

Gazette Supplement



Encaenia 2013

Congregation

19 June

1 Conferment of Honorary Degrees

The Public Orator made the following speeches in presenting the recipients of Honorary Degrees at the Encaenia held in the Sheldonian Theatre on Wednesday, 19 June:

Degree of Doctor of Civil Law

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LI KWOK NANG

Former Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal of Hong Kong

Britanni, cum imperium in ultimos orbis terrarum fines propagarent, gentes non raro reppererunt quorum cultum ac mores suis inferiores esse aestimabant. Sed ubi ad regiones orientales penetraverant, civitates sua republica vetustiores offenderunt: Indos, gentem antiquissimam, in dicione tenebant, et prope litus Sericum insulae satis parvulae potiti sunt cuius populus postea in spatio non longo prosperitatem per suam indolem industriam sollertiam adeo auxit ut non solum Seribus ipsis sed etiam multis nationibus momenti maximi fieret. Ex magna parte per eum stat qui hodie agmen honorandorum ducit ut illa respublica libertatem et tranquillitatem plerumque servaverit. In colonia Hong Kong natus, partim in patria sua partim apud nos, primum in comitatu Derbicensi tum Cantabrigiae est educatus, sapientiamque occidentalem bene scrutatus est. Confitemur imperium nostrum non semper Seribus profuisse - immo bellum, pro pudor, olim gessimus ut somniferi papaveris mercaturam protegeremus - sed speramus hunc virum in nostris scholis aliquantulum ab hominibus doctis recepisse quo ad beneficium civium suorum uti potuerit. Certum est eum domum regressum mox in foro floruisse. Abhinc quattuor lustra proconsul - quem hodie videtis vestimentis iis aureis hodie ornatum quae tunc abnuebat - eum ob meritum consilio suo adscripsit; tum urbe illa in potestatem reipublicae Sericae tradita, novus praefectus eum principem summi iudicii destinavit. Illo tempore adhuc in dubio

erat num ius Anglicanum in novo rerum statu esset superfuturum; sed hic firmum prudentem sapientem se praebuit. Silentium aliquando verbis clarius loquitur: principum peritiam testatur quod rarius nuntios de Hong Kong audimus. Et si testimonium auctoritatis huius viri apud cives requiris, hoc disce: postquam a magistratu decesserat, apud tres iurisprudentiae scholas in sua urbe professor honoris causa est creatus.

Praesento iuris et legum magistrum gravem fortem sagacem, Andream Li Kwok Nang, Excellentissimi Ordinis Imperii Britannici Commendatorem, Summi Iudicii Hongkongensis quondam Praesidem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili.

Admission by the Chancellor

Iustitiae vindex doctissime, qui civium libertatem pro virili parte defendisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili honoris causa.

Paraphrase

As the British extended their empire all over the world, they quite often encountered peoples whose state of civilisation they supposed to be inferior to their own. But when they reached the east, they came upon nations older than theirs: they held sway over India, a most ancient people, and off the coast of China they acquired a rather small island whose inhabitants in the course of time, through their own character, energy and talent, grew in prosperity to the point at which they became of great importance not only to China but to much of the world. It is due in no small part to the man who leads the line of honorands today that Hong Kong has preserved a great deal of its freedom and stability. Born in the colony, he was educated partly on his native ground, partly in England, where he was able to observe the scrutable occident, first in Derbyshire and then at Cambridge. It must be admitted that the British Empire was not always to China's advantage - there is the embarrassing

matter of that war fought to protect the trade in opium, Virgil's 'sleep-bearing poppy' - but we may hope that our dons and teachers provided our honorand with at least something that he could use to the benefit of his fellow citizens. At all events, his return home soon led to a flourishing career at the bar. Some twenty years ago the Governor of Hong Kong - today resplendent in the gilded raiment which in those days he declined - recognising his qualities, picked him for the Executive Council, and when the city was handed over to the People's Republic, the Chief Executive appointed him Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal. At that time it was still uncertain how far the common law would survive under the new dispensation, but he showed the needed resolution, tact and judgement. Sometimes silence speaks louder than words: it testifies to the success of Hong Kong's leading people that it is so seldom in the news. And if testimony is needed to the esteem in which the present honorand is held, we need only point out that since his retirement from high office, he has been elected honorary professor in the city's three schools of law.

I present a weighty, doughty and wise master of jurisprudence, Andrew Li Kwok Nang, CBE, formerly Chief Justice of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Admission by the Chancellor

Learned champion of justice, who have vigorously defended the liberty of your fellow citizens, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

DAME ANNE OWERS

Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission and formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons

Secundum Biblia Sacra in ultima illa die, cum agni ab haedis separabuntur, Iudex alios laudabit quod eum in carcere visitaverint, alios condemnabit quia hoc officium neglexerint. Quare cum vix iustus sit securus, scilicet

haec femina nullam metus causam habebit. Historiae apud universitatem Cantabrigiensem studuit, ubi discipulis res quoque Africanas - quod rarius illo tempore fiebat - scrutari licebat. Quibus ad homines iuvandos arrepta, ad Zambiam perrexit et ibi adulescentes docuit, incolarumque mores examinavit. Ad patriam regressa, propter libertatis defendendae ardorem gubernatrix societatis quae Iustitia vocatur creata est; quo munere suscepto non solum iniuste condemnatos vindicavit sed etiam leges de hominibus asylum petentibus de adolescentibus puniendis de iure gentium sustinendo emendare contendit. Tum ad carcerem tracta est. Circumstabant eam magnae difficultates: crescebat captivorum multitudo, non pauci ex eis morbo mentis affligebantur vel sibi mortem consciscere conabantur; magistratus urgentibus plebe et plebicolis roborata Titania, ut vocabantur, condere volebant. Principibus reipublicae auctoritatem vel maximam habentibus resistere non timebat, sed tantam prudentiam praebebat ut custodes conciliaret, captivorum statum meliorem redderet. Praeterea, tamquam si onus officii parum grave suscepisset, Auxilio Christiano annuit praesidere. Hanc etiam ob causam laudanda est, quod fortiter in provincias antea omnino masculas esse visas iniit: in alio magistratu ducem exercitus in alio episcopum secuta est. A carceris vinculis tandem soluta, alia statim sibi quaesivit, et nuper iudicio ad crimina in vigiles adlata scrutanda constituto praeposita est. Sive vigiles sive carcerum ianitores contemplamur, illud Iuvenalis saepe in mentem venit: 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?' O fortunatos nos qui talem vindicem invenimus.

