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Gazette supplement

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Encaenia 2025

1 Conferment of Honorary Degrees

2 Encaenia

1 Conferment of Honorary Degrees

The Public Orator made the following speeches in presenting the recipients of honorary degrees at the Encaenia on Wednesday, 25 June:

Degree of Doctor of Letters

LORD MELVYN BRAGG

…quo dicto semper quid reprehensionis auditur.

Hic, ne nimium suggeram, contione iampridem in hoc aedificio habita tumque edita Angliae quidem incolae significati sunt. Sed priusquam verbum vestigantes labori parcatis, coniectura, precor, utimini. Si enim temporibus mutatis hoc verbo audito minus velimus 'arma corripere', gratias non minimas huic viro Wadhamensi agere oportet, historico, Cumbriae cum puero tum adulto etiamque nationis nostrae, qui nunc mihi adstat. Nam, ut ipse censet, ita multiplex est potestas istius verbi istiusque notionis ut modo pauca talia lingua nostra proferat. Et hic praeter plerosque in huius linguae ingenium inquisivit. Hodie ubique fere nomen eius vel eum ipsum gratum acceptumque invenietis ubi ea offeruntur, promoventur, perspiciuntur, quae nobis noscenda magnique facienda sunt ut ex angustiis instantibus aliquanto elabamur, ideoque rebus gestis, artibus, scientiis incumbentes ad meliora inclinemur – ne philosophiam omittam neve res publicas neve cetera quae cognita vel perfecta quibus genus nostrum circumscripti sunt, sodalitates conformantur. Si forte accidat – dii meliora! – ut nuntiis vel muneribus aeriis nostrae nationis aliquid exprobrare cogamur, revocare deceat hunc ipsum acriter de rebus disputasse, ipsum vero inter eos praecellere qui eas operas alere soliti sunt. Non modo rerum interpretem sed ipsum auctorem eloquentem atque ingeniosum se praebuit. Fuerunt qui quaedam inter se contraria apud eum viderent – animo modo aperto modo verecundo praeditum, modo laetum modo demissum, et tristitiae et gaudii gnarum, pedilusorum et Bombardicorum et Luguvaliensium fautorem. Ego tamen et video et

praesento virum tam copiosum, tam multiplicem quam verbum quod ita accurate probavit, Melvyn, Baronem Bragg, inter Viros praecipue Honoratos Socium adscriptum, socium Collegii Wadhami honoris causa adscriptum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphase

With us the word is always used in a somewhat disapproving sense.

A clue: the 'us' is the English, the statement made in this building and published long ago. But before you take the easy way to track this sentence down, take a guess at what the word is. If things are different now, and we are less inclined than some to 'reach for our revolver' on hearing it,[1] we may offer many of our thanks to the Wadham historian, child and adult of Cumbria and of our whole nation, who now stands beside me. It is, he has said, 'one of the most complicated words and multi-tasking concepts in the English language' – this, I should add, from one who has studied more than most the character of our language. In our time there is scarcely a place where you may not find, and welcome, his name and presence in the public presentation, furtherance and examination of what we should wish to know and to appreciate as a 'great help out of our present difficulties', in order to learn from, and be improved by, a study of history, the arts and sciences, philosophy, politics and ideas and achievements that define and shape human beings and their societies. If we should ever – perish the thought ! – find reason to reproach our national broadcasting agencies, we should hear our honorand's own incisive relevant arguments and also count him chief among the redeeming ingredients of those media. Not only critic and commentator but eloquent creative writer, some have seen contradictions in him – the open and the shy, high and low, tragedy and happiness, Arsenal and Carlisle United – but I see, and

I present as rich and coherent a complex as the word and concept he has examined so precisely, Melvyn, Baron Bragg, CH, Honorary Fellow of Wadham College, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Inter scriptores nil minus quam voces et interpretes exemplar, qui permulta tradenda curas quae optima per terras aestimata vel edicta sunt, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Paragon of writers and commentators, conduit of much of the best which has been thought and said in the world, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

[1] You may, though, look this up, to avoid misattribution.

CLIVE MYRIE

Καταπαύει μὲν ὁ Ζοροβάβηλος τὸν περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγον, ἐπιβοήσαντος δὲ τοῦ πλήθους ὡς ἄριστα εἰπόντος, καὶ ὅτι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἰσχὺν ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀγήρω μόνον ἔχοι…[1]

Ecce qui nobis suadet ut recordemur nuntios civitati maximi esse momenti, neque ut mercem quandam habendos sed ad usum valde necessarios, diligentissime observandos. Qua ratione imbutus iam diu Societati Britannicae late proicienti fideliter servivit, ut qui eius societatis sensibus atque libertati sit confisus. Et illos et nos omnes oportet studium veritatis ac iudicii optimi respicere, quod hic magni facit – ne tamen sententiam tantum aequam vel ambiguam hic referat: 'Si de quacumqe re vera cogoscere vis, necesse est tibi adesse, aut saltem testem satis idoneum probatumque adducere.' Et quo magis repugnant alii, praesertimque qui potestatem vel imperii vires gerunt, eo constantius opus est investigatori vera adipisci contendere. Opiniones audimus nos et magistri eius neque assis quidem faciendas, immo ex ipsa re suspiciendas esse. Attamen in narrando affectus etiam patefactos nil recusandos esse, quod saepe apud eum perspeximus hinc illinc acta afferentem vel laeta vel acerba, quae officio peregrino functus ipse tuitus enarravit – bella revocamus et certamina civilia, necnon rectorum praesidentiun discrimina vel reipublicae motus tumultusque gravissimos – neque saluti suae unquam consuluit neque a periculo refugit. Nonne et artem magicam aliquando eum exercere mirati cognovimus? Nam simul hic inter mentis magistros gloriam appetentes adesse simul Kioviae ad culmen quoddam ascendisse eum vidimus. Sed ratione maiore adhibita et hoc mirum enodavimus.

