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Don Quixote de la Mancha

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DOUGLAS FLAHERTY

DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA

(‘My armaments are arms/ My pastime is in war.’)

He carries, strapped to his haunches,
a small flesh parcel from us all,
riding off on a skinny charger,
clothed in shag vestments of a knight.
Followed by a fat monkish friend,
he is directed with caution
of third grade simplicity.

Yet, it is the purity of the scene
which strikes the eye like a
chiselled medieval triptych:
reason dried in the brain
like rain on a hot copper roof.
The armor moulders, the helmet
is eaten like a skeleton’s mouth.

He called, his head beaten and bloodied,
for food to sustain the government of his guts.
Lying beneath each brown scab, a scab.
But the mind goes on without the arms:
colliding with windmills, indentured sheep,
the chamber pot crown of mistaken errantry.
Then the renounced fantasy, the signed will.

The populace, clothed in his spirit, picks
over the dream like an old sore to await
another Second Coming. Which detains us.
And we again contrive the most fitting day
to ready the inn, the animals, summon the page,
and plant redemption in the social head.