Praesento feminam humanam prudentem misericordem, Annam Elizabetham Owers, Excellentissimi Ordinis Britannici Dominam Commendatricem, carcerum conditionis quondam curatorem principalem, iudicii ad vigiles scrutandos constituti praesidem, Collegii Sanctae Hildae sociam honoris causa adscriptam, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili.

Admission by the Chancellor

Iustitiae atque humanitatis exemplar, cuius labor ad tenebras lucem apportavit, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili honoris causa.

Paraphrase

We read in the Bible that on the last day, when the sheep are separated from the goats, the Judge will approve some because they visited him in prison and condemn others for neglecting that duty. So although 'scarcely the just shall be in safety', this lady will surely have no cause for anxiety. She studied history at Cambridge, where the tripos included an

option in African history - not so common in universities in those days. Fired by this with the wish to better mankind, she went to Zambia, where she was engaged in teaching and research. After returning to her homeland, her concern for human rights led her to become director of JUSTICE; from this position she not only championed those who had suffered miscarriage of justice but also campaigned to reform the laws relating to asylum seekers, the criminal system for juveniles, and human rights. Then she was hauled off to prison. She faced daunting problems: the prison population was increasing, too many inmates were mentally ill or at risk of suicide, and the government, under pressure from the public and populist media, were planning to build huge 'Titan' prisons, as they were called. She was not afraid to stand up to even the most powerful ministers, while showing such tact and common sense that she brought the prison service over to her side and improved the condition of its customers. In addition, as though she had not enough on her shoulders, she took on the chairmanship of Christian Aid. She should also be praised for entering boldly into spheres which had hitherto seemed exclusively masculine: in one of her offices she succeeded a general, in another a bishop. When she was finally freed from the chains of prison, she immediately looked for new ones, and has recently been put in charge of the commission that investigates complaints against the police. Whether it is the prison or the police service, Juvenal's famous question keeps coming to mind: 'Who shall guard the guards themselves?' We are fortunate to have had such a champion.

I present a humane, wise and compassionate lady, Anne Elizabeth Owers, DBE, formerly HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, now Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Admission by the Chancellor

Pattern of justice and humanity, whose labours have brought light to dark places, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Degree of Doctor of Letters

PROFESSOR ANTHONY GRAFTON
Henry Putnam University Professor, Princeton

Cum sapientissimos ex illis contemplamur qui saeculo quinto vel sexto decimo litteris humanioribus studebant, doctrinae eorum varietatem et magnitudinem stupemus. Recte hi exempla scientiae fere universae aestimantur. Qui vero tantos viros nostra aetate interpretari quaerunt, non modo ipsorum scientiam penitus scrutari sed etiam scientiam recentiore omnino examinasse debent; ad quod mens hominis quamvis

ingeniosissimi non valere videatur. Ecce tamen vir qui hoc miraculum egit, quem nescio utrum historicum an grammaticum an litterarum existimarem vocem. De Iosepho Iusto Scaligero, philologorum principe, qui etiam mathematicas astronomiae rerum Iudaeorum scientiam auxit, duos libros oculatissime exaravit; et Leonem Baptistam Albertum, architecturae geometriae litterarum magistrum praestantissimum, acuto calamo depinxit.¹ Nihil scriptum a se alienum putat; ut lac felis, ita verba devorat; cum filios ad campum ludi causa duceret, uxor vestem eius, ut dicitur, excutere solebat ne in sinu libros abderet. Forsitan putes talis viri aridam esse paginam, bibliothecae pulvere sordidam. Minime. Quidquid enim scripsit, eloquentia lepore intellectus ardore illuminatur. Orator idem optimus, quem ipse ego in hoc theatro auscultavi, cum auditores facietiarum sale doctrinae melle defigeret. Est propter barbaram atque incessum antiquo inter Hebraeos prophetarum similis, si prophetam oculo scintillanti magna humanae fabellarum hilarium copia praeditum potes concipere. Dignitatis satis possidet, otium tamen non petit; nam utcumque ad calcem pervenit, novum certamen quaerit, novos labores. Etiam nunc rerum ecclesiasticarum scriptoribus studet, opus perdifficile, in quo historiam theologiam Iudaica coniungere necesse est. Accedit quod discipulos magna humanitate hortatur, magnis haustibus e fonte suae doctrinae adiuvat; quare litterarum rempublicam non dominatione sed populi consensu regit.

Praesento hominem et alta et exacta mente praeditum, Antonium Grafton, apud Universitatem Princetonianam historiae Professorem, praemio Balzaniano nobilitatum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Admission by the Chancellor

Fons sapientiae largissime, cuius scientia docemur facundia excitamur, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

When we contemplate the greatest humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we stand astonished at the extent and variety of their accomplishment. No wonder that the 'Renaissance man' is taken as the type of universal mastery. Those today who aspire to interpret such formidable figures to their own contemporaries need a deep understanding of Renaissance scholarship combined with a thorough knowledge of the modern literature - a task which might seem beyond the capacity of even the most powerful intellect. But here is a man who has performed this miracle, and one hard to categorise; one might debate whether to call him historian, textual scholar,

¹ Etiam *De Marginalibus* scripsit libellum.

or critic. He has analysed J J Scaliger, not only supreme as a classical scholar but an important player in mathematics, astronomy and Jewish studies, in two penetrating volumes; and his monograph on Alberti, a great master equally in architecture, geometry and letters, is a keenly drawn picture of its subject.² He counts nothing written as a stranger to him; he devours words as a cat laps cream; rumour has it that when he took his children to play in the park, his wife used to frisk him, to check that there were no books hidden in his pockets. One might expect the pages of such a man to be dry, and dingy with dust from the library. Not at all. All his writing is eloquent and attractive, lit up by his ardour for understanding. He is a superb communicator; I have myself heard him lecture in this very theatre, transfixing the audience with the salt of his humour and the honey of his knowledge. His beard and bearing give him some resemblance to an Old Testament prophet – if, that is, you can imagine an Old Testament prophet with a twinkle in his eye and a rich fund of entertaining stories. He has eminence enough, but does not look for that ease of life with which Cicero believed eminence should be accompanied, for whenever he has reached one goal, he looks for another challenge, and for further labours. His project at the moment is an investigation of ecclesiastical historiography, a very difficult subject bringing history, theology and Jewish studies together. He is also notable for the benign encouragement that he brings to younger scholars, generously sharing with them deep draughts from the well of his learning. In short, he governs the republic of letters not as a tyrant but by popular acclamation.

