

Trope

## The Mad Professor<sup>1</sup>

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**H**ave you not heard of that mad professor who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the mandatory CITED webinar and cried incessantly: “I seek education! I seek education!” — As many of those who did not believe in face-to-face learning were standing around just then, he provoked confusion and menace. Has he got lost in cyberspace? asked one. Did he lose his way like an old graduate school professor who does not know how to log into the BB virtual classroom? asked another. Or is he uploading K-dramas to the university cloud storage and is afraid of being caught? Has he gone synchronous? asynchronous?—Thus they waved their tambourines, sang, and danced!

The mad professor jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. “Whither is education?” he cried; “I will tell you. We have killed education—you and I. All of us are education’s murderers. But how did we do this? How did we stop caring about our students? Who gave us the idea that learning could be done online with 45 students in one virtual class? What were we doing when we distanced ourselves from each other? Whither is the log in page? Whither are we meeting, Zoom or Google Meet? Away from all the students and colleagues? Do we have to record ourselves dancing? Backward, sideward. Forward—cha, cha, cha! in all directions? Do we still believe that we can inspire young people; how about their mental health? Are we not straying from the format of our course plans? Do we not feel the breath of our empty learning outcomes? Has it not become just a matter of show for the accreditors? Is not the accreditor closing in on us, visiting us virtually? Do we not need to compare our rankings in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of administrators burying education? Do we smell nothing as yet of the pedagogical decomposition? Pedagogies, too, decompose. Education is dead. Culture then is dead. And we have killed academic freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche’s “The Madman,” in *The Gay Science*, 125.