Praesento actorum indagatorem impavidum, praebitorem facundum multorum quae cognoscere nobis opus est, Clive Augustum Myrie, Universitatis Artium Londiniensis Cancellarium, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphase

Then Zorobabel finished his speech on truth, and the assembled crowd declared him the best speaker, saying that it was truth alone that had unchanging and unaging strength …

Here stands a man who urges us to remember that news is of vital importance in a democracy; it is not, he says, a 'commodity' but something 'very basic, very precious'. This belief, or principle, has kept him for many years with our national news agency, where his long service has been conditioned by his trust in its vision and independence. And well it behoves that agency, and all of us, to respect the search for truth and the concept of objectivity that he honours, as opposed to the spurious notion of 'impartiality': 'If you want to get at the truth of any story you need to be there, or at least have witnesses who are credible and verifiable.' It seems that the strength of opposition a reporter faces, especially from official and government forces, when trying to gain such access is a good measure of the need to persist. Opinions, he tells both us and his employers, are by contrast 'two a penny' and perhaps inherently suspect. Yet he defends the role of expressed emotion in reporting, as has been shown in numerous places and momentous events, both tragic and propitious, which he has witnessed and represented as a foreign correspondent, covering wars, civil conflicts and emergencies, presidential fortunes and misfortunes, and major political changes, often at considerable personal risk. Something of the magician may also be cautiously admired in him; popular accounts noted that our honorand was able to appear simultaneously among his aspiring masterminds in Britain and on a rooftop in Kyiv. An objective observation, however, explained the paradox.

I present a fearless pursuer of facts, an eloquent expositor of much that we need to know, Clive Augustus Myrie, Chancellor of University of the Arts London, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Te personam sicut vocem spectatam gerentem, per quem res gestae undique ab orbe nobis allatae sunt, te veritatis et sermonis sinceri defensorem, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Respected face and voice of news from around the globe, defender of truth and honest reporting, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

[1] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XI.iii.7

PROFESSOR SERHII PLOKHII

Nondum Ucrainae gloria tabuit,
nondum voluntas perditur; in diem
risus renidebit deorum
nos refovens iterum beatos.

Nonne 'Rotula Czernobelensis' periculosae plenum opus aleae? Quo modo tamen confecta sit, qui hac ludatur, nos lucidissime monet scriptor doctus quem nunc produco. Iam ex libris multis ab eodem antehac editis permulta sunt nobis discenda de rebus cum in natione eius Ucrainica tum in Russia inter saecula gestis. Etiamque ibi de minis legimus quae tempore belli stationibus et reactoriis atomicis imminent, quantumque cives singuli aucto animo et sollertia usi ad incursus vel militiae vel imperii obeundos prosint. Quam acriter impulsa mente ibi de Velentino Heiko quodam Czernobelensi legimus, qui audacius in statione moratus collegas suos trepidos pacarit; illum nil minus fortem se praebuisse quam eos socios qui calamitatis tempore prioris flammis restinctis cladem avertissent. Verbis hic narrat qualia usus et familiaritas, etsi sine ira et studio, animant, nam ipsa cognatio his periculis acerbissimis praesens interfuit. Haec rerum narratio fabulas facile superat, nosque mente capta attentos tenet fortasse omnes, certe tamen qui re ipsa acta, vera, ut sunt ita agnoscere velimus. Sed hoc etiam, ut hic videtur, apud historicos pondus habet, causas et origines perspicere et hominum motus animi tamquam errores. Hoc bellum, ut dicit honorandus noster, ubique rebus ac memoriis tinctum est. Quae de generibus parum recte intellectis docet, de fabulis fictis nimis respectis, de vano ac superbo amore patriae, attente audiamus.

Praesento historicum cuius opera simul latis, altis, profundis commixta passim penitusque par est legere, Sergium Nicolaidem Plokhii, apud Universitatem Harvardianam Professorem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris..

Paraphase

Ще не вмерла України і слава, і воля,
Ще нам, браття молодії, усміхнеться доля.[1]

'Chernobyl Roulette' is surely a hazardous activity. But the ingredients and procedures of this 'game' have been recorded with devastating clarity by the scholar and writer who comes next in our line.[2] From his numerous earlier publications too we stand to learn much about the histories of his own Ukrainian nation and of Russia over many centuries, about the threats attending nuclear power installations in times of war, and how the courage and intelligence of individuals can respond effectively to military and political aggression. I commend his gripping account of how one Valentyn Heiko bravely held his post and contained the anxieties of his fellow workers in an 'act of heroism equivalent to that of the operators and firefighters who had overcome the nuclear disaster in 1986'. Such reportage is animated by the personal but objective interest of one whose own family have closely experienced the present conflict and its tragedies, and is more telling than fiction, and commands the utmost respect at least from those of us who strive to see facts and truth for what they are. But equally important is the historian's understanding of longer-term causes and passions and misapprehensions. 'History', says our honorand, 'is written all over this war.' Let us carefully listen to what he tells us of the dangers that attend confusions of identity, dedication to historical mythology and misplaced nationalist pride.

I present an historian who fuses the dimensions of width, breadth and depth, one whose work should be read from beginning to end, Serhii Mykolayovych Plokhii, Professor at Harvard University, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Indagator egregie, auctor et interpres et rerum aestimator, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Outstanding researcher, writer, interpreter and commentator for these our troubled times, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

[1] *The glory and will of Ukraine has not yet perished, And yet still upon us, brothers, fate shall smile once more.* Ukrainian National Anthem, verse 1.

[2] Serhii Plokhy, *Chernobyl Roulette* (Allen Lane, 2024)

PROFESSOR TIMOTHY SNYDER

…praecipuum munus annalium reor ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit.

Absit ut a Tacito astricte arbitrante dissentiamus. Sunt tamen quae prosequamur. Ornat hoc officium eruditus, scholaris quondam apud Balliolenses Marshallianus, cui nec litteris mandare tantum sufficit nec contra tendere, sed funditus scrutatus intellegere nititur, etsi res aliquando discrepat. Spe enim alios pernoscendi dimissa cognitionem ipsam, ideoque studium ipsum rerum, nos quaerere desiisse. Eheu, quamvis immanes videantur homines, nihilominus homines esse! Hac natura alicubi negata, vix iam de moribus recte nobiscum agitabimus. Causas ac motus actionum primum opus esse intellegere ut ratione quidem caveamus. Hic igitur recenter hortatus est ut genera libertatis iuste aestimemus, notasque tyrannidis acute deprendamus dominationes priores sicut praesentes scrutati, et quae fortasse futurae sunt. Attamen non semper sic remedia comparantur. Sed ad haec petenda, ad modos curandi, nos certe adducimur, praecipueque, quod nonnunquam admonendum manet, ad iuris praecepta sustinenda. Huius autem sententiae ab aetate prima ex usu ortae instructae sunt; vox eius ab eis audita est quibus mandamus ut vias nostras iuste dirigant. Et hanc apud eum rationis vim agnitam accipiamus, quod nil minus a tyrannis repudiatur quam ab omnibus benigne excipitur qui humanitatem reipublicae magni pendunt cum discrimina eius percipiant. Quod nos, ut puto, plurimi facere oportebit, regionem nostram Europae tractavit, haud exceptis rebus ac casibus quibusdam atrocissimis. Hoc mente teneamus quod caput disputationis apud eum subest: quomodo haec fieri potuisse? Quidnam maioris momenti rogabit rerum gestarum scriptor? Audacem igitur

praesento historicum qui nos obsecrat ut posteris veram libertatem ultra confirmandam legemus, Timotheum David Snyder, apud Universitatem Torontonensem Professorem futurum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris

