

Gazette supplement



Encaenia 2026

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1 Conferment of Honorary Degrees

The Public Orator made the following speeches in presenting the recipients of honorary degrees at the Encaenia on Wednesday, 24 June:

Degree of Doctor of Civil Law

DAME JACINDA ARDERN

Honoratissime Domine Cancellarie, licetne quaedam verba Māoriana emittere?

He pai te tirohanga ki ngā mahara mo ngā rā pahemo engari ka puta te māramatanga i runga i te titiro whakamua.

Nonne multa sunt nobis e civitate accipienda quae hoc lucro apponit, quod in liberis educandis praecellere late videtur, ideoque posteritati consulere? Agmen nostrum celebre femina ducit, dux quondam civitatis eius egregia, eo tempore natu inter omnes gubernatrices minima, quae miro modo hodie iuventutem mansuram cum rerum publicarum peritia probata coniunctam praestat. Haec se ‘democratiae sociali’ ac ‘progressioni’, ut vocantur, sociam animo libentissimo praebet, apud quam – ut verba arguta eius usurpata reficiam – sane satis suci ac sanguinis supersit. Nuper oratione ‘initiali’ apud Harvardianos habita monuit, quod eis commotioni fuit, quam caducus hic civitatis status et in Nova Zealania esset. Qui ut permaneret, opus esse nobis satis fiduciae firmae stabilisque officiorum, hominum peritorum, iustae denique gubernationis. Facile perire hanc fiduciam, quam ad sustineendam nos omnes et regentes et rectos reos esse. Nota sunt nobis multa quae haec effecit, inter quae arma perniciose lege firmata circumscripta vidimus, quaeque efficaciter humaniter hostilibus et humanitus et divinitus proiectis opposuit – terroris dico viribus ac morbi nuper evagati. Et alia ab ea res gestas suas scribente edicta vel indicata vidimus, ut spes habere oporteat eos qui ad meliora pro republica munienda operam dare velint.

Praesento igitur duces nationis auctoritate etiam latiore praeditam, quae dicitur consuetudinem ibi in republica infirmasse ubi viri praepotentes florescere solebant, Hyacintham Katerinam Laurellam Ardern, Ordinis Insigniter Meritorum Novae Zeelandiae Dominam Commendatricem, olim Primam Ministrum Novae Zeelandiae, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili.

Paraphrase

‘It is good to reflect and learn from the past but true understanding and wisdom will also come from looking into the future.’¹

We surely have much to learn from a democratic country that rejoices in being considered by many the best in the world for raising children – and thereby raising its hopes for the future. Here, to lead our honoured line of guests, is a remarkable former leader of that country, in her time the youngest of the world’s female heads of government, and now an admirable blend of sustained youthfulness and long political experience, one who proudly describes herself as a social democrat and a progressive, one who shows that there is indeed plenty left ‘in the tank’, if I may borrow and reinvigorate her own dynamic metaphor. In her Harvard Commencement (= Encaenia) speech 4 years ago she movingly stressed the fragility of democracy, not excepting that of New Zealand; its endurance depends above all on a sufficient level of well-grounded trust in institutions, experts and government, a trust which can be quickly destroyed; to preserve such trust is a responsibility of both governors and the governed. Many of our honorand’s own achievements are well known to us, for example in tightening the law that restricts access to firearms, and in her effective and humane responses to the man-made catastrophe of terrorism and the natural disaster of the 2020 pandemic. Others, to be detected in and between the lines of her recent autobiography, should encourage optimism in those who aspire to help ensure a healthy future for our body politic.

I present a national leader of more than national influence, a woman who, as has been said, has broken the mould in a world where the political strongman is on the rise, Dame Jacinda Kate Laurell Ardern, GNZM, formerly Prime Minister of New Zealand, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Admission by the Chancellor

Ut quae digne ac studiose nationis tuae personam referas modumque novum suadeas auctoritatis, te ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto ad gradum Doctoris in Iure Civili honoris causa.

Worthy and devoted representative of your nation, advocate of a new kind of power, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

