

LES SARGÉNTS The Spoofical by Schönberg, Boubil, and Wacome Stevick

annotations, commentary and gossip

1. **Biola Prison** (original: "Prologue—Look Down/Work Song")

PRISONERS: Look round and see Biola's prison* gates;
Look down and serve Biola prison time;
Your doom is here, say "*hola*" to your fate;
Look out and fear Ebola-of-the-mind!

-Biola University in La Mirada, California, is a CCCU school.
Technically it's not a prison.

TENURE: Prisoner-of-English* 90639,
Your term's* undefined and your sentence* runs on,
Do you know what that means?

-Sargent taught American Lit at Biola from 1981 to 1993.
-play on words: verbal wit based on word meanings and ambiguities.

SARGÉNT: Yes: it's a comma splice.*

-a "comma splice" or run on sentence occurs when two or more main clauses are connected by a comma, a main clause makes a complete thought, this is an example.

TENURE: *Clever...*
You spend nine hours in class each week,
And 90 reading books and student papers—
90639—*

-Biola zip code.

SARGÉNT: My name is *Mark Sargent*.

TENURE: And I'm *Tenúre!*
Do not forget my name!
You'll always have me*—90639!

-rumor has it that Sargent misplaced his tenure twice.

2. **Sargént Admits** (original: "On My Own")

SARGÉNT: On my road,* I've never liked Jack Kerouac,
Of myself,* I've never sung Walt Whitman;
On this chain gang I'm just a scarlet number—*
Condemned as Dr. English Prof,
But Reverencing the Pilgrims.

-Kerouac's (American) *On the Road* was published in 1957.
-Whitman's (American) "Song of Myself" appeared in 1855.
-Sargent alludes to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), the only American novel by an American author that Sargent approves of. In it Hester Prynne, wife of old Dr. Chillingworth, conceives a child with Rev. Dimmesdale.
-"Is the world, then, so narrow? There is the broad pathway of the cv! It brought thee hither. If thou so choose, it will will bear thee back again." -Hester Prynne

How to escape? How may I flee?—*
I will smuggle out my CV.

3. **Sargént Applies** (original: "Come in, Sir, for You Are Weary"/Valjean Forgiven)

SPRING ARBOR: Here's an applicant in fetters
In a cell departmental
Who never broke the law of letters
Or one rule grammatical.

-Puritan settler-leader, wrote *Of Plymouth Plantation*.
-Henry David, transcendentalist author of *Walden*.
-first governor of Mass. Bay Colony—and the "city on a hill."
-from R. Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

SARGÉNT: But I consider William Bradford*
More transcendent than Thoreau,*
And John Winthrop* more poetic
Than *whose words I think I know...**

SPRING ARBOR: Never fear!—you may retire
From that cold anthology
And rekindle now the fire
Of your "Plymouth PhD."*

-Sargent's dissertation was "Rekindled Fires: Jamestown and Plymouth in American Literature, 1765-1863."
-Michigan is "The Wolverine State"; Massachusetts' nickname recalls its origins as the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
-the *Arbella* brought John Winthrop and settlers to the harbor and Naumkeag—which was renamed Salem in 1626.

You are welcome at Spring Arbor;*
Though we're not the Bay State,
Think of us as Salem Harbor:*
Anchor and administrate.

Wipe your past record clean
As our governor/dean!

4. **Sargént Debates** (original: "Why Did I Allow That Man?")

SARGÉNT: *If in my two dozen semesters
I read one paragraph of grace
Here at Biola I'd endure
If for literacy – and Arlyne's sake;

-Sargent quotes Arthur Dimmesdale: "If, in all these past seven years I could recall one instant of peace or hope, I would yet endure, for the sake of that earnest of Heaven's mercy. But now, since I am irrevocably doomed, wherefore should I not snatch the solace allowed to the condemned culprit before his execution?"

But now since that my doom is ceaseless
Compositional manure,*
Wherefore should I not this solace
Snatch before my office hour?*

-student compositions have vastly improved since 1981.

-efficiently, Sargent kept just one office hour per semester.