Paraphase

… it seems to me a historian's foremost duty is to ensure that merit is recorded, and to confront evil deeds and words with the fear of posterity's denunciations. [1]

We need not argue with Tacitus' terse observations. But we may sometimes enlarge upon them. We are here honoured by the presence of a scholar, indeed a one-time Marshall Scholar at Balliol, who refuses simply to record and confront, but also strives to explore and comprehend, often controversially, for 'to find other people incomprehensible is to abandon the search for understanding, and thus to abandon history.' Monstrous human beings are, alas, also human, and 'to deny a human being his human character is to render ethics impossible.'[2] And understanding human causality is key to reasonable cautions; his more recent work has urged both appreciation of freedoms and certain specific diagnoses of tyranny in totalitarian regimes of the past and present and, by implication, of the possible future. If diagnosis does not always of itself lead to cure, it can still helpfully suggest interventions. Among these, as should be more obvious than is sometimes the case, is protection of the rule of law. Here is a mind conditioned and taught by personal experience from early childhood, and a voice that has been listened to by those we trust to guide good policy. Let us recognise, and take as a mark of strength in his arguments, that he is as keenly shunned by autocracy as he is welcomed by those that value democratic civility and yet understand its precariousness. Perhaps most immediately for us he has written about our own continent of Europe, including some of its darkest moments. But let us keep in mind his most fundamental question, and apply it to the whole world: 'How could this have happened?' What greater task should any historian set himself?

I present a bold historian whose urgent counsel is to ensure that we leave a legacy of true freedom to be built upon by the next generation, Timothy David Snyder, soon to be a Professor at the University of Toronto, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Clius dignissime cultor, libertatis iustae atque idoneae propugnator eloquens et egregie, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Worthy scion of Clio, powerful and original advocate of responsible and defensible liberty, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

[1] Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome* III, 65, transl. Michael Grant

[2] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London, 2010), p400

PROFESSOR COLM TÓIBÍN

Aetate olim tua ita provecta, ut mea nunc est, unumquemque hominum videbis velut crusta quadam propria tectum esse, quam noli neglegere. Rerum dico totam congeriem qua velut tegmine involvitur. Nemo fere omnino ab aliis secretus vivit; immo omnis quisque nostrum velut ex cumulo adiunctorum constat.

Adest qui haud minus perspicax quam domina ista egregia tam pauca neglegat quibus imagines depingat eorum quos scribendo ad nos inducit. Quae autem quasi sub tegmine latent penitus ac mire subtiliter scrutari solet. Ecce ars, sollertia quadam perfecta, qua motus pulsusque orationis utriusque commixti apparent, qua subtiliter subiciendo tamquam verba aperta adhibendo item facunde disseritur. De labore nil obtectum dissimulat, neque negat sibi aliquando velut modum quendam repente subitoque prius subvenire, quamvis expedite, perfacile nobis legentibus scripsisse videatur. Pervaria conficit, animi commotione acri ac clara persuadet. Ficta apud eum sicut vera relata accipimus, et facta vere viva illustrata patefacit. Ante omnia tamen veritatem praebet quae valens in fabulis latet, seque ipsum modeste praesentem offert quaecumque de aliis vel legit vel explicat. Si qua nimis tranquille suscipimus, hic nos sollicitare valet, quod nobis prodesse grato animo confitemur. Libellos huius legite, precor, et fabulas, historias, carmina, quae denique de rebus publicis commentatus est, et si quando ab eo dissenseritis, quare ita putetis rogare cogemini. Orator ego, hoc libens concedo, confutatus ero. Primum tamen

praesento ex Vexfordiae donis clarissimis quoddam nobis omnibus fruendum, auctorem cuius modi, numeri, silentia nos simul fascinant simul commovent, Colm Tóibín, apud Universitatem Columbiae Professorem, Universitatis Lyrpulensis olim Cancellarium, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphase

When you have lived as long as I, you will see that every human being has his shell, and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances. [1]

Here now is a man who, no less perceptive than Madame Merle, is able to take so much into account that encapsulates the persons he presents to us in his writing; at the same time he delves under the 'shell' with remarkable depth. His is a craft and an art that melds the pulses of prose and poetry and speaks as eloquently through subtle suggestion as through the immediacy of words themselves. He is candidly honest about the toil, as well as the sudden, unexpected inspiration of a 'melody', that precedes what often seems to his readers natural and effortless. Yet his range is vast, his passion and conviction ever clear and persuasive. His portrayal of the fictional is as direct as reportage, and of the actual it is vivid and revelatory. Most striking of all is the power of truth he can show us in invention, his own presence discreetly felt in his reading and perception of what he reads, or tells, of others. He can disturb our complacent assumptions, and for this we are beholden to him. Read his essays, his novels, short stories, poetry and political commentary, and when you may take issue with him you will be forced to ask yourselves why. Your orator, I readily concede, is reduced to silence. But first

I present one of Wexford's greatest gifts to all of us, a writer whose melodies, rhythms and silences at once enchant and disquiet us all, Colm Tóibín, Professor at Columbia University and former Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Magister, Mage, voce cum animata tum admodum polita instincte, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Master, Magician, inspired yet highly crafted written voice, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

[1] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, ch 19.

Degree of Doctor of Science

SIR MO FARAH

Est quibus in celeris gloria nata pedes.[1]

quales mihi nunc adstant, et quam illustris athleta supremus qui eos incessit! Cuius nomen nobis nationique huic diu miraculo erit. Ex angustiis aetatis puerilis ad Angliam nonum annum agens advectus – qua ubi tandem ei licuit in ludum ire nulla nisi athleticae lingua uti posse videbatur – magistro admodum benefico iuvante apud benevolos quosdam humanitate, spatioque feliciore frui ei datum est. Pilam primo pulsare in animo habuit, sed magister puerum, cum iam observasset quanta habilitate curreret, prorsum profecto incitavit, ut mox in astra vectus omni fere certamine vincere soleret. Tum vero occasione oblata pro patria adoptiva personae peregre gerendae, non ante concessum est ei testimonia necessaria impetrare, cursuque ita foris contra alienos contendere, quam annum iam septimum decimum agens civitatem tandem adsecutus est. Postea autem per terras invictum se praebuit – verbis circumspecte utendum, senatores! – et honores comiter necnon modestia quadam confecit, quales nunquam aliter apud Olympia in cursibus superati sunt. Haec memoria satis digna, sed etiam insignissimis praemiorum eius plerique nostrum hoc quidem maioris facimus, et admiratione maiore audivimus, unde ortus ad talia tantaque surrexerit, quomodo denique eos repertos reviserit qui eum in lucem protulerunt. 'Non is sum qui videbar esse,' dixit olim honorandus noster. Immo vero eius ingenii erat, neque desiit esse, quod mirati agnoscimus; quod et quem hodie laete honoramus.