I present a scholar as exact as he is deep, Anthony Grafton, Henry Putnam University Professor at Princeton University, Balzan Prizewinner, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Abounding wellspring of wisdom, whose learning instructs us and whose eloquence inspires us, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

SIR TOM STOPPARD

Playwright

Vergilius, ab obtrectoribus reprehensus quia versus ab aliis poetis sumpsisset, respondisse dicitur illos, si eadem furta temptarent, mox intellectuos facilius esse Herculi clavam quam Homero versum subripere. Et Iohannes Brahms, cum quidam quererentur numeros eum Ludovico van Beethoven similissimum cecinisse, adfirmavit stultissimum quemque illud audire posse. Eodem modo Thomas Eliot, Collegii Mertonensis alumnus, 'Mali

poetae,' dixit, 'res mutantur, furantur boni.' Vir quem nunc produco cum illis consentire videtur, quippe qui scriptis aliorum saepius usus sit, sed tantam inventionis copiam ingeniumque tam sibi proprium praebet ut paucis verbis dictis iam agnoscatur auctor. In fabula quam audax adhuc iuventa exaravit (quam primi egerunt histriones Oxonienses) notissimam e Gulielmi Shakespeare tragoediis in tragicomoediam mutavit, et circa vatem illum venerabilem lascivus ut puer saltavit. Nec scriptorum tantum scrinia compilavit, qui cum Alexandrum Herzen in litore Utopiae posuisset, etiam picturam Eduardi Manet imitatus est. In aliis fabulis personae de mathematica de philosophia de litteris sermocinantur; nam cum facietis abundat, tum intellectum naviter quaerit. Ubi vitam Alfredi Housman, viri Oxoniensis, repraesentavit, non solum amoris inventionem sed etiam (quod rarius accidit) artem versus Latinorum emendandorum scrutatus est. Et in Arcadia fuit, ubi unitatem illam temporis aspernatus quam probavit Aristoteles, scaenam modo in saeculo nono et decimo modo in aetate nostra locavit. Ludis seria miscet: in fabula eius Danica humanae vitae vanitatem sentimus; in Arcadia latet anguis in herba, quia Thomasinam, filiolum lepidissimam, mox morte crudeli interituram cognoscimus.

Scientiam desultoriam quam Apuleius sibi attribuit maxima arte demonstrat; apte igitur uni e fabulis *Saltatores* inscribitur. *De Vera Re, De Vero Cane* dixit; verum Thaliae antistitem hodie grato animo salutamus.

Praesento scriptorem altum lepidum facetum, Thomam Stoppard, equitem auratum, Excellentissimi Ordinis Imperii Britannici Commendatorem, Excellentissimo Ordini Insigniter Meritorum adscriptum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Admission by the Chancellor

Artium theatralium magister ingeniosissime, qui spectatores multis e gentibus delectavisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

When Virgil was criticised by his detractors for taking lines from other poets, he is said to have answered that if they tried such thievery themselves, they would soon realise that it is easier to steal his club from Hercules than to pinch a line from Homer. Brahms too, when certain people complained that a tune in his First Symphony was very like one in Beethoven's Ninth, retorted that any fool could see that. In similar vein, that Merton man, T S Eliot, remarked that bad poets borrow, good ones steal. The honorand whom I now present would seem to agree, for he has often used other men's works, but with such individuality and fertility of invention that one would be able to identify him as the author

after only a few sentences. In a play which he wrote in the boldness of youth (and one which received its first performance from Oxonian actors) he turned Shakespeare's most famous tragedy into tragicomedy, and danced round the venerable bard like a naughty boy. Nor is it writers alone whom he has pillaged, for when he planted Alexander Herzen on *The Coast of Utopia*, he even managed to imitate a painting by Manet. In other plays the characters discourse upon mathematics, philosophy and literature, for while he is rich in comic ideas, his intellect is also hard at work. When he put the life of A E Housman (another Oxford man) on to the stage, he explored not only *The Invention of Love* but (a less usual theme) the textual emendation of Latin poetry. He has been in *Arcadia* too, where spurning the unity of time prescribed by Aristotle, he moved the scene back and forth between the Romantic age and the present day. He mingles serious matters with his sport: in his Danish play we are made to contemplate the emptiness of life, and in his *Arcadia*, as in Virgil's, there lies a snake in the grass, for we learn that the charming Thomasina is about to meet a cruel and early death. He exhibits to the full the 'circus-rider's art' of leaping from horse to horse on which Apuleius prided himself, and so it is appropriate that one of his plays should be called *Jumpers*. He has written about *The Real Thing* and *The Real Inspector Hound*; it is a true and real priest of the dramatic Muse whom we gratefully salute today.

I present a witty, engaging and penetrating author, Sir Tom Stoppard, CBE, OM, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Brilliant master of the stage, who have delighted audiences in many lands, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Doctor of Science

PROFESSOR INGRID DAUBECHIES

Professor of Mathematics, Duke

Feminam nunc produco optime notam propter reperta de eis flucticulis qui ad imagines coartandas et signa digerenda adhibentur. Cum haec verba ut quondam Pythiae vaticinationes interpretem requirere videantur, ipsa notationem operum musicorum comparat per quam de sono quoque utrum longus sit an brevis, acutus an gravis, clarus an lenis discere possumus. Ita flucticuli varietates signorum accuratissime indicant. Non miror eam suum opus musicae contulisse; nam mathematicorum optimus quisque non solum intellectum et veritatem sed etiam pulchritudinem quaerunt. Dixit olim vir quidam satis doctus satisque amplus quo elegantior fieret notio mathematica, eo minus

² He has also written a book on *The Footnote*.

utilitatis possidere. Quae sententia huius feminae repertis redarguitur; nam etsi suis notionibus pulchritudinem illam cogitatione non sensibus perceptam creavit quam mathematici maxime laudant, eadem multos ad usum cottidianos adhibentur. Neque eam pulchritudinem negligit quae oculos delectat: fictilia manu sua ipsa format, et in Corea, cum figulum quendam artificiosissimum viseret, 'difficilior,' inquit, 'est ars figuraria quam mathematica'; quae sola e sententiis eius vix credibilis est. Picturae autem arti studentibus flucticuli magnopere prosunt, ut tabulas suppositas detegant et compositionem operum pluribus manibus factorum melius intelligant; ipsa, in Belgio nata, de pictore Belgico Goossen Pratensi, cuius tabulas praecipue diligit, sagaciter disseruit. Etsi ad summum dignitatis mathematicae fastigium ascendit, tirones haudquaquam despicit; immo, dicitur oratiunculas eorum perpendere, etiamsi decem vel plures uno die audiverit, et cogitate consilium suum sine mora litteris mandare. Quapropter non minus amorem quam observantiam est consecuta; testatur quod prima e muliebri sexu Praeses Societatis Mathematicae Omnium Nationum nuper electa est.