ENSEMBLE: O how anguished he has been
Editing his students' work;
They employ their English words*
Like a church employs a jerk—

-students' facility with English has drastically improved since Sargent's early failures as a writing teacher.

SARGÉNT: I'll escape now from their words
And the world of *Prof. Sargént*;*
Prof. Sargént is nothing now,
A new job title must begin!—*

-Sargent was named University Professor of the Year at Biola in 1989. A lot of good it did them.

-Sargent took the title Vice President for Academic Affairs at Spring Arbor (and other titles, 1993-1996).

4. *Are We Making the Grade?* (original: "At the End of the Day")

GORDON [ENSEMBLE]: *verse 1*

Are we making the grade, are we getting promoted?
'Cause that's how you reckon your worth and your flaws:
 And we're hungry for acclaim
 On our student e-valuations,*
So we coddle and we curve—tending to cause
 Grade and ego inflations!

-response to these evaluations has been abundant and colorful.

verse 2

We're not making the grade, so the faculty voted
To appoint a new person to stiffen our spines:
 There are spirits to be raised,
 Our prides are easily wounded,
There are cases to be heard, *especially mine*—*
 Would that somebody soon did!

-the "especially mine" here is likely Elaine Phillips.

chorus

Are we making the grade, are we making exceptions?
Are we making the grade, are we making it worse?
 All those outcomes to achieve *(in this hour we*
 And there's always accreditation; *need a leader*
 Can we advertise that we're *who can help us*
 A best bargain* school in the nation? *be upbeater)*
 Our mark has yet to me made—
 When we're making the grade.

-*U.S. News & World Report* holds bothersome sway. Margie DeWeese-Boyd says we should consult *The Onion* instead.

verse 3

Who can make Roger Green get along with Marv Wilson?
Who can make David Rox get along with himself?
 There are squabbles in our ranks,
 'Cause our rank* is increasingly urgent,
In the race to be number 1- we come in 12th:
 Guess we need a drill sergeant.

-play on words, as above.

chorus 2

Are we making the grade, are we making excuses?
Are we faking the grade, are we faking our deaths?
 There's enrollment to be upped *(we need someone*
 And a goal for every September; *who can cure us*
 There is NEASC to be stopped— *or who can at*
 Why did we ask to be members?* *least endure us)*
 Who will lead our learning crusade—
 Till we're making the grade?

-in the April faculty meeting Sargent stated that our membership in NEASC is voluntary; the minutes show that only Moises Park believed him.

-fin-

5. *I Dreamed of Deans* (original: "I Dreamed a Dream")

SARGÉNT: I dreamed of deans—and deans gone by
Like Herma Williams* and Dot Chappell
Who in my dream was Dean of Chai*
And Barry Loy* was Dean of Snapple.

-H. Williams, Associate Provost 2000-2006
-D. Chappell, Academic Dean, 1994-1999
-B. Loy, Dean of Students, 1985-the rapture

And as I dreamed I grew afraid:
Dan Russ* was Dean of Body Armor,
Dean Kina Mallard* pulled a blade
And made me Dean of Greg Carmer.*

-D. Russ, Academic Dean, 2009-
-K. Mallard, Associate Provost, 2005-2009
-G. Carmer, Dean of Chapel, 2004-

Then Cliff Hersey* comes to fight
Terry Charek by his side*
With the grammar of John Skillen*
Please don't ask him to repeat
And he turns your mind to mush
Yes, he turns it right to mush
And pretends to dock your pay.

-C. Hersey, Dean of Global Education, 2004-
-T. Charek, Associate Dean of Students, 1996-
-J. Skillen, Dean of Syntactical Prolixity, 1983-

6. *Lovely Movies* (original: "Lovely Ladies")

STUDENTS: Lovely movies – movies that delight;
It's awesome to invade the lives of others every night.

SARGÉNT: I could launch a series—*

-Sargent launched and named the Provost's Film Series
after himself in 1997.

STUDENTS: That'd be great!—

SARGÉNT: —Show some boring foreign film and then pontificate.

STUDENTS: What a perfect chapel-credit date!