Praesento inter Olympios Olympium nobis ex terra Somalica tributum, artificem 'moboticum', humanum, multorum praestitorem quae in rebus ludorum vitaeque perficiendis prosunt, simul Hussein Abdi Kahin simul Mohamed Muktar Jama Farah, Equitem Auratum, Excellentissimi Ordinis Imperii Britannici Commendatorem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphase

There are some for whose swiftness of foot glory is destined.[1]

And how fleet and distinguished are the feet that stand beside me now, how celebrated the paragon of athletes who has plied them, one whose name we and our country may long conjure with. His troubled early days after being brought to England aged nine – it was thought the only language he really seemed to understand, when finally allowed to go to school, was that of sport – were, through the help of an inspiring teacher, transformed to happier times with an attentive and loving home. He wanted to be a footballer, but that teacher saw his extraordinary aptitude for running and steered him steadily forward. Thence came his stratospheric ascent with victories through every race he ran, though still when the opportunity came to represent his adoptive country in world championships abroad he was unable to obtain the papers to travel until granted citizenship at the age of seventeen. His subsequent record is truly 'world-beating' – politicians take note! – the distinctions he has brought to us achieved with grace and humility, as Britain's most successful track athlete in the history of the Olympic Games. But perhaps for many of us the human story of his origins, his rise to fame, and at last his rediscovery of those who brought him into the world, will outshine even the glories of his most memorable achievements. 'I am not who you think I am,' said our honorand once. It was perhaps so, but he was then, and remains now, what we know he is, and today we honour both what he is and who he is.

I present an Olympian of Olympians, Somaliland's gift to Britain, Mobotic artist, philanthropist and representative of much of what is good and positive in sport and life achievement, both Hussein Abdi Kahin and Sir Mohamed Muktar Jama Farah, CBE, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Heros seu stadii seu viae Marathoniae celeripes, patriae nostrae decus, ego auctoritate mea et totius universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Swift-footed hero of road and track, pride of our country, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

[1] Propertius, *Elegies*, III, 9, 18.

[1] See the BBC documentary *The Real Mo Farah* (www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001977f/the-real-mo-farah)

PROFESSOR ROBERT S LANGER

ὁ βίος βραχὺς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὀξὺς, ἡ δὲ πεῖρα σφαλερὴ, ἡ δὲ κρίσις χαλεπή. [1]

Vita brevis, ars longa, occasio praeceps, experimentum periculosum, iudicium difficile.

Satis bene dictum, bene factum, Hippocrates. Sed quanta et qualia praeterea perficere poteras, si modo scientia machinali una cum chimica biotechnologicaque coniuncta praeditus fuisses, ne omittam quae auxilia argentaria utiliter quidem prodessent. Quae omnia tam egregie illustrat hic indagator, inventor, negotiator eximius quem nunc produco, qui res nostras itidem in melius provexit. Hic iam puer investigationibus ex animo deditus simul arte magica tenebatur, per quam inopinata conspiceret. Cursum suum egregium praecipue machinator, scrutator iniit, quem ad scientiam biomedicam adhiberet, prius tamen se ad docendum exponendumque allici invenit, quo melius, immo modo insolito, iuvenes etiam parvuli mentem ac rationem exercerent; quod enim se ipsum didicisse. Et exemplo ita praebito ipse statim investigatus omnem fere repudiationem ut confirmationem, ut videtur, accepit, quo pervicacius ea secutus quaereret quaecumque verisimilia viderentur. Iamque nunc late ubique confidenter accipiuntur quae machinatus est, quae repperit, quas materias inventas in medium protulit. Hoc enim nuper cognovimus, quod nobis vero abunde prodest, 'vaccina', ut vocantur, recentiora magnopere adiuta esse, cum ex tali labore effecerimus ut admodum parvula trans cellulae membranam traici possent, moleculas dico quibus corpora nostra ad προτεινούσας creandas utantur. His autem opus est nobis ad arma tantadem paranda, quibus contagiis repugnetur. Unde et alia remedia fortasse apparebunt; quod nobis admirationem gaudiumque summum parere videtur. Nonne ita saltem mundus noster minus infestus fiet? Pro certo scimus hunc virum in animo habere magis magisque large ac liberaliter ea vulgare quae tam utiliter inquisiit.

Praesento indagatorem impigrum, studiosum, cuius ex cognitionibus rationibusque innumerabiles per terras profecerunt, Robertum Samuel Langer, apud Massachusettense Institutum Technologiae Professorem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphase

Life is short, and craft long, opportunity fleeting, experimentations perilous, and judgment difficult.

Well said, and well done, Hippocrates. But your achievements might have been even greater had you had the combined gifts of engineering, chemistry, biotechnology, and the more-than-acceptable side and blessing of capitalism, all of which are so signally championed by the truly exemplary scientist, inventor and businessman whom I now introduce, one whose achievements have changed the world for the better. Here is a man whose boyhood love of science was coupled with a fascination with magic, the experience of 'seeing the unexpected'. Before he began his extraordinary career in what was fundamentally engineering research and its application in biomedical science, he discovered a love of teaching, of explaining, and inspiring the very young to think, like him, 'out of the box'. He followed his own example; from the start of his original scientific work the scepticism he faced from others was, I believe, always a stimulus, for it inspired in him a dogged determination to pursue what he intuitively felt was possible. And now there is wide acceptance of techniques, materials and interventions which he has developed, and promoted. For the newer generation of vaccines, as we have experienced to our immense benefit in recent years, such work has enabled the delivery by tiny particles, over the cellular membrane, of molecules that our bodies can then employ in generating the crucial proteins necessary for our making, matching antibodies and resultant defenses against infection. Possibilities of other remedies in the future are profoundly exciting. The world could, at least in this sense, become a safer place, and we know that our honorand aspires to spread the benefits of his research and teaching ever more widely and liberally.