Praesento feminam mente acuta animo humano praeditam, Ingrid Daubechies, apud Universitatem Dukensem mathematices Professorem, Societatis Mathematicae Omnium Nationum Praesidem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Admission by the Chancellor

Mathematices magistra praestantissima, cui parent etiam flucticuli, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Paraphrase

I now bring forward a lady who has achieved wide renown for her transformative work on wavelets used in image compression and signal processing. Since this statement may seem to need as much interpretation as the utterances spoken by the Delphic priestess of old, she herself compares the way in which musical notation expresses the pitch, duration and volume of the notes. So too wavelets can report differences in signal with great accuracy. It is little surprise that she should light upon a musical analogy for her work, for the best mathematicians have always sought beauty as well as truth and understanding. A distinguished mathematician once opined that elegance of any piece of mathematics was in inverse proportion to its utility. This lady's work can stand as a refutation of that dictum, for despite exhibiting that purely abstract beauty which mathematicians especially admire, it also has many applications which we use daily. She does not neglect either the beauty that delights the eye: she makes pottery, and on a visit to a master of ceramics in

Korea she remarked that pottery is harder to do than maths – the only claim of hers that meets with disbelief. Wavelets are also valuable to art historians, enabling them to detect forgeries and to analyse the make up of pictures painted by several hands. She has herself written acutely about her compatriot, the Flemish painter Goossen van der Weyden – a particular favourite of hers. Although she has reached the summit of mathematical distinction, she does not at all look down on those starting their careers: indeed, it is said that even when she has heard a dozen presentations in a day, she thinks them over carefully and writes down helpful advice straight away. Accordingly, she has earned affection to match the respect in which she is held; it is testimony to this that she was not long ago elected as President of the International Mathematical Union, the first woman to hold that office.

I present a lady of penetrating mind and humane spirit, Ingrid Daubechies, Professor of Mathematics, Duke University, President of the International Mathematical Union, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Eminent master of mathematics, whom even the wavelets obey, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

BARONESS (TANNI) GREY-THOMPSON
Paralympian

Quid sit quis, quid non sit, rogat Pindarus, respondetque umbrae somnium esse hominem, paucissimos dies mansurum. Atqui addit si fulgor a deo datus veniat, splendore ac vita iucunda mortales quoque frui posse; nam de viris canebat qui ex Olympicis aliisque sacris Graecorum ludis victorias reportaverant. Qui non aurum receperunt sed coronam ex oleastri ramo nexam, aliquando autem, quod divitiis est perennius, carmen a divini poetae ore fusum. Unum tamen melius hominibus antiquis facimus: illi enim solum corpora omni mendo carentia laudabant, nos aequa vel maiore admiratione illos habemus a debilitate minime deteritos quin gloriam in ludis petant; quare Paralympica condidimus (a quo verbo Pericles forsitan abhorreret). Ecce femina quae maximum successum ibi habuit. De rebus ab ea gestis vix causa est cur longius disseram. Quis nescit ter deciens eam omnes in toto orbe terrarum velocitate superavisse? vel sexiens certamen Marathonium Londini vicisse? vel undeciens praemium aureum ludis ipsis Paralympicis sustulisse? Adde quod exemplum clarissimum praebuit quod permulti iam ad imitandum nituntur. 'Alit aemulatio ingenia,' inquit Velleius Paterculus, cuius sententia, licet de scriptoribus loqueretur, etiam ad athletas adhiberi potest. Sed Pindarum quisquis studet aemulari, dicit Horatius, pennis ceratis ut Icarus nititur nomenque ponto dabit. Itaque

Musa mea pedestris verbis solutis afflatu minore, non minore sinceritate has laudes pronuntiat.

Praesento BriTanniae decus et lumen, Carys Davinam Baronissam Grey-Thompson, Excellentissimi Ordinis Britannicae Dominam Commendatricem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Admission by the Chancellor

Paralympionicarum princeps, quae tibi gloriam aliis spem et stimulum paravisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Paraphrase

What is a man? what is he not? asks Pindar, and answers that man is the creature of a day, the dream of a shadow. But he adds that if the god-given gleam appears, mortals too may enjoy brightness and grace of life, and indeed his verse celebrated the victors in the Olympic Games and the other great sporting festivals of ancient Greece. These men received not gold but a crown made from a wreath of wild olive and perhaps a thing more durable than worldly reward, an ode from the lips of an inspired poet. There is one respect, though, in which we have improved on antiquity. The ancients reserved their praise for flawless physiques, whereas we feel equal or even greater admiration for those who have not been deterred by handicap from the pursuit of sporting glory; and so we have established the Paralympics (a word which might startle Pericles). You see here the lady who has won the greatest success in these games. There is small need for me to recite her achievements at length. They are very well known: she has broken thirty world records, won the London Marathon six times, and at the Paralympics themselves collected eleven gold medals. Moreover, this dazzling career has provided a model for others, and many indeed are those now striving to follow her example. 'It is the spirit of emulation that fosters brilliance,' the historian Velleius Paterculus observed, and although he was speaking about literature, his remark can be applied to athletes too. But he who seeks to emulate Pindar, says Horace, does his striving with waxen wings, and like Icarus will end up giving his name to some sea. And so my own earthbound Muse sticks to prose, but speaks her words of praise with no less sincerity.

I present Britain's light and glory, Carys Davina (Tanni) Baroness Grey-Thompson, DBE, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Supreme among Paralympians, who have brought glory to yourself and inspiration to others, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

MR COLIN SMITH

Director of Engineering and Technology, Rolls-Royce plc

Si verbum Rolls-Royce audimus, de elegantia de levore de tranquillitate fere incredibili plerumque cogitamus. Et forsitan putes eos qui tales machinas fabricentur parem suaviloquentiam praebere, parem urbanitatem. At Societatem Rolls-Royce duo viri condiderunt, quorum alter erat patricius, alter ex humili loco suo ingenio sua contentione surrexit. Praeterea, cum in aëronave per caelum vehimur, minus elegantiam (scilicet pennas habuit Icarus lepidissimas) quam vim et firmitatem desideramus; quae virtutes in viro nunc a me producto abunde videntur. Illa societas nunc divisa est in partes duas, quarum altera ad autocinetam altera ad aërovehicula faciendam est constituta. Hic vir aëronaves construit, sed machinas qualescumque diligit: automatam tractorium in praedio suo suburbano possidet, et haud scio an agros sua manu cultos, ut olim rex Cyrus, exhibere possit. Mens ei acris, celeris, acuta; animus vicens et audax; bonas sententias approbat, mendas cito deprehendit. Constat inter omnes eum artem ingeniariam perfecte didicisse, sed non minus laudatur quod artem hominum gubernandorum optime comprehendat. Dicit amicus quidam eum cum pueros pila ludentes spectaret, exercitorem in primis attendisse; intellegere enim voluit quomodo animos illos iuveniles excitaret. Ipse socios ducit, arrigit, hortatur; quod tam bene gessit ut iam plus quam quadraginta milia hominum auctoritati eius pareant. Pecunia insuper immensa curae eius mandata est, cuius decies centena milia librarum pars est millesima. Quapropter labor eius magni momenti non solum illi societati sed toti reipublicae nostrae est aestimandus.

