

Latin Salutatory

“Epos Imperfectum”  
 (“The Unfinished Epic”)

by

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## Epos Imperfectum / The Unfinished Epic

By Jessi Glueck

Praeses Faust; decani illustres; professores sapientissimi et familiae delectissimae; et vos, carissimi sodales -- salvete omnes!

In hoc teatro sedentes, dum reputamus omnes priores Harvardianos, cogitare paulum de rebus antiquis nos oportet. Fortasse, vel in otio vel negotio, opera poetarum veterum legistis: de itinere Odyssei aut de proeliis in urbe Troia. Hae fabulae longe remotae et spatio et tempore videri possunt. Sed nosmet ipsi hodie, ut tempora dulcia in hac universitate meminimus, hiscere epos Harvardianum nervis nostris possumus.

Arma virosque canimus, qui primi longas per noctes cum Scientia Computatoris Quinquaginta vel Scribendo Expositoris vel Oeconomicis Decem certaverunt; qui postea, iactati maximis laboribus, theses difficillimas superaverunt. Clarorum illorum animorum, qui ad litora Lamonstrorum pervenerunt, et quorum nonnulli in Lamonstra ipsi mutati sunt, numquam obliviscemur; nec obliviscemur illorum summae fortitudinis, qui ad Tartaream terram--id est, ad inferam partem Institutionis Scientiae--descendere ausi sunt. Ibi explicationes oraculorum, scilicet arcanorum verborum professorum, petiverunt: eventus eorum varii, conatus tamen egregii erant. Sed non solum validos in mente laudamus. Sunt etiam illi in corpore validi, lusores nostri pedifollis. Ut in Troia olim Achaici, sic in hoc anno Elienses indigne illos vicerunt, sed saepissime nostri athletae triumphaverunt.

Haec magna fecimus non singuli, sed communiter. Amicos fidos habebamus, qui stabant nobiscum tam per adversitates quam per laetitas. Haec res apta materia est libro epico. Nam quamquam tanti libri heroes habent, re vera historiae populorum sunt. Ilias Homeri scilicet ex oribus multorum Graecorum nata est; sic epos nostrum fabulam communem narrat.

Interim, cum lauri merebantur ab duris Harvardianis, forsitan arsimus cum aliquo amore ut Aeneas et Odysseus quondam arserunt. Forte Circen quandam novam in convivio invenimus; aut forte volumen quoddam, vel sententiam, vel linguam amare coepimus. Hae deliciae semper comites erant, cor calefactantes in hiemibus frigidis Cantabrigiensibus; cum sub pondere officiorum laboravimus, spem ac gaudium in amplexibus earum experti sumus. Necesse erat Aeneae relinquere suam pulcherrimam reginam ut Italiam peteret. Nos tamen trans aequora et terras delicias nostras ferre possumus; et semper hunc locum, in quo primum amavimus, in memoria tenebimus.

Nunc etiam, cum sub finem narrationis stamus, hoc epos nostrum imperfectum videtur. Reverti fortasse et emendare, congregi cum pluribus sodalibus, maiorem gloriam adipisci, multum desideramus. Poeta ipse Vergilius magnos libros Aeneidos haud perfecisse sensit; forsitan sollicitudo ab fatis poetis omnibus decreta est. Alio in modo autem opus nostrum solum hodie incipit. Cum liber Harvardianus finiatur, gloriosissimae pugnae et terrificissima monstra et potentissimi amores nos in futuro tempore manent. Epos nostrum Harvardianum multas res gestas continuit, sed proemium tantum erat. Nam tempus etiam nunc restat nobis in quo opus pulchrum et omnino novum scribere possumus, quod dignum loco erit apud carmina priscorum.

Valete!

## English Translation

President Faust; illustrious deans; wisest professors and most beloved families; and you, dearest friends: greetings to all!

In this theatre, as we think about all the Harvardians who came before, it's good to spend a little time contemplating ancient things. Perhaps, in school or for fun, you have read the works of the ancient poets: about the journey of Odysseus or the battles in the city of Troy. These stories may seem far removed in both space and time. Yet today, as we recall sweet memories at this university, we ourselves may begin a Harvardian epic on the strings of our lyre.

We sing of arms and heroes, who first fought through long nights against Computer Science 50 or Expository Writing or Economics 10; who afterwards, tossed about by the greatest labors, defeated formidable theses. We will never forget those brave souls who ventured to the shores of the Lamonsers, and some of whom were changed into Lamonsers themselves; nor those paragons of utmost courage who dared to descend to the underworld--that is, to the basement of the Science Center. There, they sought explanations for the "oracles," or the mysterious words of their professors: their success was variable, but their efforts were extraordinary. But we don't only sing the praises of those who are powerful in mind. There are also those who are strong in body, our football players. The Yalies unjustly conquered them this year, as the Greeks conquered unfairly at Troy long ago; but most often, our own athletes triumphed.

We accomplished these great deeds not individually, but together. We had good friends, who stood with us in adversity as well as in joy. This is fitting for an epic tale. For although such tales have heroes, they are actually the histories of whole peoples. Homer's *Iliad*, in fact, arose from the mouths of many Greeks. Thus our epic, too, tells a common story.

Meanwhile, as the laurel wreaths were being earned by these tough Harvardians, perhaps we burned with some passion, as Aeneas or Odysseus did. Maybe we found a new Circe at a party; or maybe we fell in love with a book, an idea, or a language. This delight was always our comrade, warming the heart in the frigid Cambridge winters; when we struggled under the weight of our obligations, we could still experience hope and joy in its embrace. Aeneas had to abandon his supremely lovely queen so that he might seek Italy. We, by contrast, may carry our dear one with us over land and sea; and we shall always remember this place, where we first came to love.

But even now, as we stand at the end of the story, this work seems unfinished. We may long to go back and change things, to meet more friends, to attain greater glory. The poet Virgil himself felt that he had not finished the great books of the *Aeneid*; perhaps the fates have decreed that all poets must worry. In another sense, however, our masterpiece only begins today. Although the Harvardian section is ending, the most glorious battles and the most terrible monsters and the most powerful passions await us in the future. Our Harvard epic has contained much, but it was merely a prologue. There is still time for us to write a beautiful and wholly new work, worthy of a place among the poems of the ancients.

Farewell!