I present a tireless and zealous scientist whose ideas, insights and methods have benefited millions, Robert Samuel Langer Jr, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Auctorem et inventorem ipsum tuum te, Aesculapi vere adiutor, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Innovator, inventor, worthy attendant of Asclepius, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

[1] Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 1.1

PROFESSOR ERWIN NEHER

Gratissimum mihi facit hic vir insignis ut qui adstet, quod et sibi ipsi velim pariter faciat. Nam pater meus, quem uBIQUE primis litteris appellabant, paulo antehac in eadem scientia biophysica versabatur quam hic una cum socio item laureato Bert Sakmann coluit. Hi animo, manu, oculi acie egregie praediti effecerunt ut modo suo novo contactus usi tum primum motiones electricas subtiliter aestimare possent quibus freti sensus omnium animalium denique impulsi aguntur. Eoque clarius intellegere coepimus quali modo 'συνάψεις', ut vocantur, ad transmittendum inducantur. Ibique in scientia amoenitatem quandam atque elegantiam videamus, vel etiam, ut ipse ita dicam, vim quasi poeticam, cum fistula admodum parvula ad cellulae membranam applicetur (abest enim ut confestim hoc tegmen tenerum nequiquam penetret) cumque, ut iam melius cognovimus, cellulae ipsae velut 'colloquantur'. Quae inventa recognita hortor ut mirati respiciatis, et consideretis qualia maximi momenti inde evenerint. Sic enim acutius intellegetis quae ego orator propter inanitatem vix praestare valeo. Hic quoque, cum iam discipuli aetate in studia physica, chimica, biologica incitatus incubuerit, certe sensit quantum pondus in scientia habeant iuvenes, qui sollertia ea aetate maxime florere videantur, seniorum tamen et magis peritorum consiliis ac notionibus adhuc libenter producantur. Quid? Nuper demonstravit quantae fruges ex academia cum usu rerum consociata nobis sint proferendae medicinae remedia scrutantibus iamdudum a Sinensibus tradita. O tempora, o nationum semper crescentem! Hic tamen amicitiae indicia quaedam percipere libeat, necnon concordiae fontem salubriorem exortae. In scientia revera delectatio, ut hic assentit; insuper tamen non modo morbos, etiam discordias valet sanare. *Es gilt wohl nur ein redliches Bemühen!*[1]

Praesento igitur scrutatorem generis rarioris, cogitatione humana et consilii firmitate insignem, Erwin Neher, Societatis Regiae sodalem, apud Institutum Max Planck Professorem, praemio Nobeliano nobilitatum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphase

I trust that the distinguished gentleman who stands beside me will share my particular pleasure in this proximity; for my father, 'BK', was a predecessor in the same field of biophysical research, both of him and of his colleague and fellow Nobel laureate Bert Sakmann, these two insightful minds whose inventive hands and eyes effected the 'patch clamp' technique to measure accurately for the first time the electrical events that underlie the activity of nerve impulses. The understanding of synaptic transmission was thereby greatly advanced, and there is a beauty and elegance in their achievement, indeed to my eye a poetry, both in this technique, in which a micropipette initially attaches itself to the cell membrane rather than immediately and ineffectually penetrating that subtle outer covering, and in the knowledge we have gained of how cells 'communicate' one with another. I urge you to study and admire the discovery and its momentous consequences, and gain a more sophisticated understanding than a mere Latin orator can hope to show. Our honorand, whose curiosity in physics and chemistry and biological processes was awakened at an early age in high school, is keenly aware of the role and importance of younger scientists, whose technical skills may be expected to be at their peak, and yet are willingly guided by the insights and instincts of those of longer experience. In recent years he has shown the fruitful collaboration of laboratory and applied research in investigating the workings of treatments in Chinese traditional medicine; at a time of increasing international tensions we see here some signs of friendship and a more wholesome sense of common purpose. Science, he agrees, can be fun. More than that, can it not thus also heal both diseases and divisions?

I present therefore a scientific innovator of humane vision and patient determination, Erwin Neher, Foreign Member of the Royal Society, Professor at the Max Planck Institute for Multidisciplinary Sciences, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Physiology or Medicine, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Investigator honorande, qui laboribus eximiis arcana enodavisti, tantumque de machinatione subtili systematis nervorum edocuisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Worthy investigator, whose work has unravelled mysteries and greatly enhanced our knowledge of the subtle workings of the nervous system, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

[1] From JW Goethe's sonnet *Natur und Kunst*, line 5

2 Encaenia

Creweian Oration

The Public Orator delivered the Creweian Oration:

Orator: *Honoratissime Domine Cancellarie, licetne anglice loqui?*

Chancellor: *Licet.*

Orator: So be it, though we now have evidence that you would very happily continue in Latin.

A prominent conservative Cambridge graduate has written of the current Chancellorship election at that University that they want someone who gives public service, but: 'We don't want someone who speaks up.' But this is Oxford, and our process has given us one who can *both* give public service *and* speak up as *we* want. Today at his first Encaenia we welcome him. *Ave, Domine Cancellarie*, speak on, speak up, speak freely, and encourage our own most important diversity – that of opinion. Should we overstep the mark in word or gesture or, may we answer to sound and prompt authority and to better instincts.

Latin, of course, is not the only classical language. Here there is growing enthusiasm for speaking, conversing and even producing plays in several ancient tongues, and not just among our signed-up students of Classics or languages that we used to call 'Oriental' before we re-oriented some of our attitudes, or at least our terminology. In last term's Sanskrit drama my friend the All Souls Professor of Eastern Ethics played the part of a fabulously disreputable villain who eventually sees the light.

In the case of the Latin mass of the Catholic Church, a recent article by Colm Tóibín, which I commend to you, is cautious about the language. 'It is all very well,' he says, 'and it sounds good… but it is code. Those who profess to want its return want many other things too; they are fiercely conservative and must be kept down.'

Not to worry. I am informed by ChatGPT that you may still find, should you need one, an ATM in the Vatican City that offers instructions in Latin. And, although we heartily rejoice to have our own Cardinal – *habemus Cardinalem* – today's celebration is no Mass. Oxford is a broad church. Our Latin is a respectful reminder of many centuries of practice and tradition that formed us and our institutions, conservative, liberal and others.

We have even updated our Latin for the ordinary degree ceremony, to be courteous and inclusive to all. Nothing very woke here, just a courtesy to those students whom we have encouraged to register themselves in a particular way. Traditional hearts should be warmed at the thought that we have allowed the Latin to change with our times, rather than scrapping the language altogether.