Praesento bonum fabrum, machinarum repertorem peritissimum, Colin Smith, Excellentissimi Ordinis Britannici Commendatorem, apud Societatem Rolls-Royce technologi praepositum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Admission by the Chancellor

Summe artis ingeniariae magister, cuius machinae nos ad caelum tollunt per aethera vehunt, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Paraphrase

If somebody mentions the name Rolls-Royce, we are likely to think of elegance, smoothness and a near impossible degree of quietness; and one might perhaps expect the people who build these machines to display a comparable suavity of style and utterance. But the original company was the creation of two men, one an aristocrat, the other an engineer who rose from modest origins through his own talent and ambition. And besides, when an

aeroplane carries us through the skies, what we are looking for is not so much elegance (I am sure that Icarus' wings were very pretty) as power and reliability, two qualities abundantly displayed by the man whom I now present. Some time ago Rolls-Royce split into two companies, one concerned with car manufacture, the other with aero engines. Our honorand is on the aeronautical side, but he loves machinery of every kind: he keeps his own tractor at his place in the country, and I suppose that like King Cyrus of old, he can point to fields cultivated by his own hand. His brain is rapid, keen and sharp, his mind energetic and confident; he praises people's good ideas, but is quick to spot error. Everyone agrees that he is a master of the engineer's art, but he is also praised for his admirable grasp of the art of leadership. A friend recalls that when he was watching boys playing rugby, he paid especial notice to their trainer, wanting to understand his method of stimulating his young charges' enthusiasm. He himself guides, challenges and encourages his staff, and his success can be measured by the fact that more than forty thousand people work under him. Moreover, the investment for which he is responsible amounts to a billion pounds; so his work is of high importance not only to his own company but to the country as a whole.

I present a good smith, a most skilled designer of engines, Colin Smith, CBE, Director of Engineering and Technology, Rolls-Royce plc, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Master of the engineer's art, whose machines lift us to the skies and carry us through the air, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Doctor of Music**MR MURRAY PERAHIA**

Pianist

Inter musicae vetustioris studiosos laudatores temporis acti facile reperire possis; atqui quoad pertinet ad clavicymbalistarum artem, vix dubium est, ut opinor, quin in aurea aetate vivamus; inter quos nemo altiore locum tenet quam is qui agmen honorandorum hac die claudit. Abhinc quadraginta annis, cum certamen in comitatu Eboracensi vicisset, fere una nocte notissimus factus est; intelligebant enim omnes in caelo novum sidus ascendere. Symphoniam Wolfgangi Mozart saepe actam tanta viriditate, ut ita dicam, cecinit ut eam denuo fingere videretur. Numeri velut margaritae lucebant, velut rivi fluebant; nescibant auditores utrum riderent an lacrimarentur. Adhuc iuvenis omnes symphonias Mozartianas clavicymbalo aliisque organis canendas orbibus phonographicis commisit, symphoniacosque ipse direxit. Haud scio an essent eo tempore

qui eum magis subtilitate quam vigore excellere putarent; sed vehementer errabant. Hunc etiam ipse ego in hoc theatro audivi maximam e symphoniis clavicymbalisticis Ludovici van Beethoven canentem; quam musici ut altissimum suae artis cacumen simul admiratione simul et formidine contemplari solent. Hic summam artem, summum ingenium praebuit; in prima parte impetum temperantiae coniunctum, in secunda alacritatem, in tertia eloquentiam et grandem et teneram, in ultima contrapuncti tetrici implicati celerrimi moderationem exhibuit. Eadem nocte *Fabrum Canorum* Georgii Frederici Handel tanta vi tanto ardore egit ut Ludovicum ipsum in sella te videre existimaveris. Sed quamvis velocitate atque exactitudine valeat, nullam superbiam in eo invenies, nullam ostentationem; semper musicae non sibi servit. Numeros paucis musicis fictos optime canit, atque si quis eum cum amico suo Dacico opera Mozartiana et Schubertiana agentem audivit, concordiam non solum sonorum sed etiam duorum animorum percipere potuit.

Praesento musicum subtilem elegantem eloquentem, Murray Perahia, Excellentissimi Ordinis Britannici Dominum Commendatorem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Musica.

Admission by the Chancellor

Clavicymbali magister artificiosissime, cuius ars audientium sensum delectat animum ad aethera tollit, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Musica honoris causa.

Paraphrase

Among the lovers of classical music there are plenty who look back with nostalgia to the good old days, but when it comes to pianists, we ought surely to agree that we are living in a golden age, and among these none stands higher than the man who completes the line of honorands on this day. Some forty years ago, when he won the Leeds Piano Competition, he became famous almost overnight, for everyone realised that a new star was rising. He played a familiar Mozart concerto, but with such spring-like freshness that it felt like his own new creation. The music gleamed like pearl and flowed like the brook; the listeners hardly knew whether to smile or weep. He was still early in his career when he recorded the complete cycle of Mozart's piano concertos, directing the orchestra from the keyboard. At that time there may have been some who supposed his particular quality to lie more in refinement than force, but that would have been entirely wrong. I have heard him too in this very theatre, when he played Beethoven's *Hammerklavier Sonata*, a work which pianists regard with fear and wonder as the highest summit that they are challenged to climb. His performance combined consummate

technique and profound interpretation; in the first movement he displayed a blend of drive and control, in the second vivacity, in the third an expressiveness that was both noble and tender, and in the last a mastery of jagged, complex and precipitous counterpoint. That same evening he also played Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmith*, with such power and passion that it might have been Beethoven himself on the piano stool. Yet for all his virtuoso brilliance, you will never find showiness in him or bravura for its own sake: he is always at the music's service, not his own. He is indeed a masterly chamber musician, and anyone who has heard his recording of works by Mozart and Schubert for two pianists, made with Radu Lupu, will not only have heard harmonious sounds but recognised the harmony of two souls.

