and grist, at turning, cheers
 The hoi polloi, even grist of rye.

Clinton F. Larson, a professor in the English Department, is poet in residence at Brigham Young University.