Elsewhere, Latin can be updated in a different way. Visit Rhodes House, as I did last week; you will see a carved inscription in the Southern African |xam language that balances and contextualises the honorific Latin words commemorating Cecil Rhodes and his legacy. The new inscription, beautiful both to hear and to see, conveys the message: 'remembering and honouring the labour and suffering of those who worked to create this wealth'.

History, it has been said, is 'always about the present'. Is that a bit of a stretch? A mysterious instinct recently directed me back to the (in those days Latin) Creweian Oration of 1939. The Professor of Poetry started by stating that we had completed a year that had been much 'under the will of fortune', was beset by crises, and was poised on the edge of a rumbling Vesuvius. Encaenia, by the favour of Peace, that most gracious of goddesses, was still duly celebrated, and with it our esteem and gratitude to generous friends and honoured guests. A poignant handwritten note from the Public Orator on my copy of the following year's oration records that the Creweian was the only item on the Encaenia menu. The (again Latin) text of that speech makes sobering reading. What, I wonder, will be the tone and content in 2026?

How are things in the UK? This is an urgent question I hear from visitors, recently a little more from academic visitors from the United States. Well, I'd answer, it depends who you ask. I for my part refuse to look furtively over my shoulder before selecting a paper from the rack. Yes, I have at times witnessed such discretion, if that's what it is. Casting the net wide, I find Oxford alumni ubiquitous in politics and press.

Take any day at random. I did, and a little while ago my eye fell on a depressing *Telegraph* piece by Neil O'Brien (PPE, Christ Church) *The state of our nation: the six reasons why Britain is heading for utter oblivion*. Here were six of the usual suspects, or the usual convicts: demographics, 'nothing to unite us' (under this head he managed to fire a shot at our Pitt Rivers Museum and its removal of shrunken heads), social breakdown and what he called 'welfarism', the economy, migration and so on. For relief from despondency on the same day I turned to Martin Kettle (History, Balliol) reporting a little more equivocally, even perhaps a little hopefully, in the *Guardian* on the spending policies of Chancellor Rachel Reeves (PPE, New College).

And the *Times*? We follow with special interest the regular column by William Hague (History – no, sorry, PPE, Magdalen). But also that day Chris Smyth (History, Lincoln College) was one of those telling us that Rachel 'relies on statistical sleight of hand'. (Well, better the sleight of hand, perhaps, than naivety. Remember the Professor of Statistics – not an Oxford one – who carried a bomb onto a plane, reasoning that it was unlikely there'd be two bombs on one plane.)

Might this all help to stress the diversity of opinion we try to engender, in which at the best of times our teaching, our dialogue and our debating, not least that of the Oxford Union, have flourished? The outgoing editor of our *Oxford Student* term-time newspaper, Yashas Ramakrishnan, comments interestingly: 'This place isn't just a university; it's a magnifying glass. It exaggerates everything – our talents and tensions, our passions and prejudices.' Yes, around us we can see what he means, but that magnifying glass can be used to *identify*, and to tease out, the elements of prejudice and replace them with reasoned judgment. Idealistic, perhaps, but surely the crucial endeavour?

That Cambridge graduate I mentioned earlier writes that on speaking in Oxford very recently to 'highly intelligent, mainly undergraduate audiences', he found the atmosphere redolent of 1980s secret meetings of dissidents behind the Iron Curtain, arranged by British intellectuals smuggled in. 'One encountered young people who feared discovery but showed a touching belief in the life of the mind as they thirsted for freedom in the desert of enforced conformity.' We heed the warning. I cannot help comparing this observation with the reported results of surveys that suggest a reassuringly high percentage of students are satisfied with the level of free speech they enjoy. Is this a sign of free, unfettered thinking, or itself more of an increasing conformism? Of a worrying adherence to orthodoxy? Do their teaching faculty, particularly younger members, feel equally confident? What is the truth here? We wait for the answer, but let us also work towards a good one. Flexibility, that's an Oxford quality, even if not always to be praised. It was a Balliol classicist, we remember, who managed, with a little help, to bring about 'landslide' victories for both our then main opposing parties, and did so without even having to cross the floor in the house.

An extra pleasure for me at these celebrations is to show off to our guests some of the efforts and distinctions of our own faculty, and also some hints of what is to come from the rising generation.

We rejoice in the recognition often given to our researchers. Awards have been many, too many for me to list here, but I can mention one or two projects. Do look at the 'Fire and Wire' video on the work of our Robotics Institute, discreetly disguised behind an elegant old building on Banbury Road, and consider its plans for 'Robots for Good', whereby machines may obligingly perform tasks that would be forbiddingly difficult or hazardous for human agents.

Look also at Oxford's collaboration with the University of Birmingham in uncovering and studying five dinosaur trackways in Oxfordshire. Oxford is the home of a world-beating collection of dinosaurs. Forgive the ambiguity here, my Lord Chancellor, but you know what I mean. Reuben College regularly dines with them, and our understanding of them and their way of life is also developing apace. I strongly recommend the current 'Breaking Ground' exhibition at our Museum of Natural History and the online article 'Major new footprint discoveries on Britain's "dinosaur highway" '.

Assessments at home – I mean in our Vice-Chancellor's annual awards – have drawn attention to admirable projects in teaching and learning, support for students, research aimed at benefiting wider society, outreach and access, sharing our facilities and collaborating with young sports leaders and local schools, museum work (including a spirited return fire from the Pitt Rivers Museum), social diversity, and eradication of poverty.

The British Pain Society has praised the Vice-Chancellor herself. 'We are proud to share,' they say, 'that Professor Tracey, an honorary member of the British Pain Society, recently guest edited BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. As a renowned neuroscientist, [she] brings her expertise in understanding and treating pain to the forefront, reflecting on hope and kindness as central themes. Her insightful discussion also explores the vital role universities play in shaping society.' We thank you, Vice-Chancellor, and hope the message is heard abroad.

Over the last twelve months five of our colleagues have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society, and nine of the British Academy. Our own Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Professor Emeritus (Emerita?) of Physics and Fellow of Mansfield College, is appointed a Companion of Honour for her services to Astronomy and Physics and to Diversity, and several others are honoured with titles that still uphold the name of the British Empire in a positive light. Long live such titles; here are the most public recognitions we have of services to science and education, to research in the arts, humanities and social sciences, to evidence-based intervention and the reduction of violence against children, to global public health, orthopaedic research and training, and ecology.