I present a refined, subtle and eloquent musician, Murray Perahia, Hon KBE, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Music.

Admission by the Chancellor

Brilliant master of the pianoforte, whose art delights the ears of your listeners and lifts their spirits heavenward, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Music.

2 Encaenia

The Public Orator delivered the following introduction to the Creweian Oration:

Public Orator: *Honoratissime Domine Cancellarie, licetne Anglice loqui?*

Chancellor: *Licet.*

Public Orator:

I have often envied our anthropological colleagues for the exciting lives they lead. They do their fieldwork in exotic places, among tribes whose beliefs and behaviour seem vastly remote from our own. They tell of festivals in which these primitive folk dress themselves in garish colours, put on extraordinary headgear, and perform strange rituals in language that they don't understand themselves. It is hard for us to imagine such ostentation, but foreigners are funny that way. Today is the great indaba of the Oxonian tribe, our decorous corroboree. It was not always so decorous. In the nineteenth century there were catcalls from the gallery, and earlier still, as you may have read in your programmes, there was the mysterious *Terrae Filius*, the Son of the Earth, a scurrilous jester; in those dark days they exploited this august occasion to tease the University's most senior figures. Happily, such poor taste belongs to the distant past.

We meet here to celebrate. A new study by Dr Susanne Shultz and Professor Robin Dunbar, from the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, has found

that socialising developed bigger brains in mammals: the more socialising, they report, the bigger the brain. How prescient, then, was Lord Crewe's Benefaction, in accordance with which the higher doctors started drinking champagne and eating peaches at half past ten this morning – and just look how brainy they are. We also meet to extend our view beyond our own parish pump, and to honour the high achievements of others. In the new edition of P G Wodehouse's letters, edited by Dr Sophie Ratcliffe of LMH, we find him writing in 1939 that he is going to Oxford to pick up an honorary degree, 'apparently a biggish honour'. Well, we like to think so. It has been a special pleasure for me today to present two people whom, as I have already mentioned, I have heard perform brilliantly in this very room. I play the piano a little myself, and I would give my right arm to play the *Hammerklavier Sonata* like that.

But above all this is a festival of gratitude, as we commemorate our benefactors past and present. Wodehouse was especially pleased to be honoured here, because as a young man he had looked forward to coming up to Oxford, but his father lost most of his money at the critical moment, and his hopes were dashed. The outstandingly generous endowment by Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman of the Moritz-Heyman Scholarship Programme will go far to ensuring that lack of money is no bar to becoming an undergraduate here. It is a very great pleasure to congratulate him on the knighthood which he has just received in the Birthday Honours. Once the students are here, tutors try to bring out the best in each of them. Sir Michael is a Christ Church man, and it was a Christ Church don who wrote, 'Everybody has won, and all must have prizes.' But he gave the words to a dodo, and he knew that they were not true. To win a University prize is a special excellence: we have captured a few of the prizewinners, and they are here on view in a pen below the Chancellor before being released into the wild again. I ask them now to stand for your applause.

Our Press benefits the whole republic of letters by its publishing, but we are also keenly conscious of the good things that we can do with its profits. In the past, the Press's attitude to lucre was more insouciant. The great classical historian Arnaldo Momigliano told how as a young man, when he was a penniless refugee from Mussolini's Italy, he bumped into a representative of OUP, with which he had published a book on the emperor Claudius. 'You may be amused to know,' said our man, 'that some months ago we had a letter from a gentleman in the cinematographic industry – a Mr Cecil Mills, or some such name – who was offering to employ you to advise him on his latest production. The sum was indeed substantial, but we knew you would refuse.' We are less fastidious now. A few years ago the bursars heaved a collective sigh of relief

when *Lewis* came along to follow *Morse*, and a similar sigh has drifted across the quadrangles now that *Lewis*'s place has been taken by *Endeavour*. But not everyone thinks that these programmes have been to our advantage: the new head of admissions at Cambridge has graciously expressed his concern that young people may be put off applying to Oxford by the belief that the dons are dead. Actually, we aren't dead. It only looks that way. In January renovation work at Wadham was interrupted when skeletons were found there, and the police were duly summoned, but they turned out to be disappointingly old.

The novelists kill us off, but the medics keep us alive. Sir Ka-Shing Li, through his charitable foundations, has made an exceptionally munificent gift, which has helped to establish the Li Ka Shing Centre for Health Information and Discovery and supported the Li Ka Shing Global Health Programme and the Oxford-Stanford Conference on Big Data. A magnificent new building up on the hill was opened with appropriate fanfare two months ago. Every time I read about Big Data there drifts into my unruly mind a picture of Big Daddy, the all-in wrestler who filled our television screens – and filled was the word – back in the 70s, and I have a vision of enormous men in singlets tapping away at their computers. I suppose the reality is different. Meanwhile, Professor Tim Key of the Cancer Epidemiology Unit has discovered that women can reduce their risk of breast cancer by moderately vigorous activities like doing housework. One trusts that he has shared the good news with Mrs Key. Caring for people and animals alike, the Robertson Foundation has made a large benefaction for the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and for the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU). Professor David Macdonald, the director of WildCRU, is the Max Clifford of the animal world (if you see what I mean): he is the man who gave the meerkat its big break, but he has been unable to retain it under exclusive contract. I understand that he now has high hopes of the Borneo clouded leopard.

Thanks to our benefactors, we are still able to build, and the city of dreaming spires has become the city of towering cranes. The tallest of them all is at the New Bodleian, now being magnificently transformed into the Weston Library. The builders have put up a sign which wins this year's prize for Reassuring Information that Leaves you Completely Terrified. It reads, 'Safe Cranes Campaign'. Did you realise that we needed a Safe Cranes Campaign? I have walked faster along the Broad ever since. If the crane topples southward in the next half hour, it will take out the senior management of the University entirely. Let us hope that the Safe Cranes Campaign has been doing well recently. Once the building is complete, we shall need some books to put in the library, and some people to

study them. We have had most generous gifts from the Helen Hamlyn Trust for the Helen Hamlyn Trust Treasury in the Weston Library, and from Fozmula Limited for the Jeremy Griffiths Professorship of Medieval English Palaeography.