Goodbye books—O movies, where art thou?
Swap our *Heart of Darkness* for "Apocalypse Now."*
Reading Tolkien* takes about a year;
Watching "Ran"* with you means we don't
have to read *King Lear*;
Same thing with *The Constant Gardener*!

-the film is loosely based on Joseph Conrad's novel.
-Sargent read *The...Ring* in a week, skipping ahead often.
-Kurosawa's film causes Sargent to weep, students to sleep.
-can le Carré possibly compete with Finnes, Weisz, and Nighy?

What's up with that new administrator?
Taught English Lit, thinks himself an *auteur*.
The printed page he's replacing with fil-m;
Daniel Defoe he's replacing with Willem!*
What's he doing? Wha-a-at's he doing?

-D. Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*; W. Dafoe, voice of
Gill in "Finding Nemo," and portrayer of Jesus in "The Last
Temptation of Christ"—a film Sargent tellingly excluded
from his series. Chicken.

SARGÉNT: I watch movies, watch 'em in my mind:
Keeps my outlook spotless and eternally sunshined;
Helps me cope with wing nuts* of desire;
Turns my charred regard into a chariot of hire;
Burns away the fog of Gordon war!

-e.g. Mark Stevick.

ENSEMBLE: He makes movies, makes 'em in his head;*

SARGÉNT: *make 'em in my head*

Making edukators out of people walking dead,
people walking dead

Films that hint that life is beautiful
life is beautiful

'Cause the big kahuna came to live in Montreal—
live in Montreal

Dreamed up in his loopy crucible!

-mentioned are 20 of the 100+ films in the Provost's Film
Series: *Apocalypse Now*, *The Big Kahuna*, *Chariots of Fire*,
The Constant Gardener, *The Crucible*, *Dead Man Walking*,
Dr. Strangelove, *Edukators*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless
Mind*, *The Fog of War*, *Hoop Dreams*, *Jesus of Montreal*, *Life
Is Beautiful*, *The Live of Others*, *O Brother*, *Where Art Thou?*,
The Lord of the Rings, *Ran*, *To Live*, *Wings of Desire*, *Wit*.

"FACULTY Z": Come on colleagues, what's all the fuss?
He's no better critic than the rest of us;
It takes a strange love and a cinematic wit:
To start a film series: why didn't I think of it?...

7. Campus Near a Mount (original: "Castle on a Cloud")

ANGEL: There is a campus near a mount.
WEST of the MOUNT you find a beach.
Sun in the *fall-will-warm-ya*—*
Climate is *calling-for-ya*.

Far out WEST where surfers pray.
WEST of the MOUNT where actors hike.
No one will *scowl-or-scorn-ya*—*
Some even *call-it-Narnia*.

Nobody *shall-inform-ya*.

-slant rhyme: a group of sounds that almost rhymes with a west coast state.

-near rhyme: a group of sounds that nearly rhymes with that same vast and western state.

8. Master of the Staff (original: "Master of the House")

THENARDIER: Who is Mark Sarge?
What is his deal?
Why's he in charge?
Ask Cathy Thiele...

Is he a geek?
Is he a sport?
We need a secret provost report*...

-The Provost's Report, an eponymous document, was much read by candlelight in the pre-Facebook era.

Try to gauge his worth
By his taste in shoes,
And wonder why on earth
He's a teacher who's—

Master of the Staff, herder of the cats:
Wears a single title but a hundred hats;
Says a little word, makes a little joke,
Tells us with a punch line that we're almost broke;
Happy to head-up a meeting,
Faculty or otherwise—
And when he mentions "Babette's Feast"*
Try not to roll your blooming eyes.

-a film apparently applicable to everything.

Master of the Staff, facer of the facts,
Suffers carpal tunnel signing our contracts;
Keeper of the goal*, academic cop:
Solved a campus murder* at a fall workshop;
As for sticky situations
There are lots of things he knows:
To him all and sundry
Bring their dirty laundry
And we surely must offend his nose.

-1) goalie; 2) jailor: "gaol" [*sic*] is Puritan spelling of "jail."
-there was no murder, though a dozen people nearly died when Sargent announced one had occurred on campus.