And down there sit representatives of the best and brightest of their own generation, prize-winners in the study of Modern Languages, History of Art, Mathematics, Medicine, Materials and Economics. This, we say to them, is a fine beginning, not an end. To them Clive Myrie might repeat his well-known advice: 'Be kind to those on the way up; you may need them on the

way down.' Remember the words of Mo Farah: 'I work so hard for what I do. To achieve what I have has taken me half my life… it has been the product of many years' struggle.' Colm Tóibín has famously said: 'Suffering is too strong a word, but writing is serious work. I pull the stuff up from me – it's not as if it's a pleasure,' though I suspect that the completion of a work is for him, as for us, a cause for quite some satisfaction. Take comfort from Lord Bragg: 'I enjoy what was called swatting in my day.' (*His* words, mark you.)

Research and scholarship must welcome not only successes but failures, where they lead to further investigation. Our honorand Robert Langer has spoken of what it has taken him to succeed: 'vision, hard work, and never letting up'. And, as we shall say again at your graduation ceremonies, remember those who have helped to bring you this far, teachers, friends and family. Remember those that have nurtured you; they tuck you up, your Mum and Dad. And bear in mind the important continuities from early to later life. Professor Erwin Neher counsels us: 'Curiosity is something we all have as children; a researcher is someone who manages to preserve it as an adult.'

Bearing in mind, then, that the Latin masculine plural covers two genders, and could, I believe, cover more if required, on your feet, *discipuli*, and receive our plaudits.

To support medical research, as our scientists in the Nuffield Department of Medicine productively exercise such curiosity, through the Calleva Foundation Stephen and Caroline Butt have made generous donations towards Professor Adrian Hill's and Professor Simon Draper's malaria vaccine research, the latter a response to USAID funding withdrawal. The department's ambition is to combine the already proven efficacies of both vaccines to eradicate malaria everywhere. Oxford is likely thereby to maintain its place among leading centres of vaccine research.

Denys Firth, an Oriel College alumnus whom we are proud to have with us today, is a major donor to our Physics Department. Thanks to his endowment we are to have a graduate scholarship, the Denys Firth Scholarship in Theoretical Physics, which will be awarded to exceptional DPhil students and enable them to pursue advanced studies. Mr Firth's generosity underscores the transformative role of philanthropy in fostering academic excellence and innovation, a role it has taken us in the past a little too long to develop.

We are learning fast, but maybe not fast enough, to watch our use of, and increasing dependence on, artificial intelligence, not to mention the rich range of opportunities and hazards it brings for our students and their learning, their research, their assessment. Can ChatGPT win the Fields Medal, we hear some of our brightest mathematicians ask. Will our thinking soon be almost entirely subordinated to non-human agency? Our honorand Professor Snyder's book, *The Road to Unfreedom*, which offers both alarming and necessary reading on the threats to democracy, considers, among other things, the freedom to behave in ways that authority, including the growing algorithmic authority of AI, cannot control. On this 50th anniversary – this very day – of Mrs Gandhi's declaration of a State of Emergency in India we may do especially well to look at the old and new fragilities of democracy and democracies around the world.

How AI has changed in recent years. I remember reporting not so long ago that a visiting professor had been introduced to our cisgender robot Aida and fallen in love with her, notwithstanding her rather boring answers to moral questions. Karl Marx reminded us 'Every beginning is difficult, holds in all sciences,' but there seems to be an incipient sense of humour in AI, if it is true that, when asked whether tripe is kosher, the answer came that it depends on the religion of the cow.

Last year I reported on our new Uehiro Institute, now up and running, which promises to ensure long life for our study *and application* of practical ethics, allying ethical argument and philosophical analysis with artificial intelligence in facilitating decision-making in many areas, and we honoured on that occasion one who had brought about particularly fruitful alliances of this kind, both in attaining the unattainable – a machine-driven victory against the world Go champion – and in attending to a formerly intractable problem in biology, notably the mysterious processes of protein development.

Today we welcome Simon and Laura Ashall, who represent their family's donations to the Department of Computer Science, contributing to the establishment of the Ashall Professorship of Foundations of Artificial Intelligence, and further unlocking Graduate Endowment Matched Funding Scheme support in this same subject. The new professor, Michael Wooldridge, will surely be one of those guiding our understanding and our use of Large Language Models, described by one of our Uehiro faculty as a 'Pandora's Box', which could 'eliminate academic independence, creativity, originality and thought itself, but could also facilitate unimaginable co-creation and productivity.'

Humanities are on the move. Quite literally, as departments migrate and our new Schwarzman Centre prepares to receive them and provide us, other conditions allowing, with much material in the 2026 Creweian Oration. Plans appear to be on schedule, a truly Britain-beating achievement. For now I express our thanks and admiration to the Cosmos Institute – its representative Brendan McCord is with us today – and its endowment of the McCord Professorship in

Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence, providing the Human-Centreed AI Laboratory, working towards a 'third way', as the institute puts it, that is to say a balanced approach between extreme pessimism about AI risks and unbridled techno-optimism. Philosophy students will, I think, find room here for several options and many a seminar.

And *Don't let's be beastly to the Vikings*. Yes, I know that earliest Oxford was a front-line stronghold between them and the Saxons, but that was long ago and we have since learned a more nuanced approach to seaborne migrant cultures. May we risk an apology for the 1002 St Brice's Day Massacre in Oxford, in which King Aethelred the Unready ordered the killing of all Danes living in England? Visit the Museum of Oxford for further information. Now Dr Kirsten Rausing has contributed very significantly towards the Gad Rausing Associate Professorship in Viking-Age Archaeology, the University's first post in the study of this age. Dr Gad Rausing, the donor's father, was an eminent scholar in the field of Scandinavian archaeology. Please read about him, and his daughter and the new Professor Jane Kershaw.

Britain's special relationship with those from whom we are separated by a common language is ever more special. Our standing, or lack of it, in Europe, takes us perhaps out of the firing line of the charge (in up-to-date presidential language) that 'the EU was formed in order to screw the United States – that's the purpose of it'. But did not *our* special relationship, even when we were more fully a part of Europe, go far beyond this level of… intercourse?

And so be it now in some perhaps new ways. There was a time when we thankfully received refugee scholars and scientists mostly from continents beyond the channel and the North Sea, and now we may come to owe a similar debt to the West. Be warned, any already here present, there may be sacrifices; in Britain academics are wise not to measure job satisfaction by remuneration, but I am told by my son's dear American in-laws that there may be compensations in our way of life.