I have reported before on the progress of our plans for world domination, on the strict understanding that nothing I say goes outside this room. It remains true that those occupying all the four great offices of state, and three of their shadows, are Oxonians. Mr Miliband of Corpus addressed his party conference for 70 minutes (my role model) and used nearly seven and a half thousand words (I know – but I'm sure the dons at Corpus did their best). He spoke eloquently about his education, although strangely the words Oxford and Harvard were absent, but then so too were the words 'freedom', 'liberty' and 'enterprise'. Our alumni may not always acknowledge us, but I hope that we make some difference all the same. In other areas of public life we continue to extend our tentacles. Mr Carney of St Peter's is about to take over the Bank of England, and Mr Thompson of Merton has been succeeded as Director-General of the BBC by Lord Hall of Keble. True, there were a few weeks when the BBC was headed by the graduate of another university, but we knew it wouldn't do. Sometimes our agents have to go about their work by indirect means. Since arriving at Broadcasting House Agent Hall has lost no time in making his key appointments: Mr Purnell of Balliol as his Head of Strategy, and Mr Cohen of LMH as Controller of BBC 1. (Controller – I like that word.) Meanwhile, Mr Murdoch of Worcester still commands BSkyB. They say that if you want to stage a successful coup d'état, the first thing you must do is seize the television stations. But I say: Why bother?

I read an article in the *Times* the other day saying that the trouble with this country is that it is run by Old Etonians. It was written by Mr David Aaronovitch of Balliol. Thanks to Agent Dave for providing the cover.

We must admit to the occasional setback. It is no secret that Mr Obama had wished to have Ms Rice of Worcester as his Secretary of State, but that hope was frustrated; we have now arranged for her to become National Security Adviser. Moreover, there has been a papal election, and yet again the cardinals have failed to pick an Oxford man. In fact, no Oxford man has ever become pope, although I am sure that Adrian IV, the only English pope, would have gone to Oxford, if only we had got round to inventing ourselves half a century earlier. It should not be thought that no Oxford men were in the running this time. If you fancied a flutter, Paddy Power was quoting Tony Blair at 500 to 1. You could get still better odds against Professor Dawkins: 666 to 1. Still further down the field was Miss Anne Widdecombe of LMH. Other disabilities apart, she had weakened her

case by turning down the post of ambassador to the Vatican in favour of her career on *Strictly Come Dancing*. If you had money to burn, Paddy was quoting 10,000 to 1 against Father Dougal Maguire of Craggy Island, who has been unable to study here because he doesn't exist. Though, come to think of it, many of our most famous alumni don't exist either: Lord Peter Wimsey, Bertie Wooster, all those *Brideshead* exquisites. In fact, it is only the real Oxonians who can sometimes be a bit disappointing. One notable Oxonian in the Vatican was William Heard of Balliol, not only the first Scottish cardinal since the Reformation, but (I believe) the only cardinal to have been an Oxford blue. I think Stendhal wrote a novel about him: *Le Rouge et Le Bleu*.

The new pope is a former chemist. We had supposed that our Vice-Chancellorship was the highest office to which a chemist could aspire, but perhaps there is life on the far side of Wellington Square after all. Cardinal Hamilton – yes, I can see it. And after that, well... It has indeed been a memorable year for chemists made good, for April (the cruellest month, according to a Merton man) brought the death and ceremonial funeral of the most famous Oxonian of our time. Lady Thatcher's passing let loose a flood of reminiscence, including a good deal about her years here.

We were reminded that she used her chemistry degree to work on the development of Mr Whippy ice cream. It needs a lot of skill to make a product as completely tasteless as that; it doesn't just happen, you know. But if anyone asks if Lady Thatcher has anything to answer for at the bar of history, just remember Mr Whippy. I met her twice. The first time was in an Oxford common room, when she told me, 'I think the Classics are so important – not only the literature, but the history and the philosophy', and I thought, there speaks a graduate of the university that has Greats. The second time I met her, she could not remember meeting me before; I thought that was odd, as I distinctly remembered meeting her. It is hard for those who were not there at the time to appreciate how dominant was her presence. A standard test for amnesiacs is to ask them who the Prime Minister is. In the later 80s this had to be abandoned, since even people who could not remember their own name knew that Mrs Thatcher was PM. I think too of my small godson leaving the cinema and saying, 'That was a silly film, Mummy. 'Why?' 'The Prime Minister was a man. You can't...' One newspaper recalled her visiting the Soviet Union. When she was taken to the Monastery of Zagorsk, she stopped on the way at a supermarket for a photo-opportunity, and was filmed buying bread and a tin of pilchards. A large crowd was gathered at the monastery to see her, and a British diplomat was heard to murmur, 'Loaves and fishes... Oh, surely not...'

At about the same time I was at a late afternoon seminar in Somerville, and while I was trying to think about Sophocles, I found myself distracted by a growing sense that Mrs Thatcher was spectrally present in the room. I was starting to feel that I must have been working too hard and ought to get out more, when I realised the cause. There was a bust of the lady, in her most imperious not-for-turning pose, in a glass-fronted cabinet, and as the light faded and the reflections dimmed, her features were emerging from the obscurity, like the Cheshire Cat, to command the room. I wonder where that bust is now. But if you want busts, there is a magnificent wall of them at the northern end of the new Ashmolean. Mr Barrie and Mrs Deedee Wigmore have made a very generous gift for the Ashmolean and for Worcester College, while, uniting arts and science, Mr Adrian Beecroft has bestowed a noble benefaction on the Ashmolean and on the New Clarendon Laboratory at the Department of Physics.

In the New Year's Honours Professor Hew Strachan was knighted and Professor Carol Robinson made a dame; CBEs were awarded to Professors David Clark, Raymond Dwek and Judith Freedman. The Birthday Honours have brought a knighthood to the Warden of Nuffield and a damehood to the President of Wolfson; Professors Terence Cave and Anthony Heath have received CBEs, Professors Peter Dobson and Alison Noble OBEs and Dr Lucy Carpenter an MBE. From our number the Royal Society has elected Professors Harry Anderson, Judith Armitage, Gideon Henderson, Christopher Schofield, Andrew Wilkie and Julia Yeomans, while the British Academy has chosen Professors Oliver Braddick, Vincent Crawford, Jane Humphries, Martin Stokes, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Lucia Zedner, and Dr John Darwin. Congratulations to one and all. Meanwhile, Sir Derek Morris is retiring from the Provostship of Oriel, and Giles Henderson from the Mastership of Pembroke; their successors are Moira Wallace and Dame Lynne Brindley. Dr Michael Lloyd is to be Principal of Wycliffe Hall.