ALL: *chorus* Master of the Staff, quick* to dot your *i*'s,
Never missed a moment to soliloquize;
Puller of the strings, sealer of the fates
Undermining overbearing candidates;*

-Sargent was also quick in the 440 yard race; see "fleet."

Everybody's trusted wingman;
Everybody's confidant:

-Sargent thinks of himself as the "Scylla and Charybdis of the candidates," but no one but Graeme knows what this means.

THENARDIER: Discriminating as Javert*
But with the flair of Jean Valjean.*

-characters from Victor Hugo's 1862 novel *Les Miserables*, inspiration for a little-known 1986 musical of the same name by Schönberg & Boubil, English lyrics by Kretzmer.

verse 2

This Mark Sargént:
Does he wear clean
Socks and so on?
Let's ask Arlyne...

None of our biz?
What can you do?—
Make him write his
16-year review...*

-the 3-year and performance reviews are popular with faculty and staff—and a source of entertainment for administrators.

What does he get paid?

SARGÉNT:

—Maybe I'll step in:
A pittance, I'm afraid,
Which is why I've been—

Charging when you're hired, twice when you've retired,
Triple to retain you when you should be fired;*
All you Gordon profs have the wherewithal
To ensure I'll grant your next sabbatical.

-explains why Rob Joss is still here and still poor.

Tenure here is no exception,
A station that we both can "earn":
Submit your application with
A little favor I'll return...

Just kidding... Master of the Staff, never took a bribe;
Took instead the mantle of our host and scribe;
Framer of farewells, famous for awards,
Shaper of the ethos that we're tending towards;

THENARDIER:

He's the only Puritan scholar
By whom I would fain* be bossed:
What I wish, when he goes off,
Is to have (said with a cough)
His office on the second floor of Frost! ...

-fain: willingly, gladly.

ARLYNE:

I never dreamed I'd have servants in my house;
That's good – the only other person there's my spouse...

Master of the Staff, while the school bell rings
Has the proper habit of directing things;
Then the day is done—and the tables turn
And we count the many ways* he still can *learn*;

-alludes to a later, testier version of E. B. Browning's Sonnet 43, "How Do I Learn Thee? Let's Count the Ways I've Tried."

When he wields the toilet plunger,
It even makes the toilet laugh:

A master here at Gordon –
But at home* he gets the short end
of the staff!

-the staff at this "home institution" served an initial class of one, but then the Sargent admission program got busy and enrollment tripled. The alumni association has reached 100% participation. They are not expecting new members.

ALL: *chorus*

Master of the Staff, quick to count the *ayes*,
Never met a CORE he didn't half despise;
Puller of your chain, seer that you're late,
Working, thinking, family man, and lifelong mate;

Everybody bless the Provost,
And we bless his better half;

SARGÉNT:

Everybody raise a toast—

ARLYNE:

Raise it to the guy we roast—

ALL:

Everybody raise a toast to the Master of the Staff!

9. ***Bring Them Home*** (original: "Bring Him Home")

WESTMONT: God on high, we implore
Bring that genius that we're waiting for

He is young-ish and brave—
A select - intellect

He has roamed
They have roamed
Bring them home

They might have sojourned yet again
And gone to countries yet unknown

But You know why they're still drawn
To native sky and childhood sun
And now at home they may belong

Bring him peace, bring her joy
As they leave - keep him fleet as a boy

You can break - you can mend
Let them heed - let them in

Should they fly—
Let them fly!—

Let them in—

Bring them home
Bring them home
Bring - them - home.

10. ***Do You Hear the People Sing?*** (original: same)

ENSEMBLE: Do you hear the people sing,
Singing a song of worthy friends?
If you cannot, may we suggest
You get your hearing checked again?

We've been hinting at your praise
Under the guise of making fun;
If you're offended—well,
Your torture is nearly done.

verse 2 Will you join our serenade?
Who will sing Sargent songs with me—
Hailing the gifts they help discover
And the good they help us be?

We commend them to the One
Who ever prospers and defends—
Blessing the beauty and the work
Of our worthy friends.