For our part, we maintain an interest in Europe. Our most international college must be St Antony's. Professor Timothy Garton-Ash retired in 2023 and his departure left us, to our shame, with no senior faculty specialising in contemporary Europe. The Sigrid Rausing Trust has funded a senior post in this subject, named the Eleanor Rathbone Chair within our History Faculty. And that faculty rejoices that our own Dmitri Levitin is one of a distinguished cohort this year awarded the Dan David Prize, which I urge you to look up and admire for its humane vision and internationalism.

I am delighted to welcome Cathleen Blackburn from the Tolkien Trust, which has donated to our Botanic Garden, our Arboretum and our libraries. Their recent gift is a 10-year commitment to fund two specialists in cataloguing the Tolkien Archive at the Bodleian and digitising some important literary manuscripts that relate to Professor Tolkien's academic interests.

The Bodleian has further benefited from a major benefaction from the Helen Hamlyn Trust, which secures the permanence of the post of Bodley's Librarian, now to be known as Bodley's Librarian and the Helen Hamlyn Director of the University Libraries. Under the leadership of the present Librarian, Richard Ovenden – remember his published interest in book burning is purely academic – we have seen improvements and renovations of several of our major libraries.

The time has come to remember those colleagues who have passed away over these last months. I wish I had the time here to include here the many, many names of distinguished Honorary Fellows that have been sent to me; I have to be content that their colleges will keep them in treasured memory. One, however, I will mention, for he was one of our Encaenia honorands many years ago and a frequent visiting artist in this very building ever since. Just a few days ago we heard that Alfred Brendel had passed away, now immortalised in his recordings of Schubert, Beethoven, Liszt and others. We shall revere his legacy.

Together we mourn the loss of Christopher Hood, Fellow of All Souls, Graham Richards of Brasenose, Martin McLaughlin, Student of Christ Church and Fellow of Magdalen, David Rice, Student of Christ Church, David Vaisey of Exeter College, Bob Arnott, Richard Pring and John Coulter of Green Templeton, Foundation Fellows of Harris Manchester John Felix and Maevadi Navapan, Keith Thompson of Kellogg, Vincent Gillespie of Lady Margaret Hall, Lincoln College's David Edwards and Leonard Polonsky, Michael Whelan and Michael Weaver of Linacre, Bojan Bujic and Susan Iverson, Fellows of Magdalen College, Béla Novák of Merton College, Chris Allsopp of New College, Charles Handy, Oriel College, Rex Mason of Regent's Park, Hazel Rossotti of St Anne's, Henry Bennet-Clark, Ian Shipsey and Sir Patrick Sergeant, Fellows of St Catherine's College, of St Cross Nicholas Mayhew, Jack Zussman, and Charles Mould, Celia Sisam of St Hilda's, of St John's William Hayes and Ioan Mackenzie James, John O'Connor of St Peter's, Sir Brian Jenkins of Trinity College, Lee Shau-Kee, Foundation Fellow of Wadham, and Edman Tsang of University College.

The immortal words 'rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord' might set us thinking. Rest? But is that what most befits them? Have not these our colleagues been known for their inspired restlessness in research and

teaching? If there is somewhere a Paradise beyond this troubled earth, it surely cannot be lacking in a good University – perhaps it simply is one – where inspired, free and untrammelled restlessness is the name of the game and scholars past and present meet, and compare and fruitfully contrast their ideas. But remember also freedoms *from* (Isaiah Berlin, Classics and PPE, Corpus Christi) – heavenly freedom, then, from admin, examining, college and University committees, from the Research Excellence Framework, and everlasting exemption from the Employer-Justified Retirement Age – yes, these there must be.

I cannot think that Paradise is an autocracy with curbs on free expression. Is it a theocracy? Well, there again I suppose it depends who you ask. I speak without relevant authority, but I fancy not. Most likely, I think, it is a multi-faith place where tolerant but earnestly and restlessly engaged dialogue is the norm.

I once closed this part of our day with some words of Oscar Wilde, who wrote from the generous perspective of a partial outsider: 'Oxford… remains the most beautiful thing in England, and nowhere else are life and art so exquisitely blended, so perfectly made one.' This year Magdalen College has celebrated the 150th anniversary of Wilde's birth with an exhibition that explored, as the organisers put it, his 'four years as a student of the college, and the sensational life which followed'.

Wilde was never awarded an Honorary Degree at Oxford, and many may regret that we do not allow posthumous awards of such degrees. But posthumous degrees are not altogether impossible, and New Zealand's former Prime Minister will rejoice with us that at long last the remarkable anthropologist Makereti, also known as Maggie Papakura, is to receive her Master's degree, 95 years after she finished writing the ethnographic study later published as 'The Old-Time Maori' and still available, still highly readable. She was to present the thesis for examination on 7 May 1930. She suffered a serious heart attack on 15 April and died within a few hours. You may visit her grave at Oddington in this county. I have been reading this fascinating, if unfinished, work and I fully understand why the degree is now finally to be granted, we hope not only to our joy but that of the Māori communities of her native country.

Well, the choir will sing its beautiful though mournful swansong, an obviously reflective choice of text, but let us keep immortalities in mind. Remember that the one thing Pandora's Box never released was that most precious of forces, hope, and those present we have celebrated today confirm our trust in that sacred force.

Both here and elsewhere may grass grown green where once encampments lay. And Paradise? The current number of the *Oxford Student* offers a large number of attractions it considers far worthier allurements than Magdalen College's Deer Park among the 'things to do before you graduate'. As you'll expect of me, I shrink from using the word heresy, but really…! I fondly remember from 50 and more years ago my South American friend, later to become a distinguished Dean of Faculty at a prominent university. What's it like, I asked him, living in Magdalen's 'New' (ie 18th-century) Building? Manuel's acquired English was already far more accomplished and poetic than my native argot, not to mention the Latin temperament that particularly distinguished him. 'Every morning', he said, 'I am awoken by the melody of the deer making love.'

Make love, not war, said my generation in a past era, before we started trying to grow up. And we no doubt still remember the words of Tolkien's elf Haldir: 'The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.'

Paradise on earth? Yes, many candidates here in Oxford. Let us each elevate our own favourites to that status. I have read that when in the late 19th century an Oxford missionary on his first visit to India first set eyes upon the Taj Mahal he wrote back to his colleagues that he had found it somewhat inferior to Keble College. Be that as it may, let us borrow the lovely Persian words that have been sometimes applied to that great monument to love and beauty as well as other glorious places, and let us make them as true as we may of our own:

اگر فردوس بر روی زمین است، همین است و همین است و همین است.
(*If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.*)

Inshâ'Allah, and *Amen* to that!

Thank you!