We hope that those retiring heads of house will come back often, but some goodbyes are for ever, and once more I call to mind those friends and colleagues who have died in the past year, among whom were Jean Banister, Fellow of Somerville, Sir John Burgh, President of Trinity, Alan Cowey, Fellow of Lincoln, Pamela Currie, Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Robert Currie, Fellow of Wadham, Robert Denning, Fellow of Magdalen, Ronald Dworkin, Fellow of University, Sir Richard Evans, Fellow of Wolfson, Marianne Fillenz, Fellow of St Anne's, Jean Floud, Fellow of Nuffield, Adrian Hollis, Fellow of Keble, John Hunt, Fellow of St Edmund Hall, Dame Louise Johnson, Fellow of Corpus Christi, Emrys Jones, Fellow of New College, Maurice Keen, Fellow of Balliol, Geoffrey Le May, Fellow of Worcester, Ian Little, Fellow of Nuffield, Lord McCarthy,

Fellow of Nuffield, Leslie MacFarlane, Fellow of St John's, Rick Mather, architect at Keble and the Ashmolean, Sir Patrick Nairne, Master of St Catherine's, Desmond Neill, Fellow of Balliol, Robin Nisbet, Fellow of Corpus Christi, Malcolm Parkes, Fellow of Keble, Francis Price, Fellow of Worcester, Patrick Sandars, Student of Christ Church, Olive Sayce, Fellow of Somerville, Harold Shukman, Fellow of St Antony's, David Stockton, Fellow of Brasenose, Godfrey Tyler, Fellow of St Cross, Geza Vermes, Fellow of Wolfson, and Penry Williams, Fellow of New College. *Requiescant in pace, et in aeternum luceat eis Dominus Illuminatio Mea.*

I have already commemorated Lady Thatcher. Her death brought to light a letter that she wrote to the students of Somerville some years ago, ending, 'One last thought - or is it a feeling? - I loved those years, I really did.' Now we dons are not on the whole the venal, conceited, porty monsters that we are sometimes portrayed as being - we do not even murder one another all that often - but we do tend to whinge a bit. But let us not mislead ourselves, or others. Underneath it all, we know how lucky we are to work, teach and learn in this remarkable place. We love it here, we really do.

CREWEIAN ORATION 2013

The Professor of Poetry delivered the Creweian Oration 'in commemoration of the Benefactors of the University according to the intention of the Right Honourable Nathaniel, Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham'.

MY LORD AND CHANCELLOR:

It is fortunate that, by tradition, the Professor of Poetry in this University holds a post comparable to that of the domestic fool in a great Tudor household and can therefore meet the official obligation to be brief about his business with a couple of tumbles and an anecdote.

A merry tale that, a century ago, would have been as little amusing as it is likely to be today (fool's merriment is traditionally melancholic), I take directly from an account by Robert Graves who held this Chair of Poetry in the early-to-mid sixties of last century (there were giants in those days).

When, in 1920, Thomas Hardy, at the age of eighty, received in this Theatre the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, there were, Graves writes,

two very aged dons sitting together on a front bench, whom nobody in the assembly had ever seen before. They frowned and refrained from clapping Mr Hardy or the Public Orator who had just described him as 'Omnium poetarum Britannicorum necnon fabulatorum etiam facile princeps,' and people said they were certainly ghosts and

identified them with those masters of colleges who failed to answer Jude the Obscure when he enquired by letter how he might become a student of the University.¹

Some may be inclined to inquire why the University displayed an excess of caution in withholding Hardy's degree until he had attained fourscore. What item of clinching evidence as to his merit had been so long awaited? It is of course possible that he had been invited to accept the honour somewhat earlier in his career and that, as in the plot of one of his own novels, the letter of invitation had slid under the doormat where it lay undisturbed for years. And it is true that genius attracts fatality –

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore –

not that the Latin verse is especially appropriate at this point; I needed an eloquent bridging-passage.

The most welcome presence among us of Sir Tom Stoppard permits me an allusion that is not inapt (inept, possibly, but ineptitude and I are old friends). I have in mind his haunted and haunting drama *The Invention of Love*, from which I take that Virgilian verse.² It is quoted by the protagonist, one Alfred Edward Housman, late scholar of St John's, in the play's concluding moments: Housman, who took a First in Part One of Litterae Humaniores but was ploughed in Greats so utterly that he had much ado even to be awarded a Pass Degree; Housman, who became one of the greatest classical scholars of last century (perhaps Wilamowitz was his nearest rival); Housman, who in the interstices of that monumental scholarship composed some of the finest English verse ever to become truly popular (beloved of the people). 'Loveliest of trees, the cherry now | Is hung with bloom along the bough,' and all that.

'[P]rivate gain is not prosperity, and equity is the treasure of states' is not Housman, though it is worthy of him. I take it from Ezra Pound, translating the Chinese *Da Xue* (*The Great Learning*).³ It is a noble sentiment, happily not rendered stale by over-citation or excessive practice in recent years.

Two crucial manifestations of public equity, one local, one national, that I formally call to mind are: the admission of women into what had been all-male colleges here and at Cambridge, one of the prime civilising acts of last century; and the ever-increasing recognition and celebration of Paralympic athletes, culminating in the grand attestation

of regard in 2012. There are others, even more recent; but I am under instructions to limit this exercise to eight minutes at most, and I must strike upon my peroration:

My Lord and Chancellor: I have introduced into a ceremony, an occasion in which all present are forbidden, on pain of expulsion, to recall that they have ever failed to accomplish what ambition and parental choice of school dictates, the notion that lasting greatness may be born of initial failure (Housman) as of official hostility (Hardy); may have triumphed over cultural or physical thwartings that, to most of us, would seem insuperable or irreparable. Even so, my lord, my memo is both impertinent and redundant; we are, this morning, in the presence of such achievement, and such glory, achieved despite physical impediments, and have bestowed upon them the honour that it is our right and duty to bestow.

'Someone said: "The dead...are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did". Precisely, and they are that which we know.⁴ With the tactical omission of one word, I quote T S Eliot, a statement made four years short of a century ago. Let us therefore honour the great achievers who are among us; though always with gratitude to the great achievers who are not.

I trust that I have not spoken grossly in excess of eight minutes. I trust that I have not spoken grossly. I had not forgotten that, at the end of the proceedings, Lear's fool is hanged; nor that, in Bunyan, Ignorance is dispatched to Hell, 'even from the Gates of Heaven,'⁵ even from – nay, certainly, from – Luncheon at All Souls.

I beg leave to hold my peace.

¹ Robert Graves, *On English Poetry* (London, Heinemann, 1922), pp129-130

² Tom Stoppard, *The Invention of Love* (London, Faber, 1997), p100

³ *Ta Hio: The Great Learning Newly rendered into the American Language by Ezra Pound* (London, Stanley Nott, 1936), p32

⁴ T S Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (London, Faber, 1932), p16. The omitted word is "writers".

⁵ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London, Stock, 1895) p232