

Fertilizing the Landscape of Higher Education

by Sherry Cook Stanforth

Your rototillers bark accredited fumes,
plowing rich, creative soil into gridlines.
Teachers and students suck
from your cauldron of Miracle Gro
solution—rounded up, culled, fed

fresh manure you've shoveled
into the garden. Thank you
for your razor wire fences,
top-down growth plans,
towers of institutional
assessment dusting out
neonicotinoid promises
of success.

Yes, we will provide learning
outcomes to fit this mission.
Yes, we will meet virtual
needs, accept massive cuts,
embrace speed, then grow

a blight upon
original seeds,
even the ones
wiggling inside
your sacs.

We wish you the best
in your top-down practice.
May the mysterious architectures
of your imagination cave in
as a tire-ironed skull, or a deep
ground mind, reforming into
the highway strip mall design
scheme defining Southern Appalachia.

May you experience rapid growth,
always having three meetings
about how to have THE meeting—
in the way head lice tends
to multiply at the neck's nape,
or genetically modified corn
stalks a county's furthest edges.

May all the robots you've
constructed in this business
assemble obediently around
your damp sickbed, at the birth
of *your* grandchildren, inside
the state and church houses
of *your* home community. May
they lead the team of airport
engineers fixing *your* plane
and dominate the kitchens
and fields of *your* consumption.

We know there is no poem,
or philosophy to speak
away your gigantism.
You will either topple
to ground zero or rip
a hole right through
heaven, just because
you can. Those who
can't, teach.