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 sh rift 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.