¹ Māori proverb

Degree of Doctor of Letters

PROFESSOR DARON ACEMOĞLU

Post duos menses, Honoratissime, ex libro novo cognoverimus quidnam reipublicae ‘liberali’, ut vocatur, acciderit. Quod proderit. Ecce auctor, filius iurisconsulti et matris poetae, qui ea definivit propter quae civitates deficerent, explicavit unde orirentur dominatus, exposuit qualia prospera, qualia adversa e machinis nuper inventis partis haurienda essent. Docet idem quamobrem alibi apud nos copia, alibi inopia perstet, etsi situs locorum, tempora, facultates communes haud multum inter se distent. Investigator insigniter cum aliis se consociat; audimus eum mente mire alacri et alta, studiosa praeditum esse. Iam adolescens rerum novarum eventus subinde observavit. Libertate repressa, milites ad portas scholae collocatos conspicatus considerare coepit quemadmodum res publicae cum condicionibus civium suorum et aliorum coniunctae essent. Alumnus cum Eboracensis tum Londiniensis instituta late diffusa, et quae haec efficiunt, recentius scrutatus est – suffragia dico et leges observatas vel observandas, necnon iura publica quibus populus eruditur et optimates ratione recta ab intemperantia avertuntur; ita enim nationes et civitates constanter florere. Inde ad eam sollertiam machinatum incubuit; quoniam hanc nos ducere, quo ducturam? Atenim iam antehac exitia lucra effecisse; ita enim multa in nova mutata esse, ut officinae tabernae, fabros machinae summovent. Sed mores nostros ac principia ‘liberalia’ ideo magis et magis everti quod, velut cuneo quodam, ei qui ex copia nova proficerent ab eis dividerentur qui derelicti languerent. Quae disserit, haec a collegis ordinum diversorum disputabuntur; aperte tamen effecit ut talia disputanda praestent, ut locum firmum apud eos in academia retineant.

Praesento virum doctum, doctorem impigrum, qui in multa ac varia inquit ut res nostrae in meliora mutari possint, Daron Acemoğlu, apud Massachusettense Institutum Technologiae Professorem, Academiae Britannicae socium, praemio Nobeliano nobilitatum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

In August, my Lord Chancellor, a new book will helpfully tell us ‘What Happened to Liberal Democracy’. Here is its author, creative offspring of a lawyer and a poet, one who has defined the conditions under which states fail, explained how dictatorships come about, what are the blessings and what the dangers of innovations in new technology and production, and why some countries are rich and others poor even given comparable circumstances of geography, climate and ‘capital’. A notably collaborative researcher, he is distinguished, we hear, by a remarkable combination of ‘speed of thought with depth of knowledge and breadth of interest’. As a teenager he witnessed the immediate aftermath of a *coup*,¹ freedom suppressed and soldiers even at the school gates, and began to think of connections between the politics and the social conditions of his own and other countries. Alumnus of York and London, in America his investigations have ranged widely over the effects of ‘institutions’ – voting rights, rule of law, opportunities in education, and reasonable constraints on élites – on the stability and prosperity of states and societies. Turning his attention to the present and future role of artificial intelligence in our lives, he reminds us of previous ‘creative destructions’, those innovative changes through which factories replaced workshops and machines artisans; but the liberal ideal, he adds, is increasingly undermined as a wedge is driven between those more and those less able to share the advantages of new resources. Economists and historians will debate the strength of his arguments; it is his achievement to have set the subject for such debate, indeed to have established it securely within his discipline.

I present a vigorous scholar and communicator whose wide interests are signally directed at changing lives for the better, Daron Acemoğlu, Professor at MIT, Fellow of the British Academy, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Scientiae et investigationis magister gravissime, qui nobis subvenis ut infirmitatem reipublicae nostrae examinatum intellegamus, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Eminent master of theory and investigation, who help us to probe and understand our political fragilities, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

¹ The 1980 Turkish coup d’état

CARLOS ACOSTA

Adstat Yuli, lumen Cubanum, primis annis heros invitus, paulo post ubique per orbem plurimi habitus. Puer saltator acrobaticus ita apud vicinos gloriam adeptus primos gradus ad artem fecit in qua excelleret. Ei pater providentia atque perspicacitate acri imbutus saltationis disciplinam praecepit, qua perversitati iuvenili repugnaretur. Vexatus quidem hic in ludum saltatorium non sine gloria admissus ibi valde renixus primum obstitit; sed de improvviso olim se revera vocatum agnovit postquam cum sodalibus ad ballatores primos Cubae spectandos invitatus est. Inter quos Albertum Terrera miratus conspexit; qui trans scaenam saliens transcendit, in aere aliquamdiu suspensus mansit, ictum ridens tenuit musicae velut caelestis. Quo viso hic obstupuit, sortem suam tandem conspexit. Praemia et decora amplissima consecutus modo in patria sua modo deinde ubique per terras celebratus est; eos annos revocamus per quos egregie inter ballatores nostrae nationis etiamque ‘regales’ se praebuit, necnon quae recentius rector, monitor, magister effecit. Genere novo, arguto incensus, ex variis fontibus instinctus, quaedam e patria sua tracta cum traditis et modernis mire variatis coniunxit; sed vires eius ingentes semper insigniter ad alta motuum animi et fabulae praestanda subveniunt. Per cursum arduum strenue contendere coactus, saepe sibi solus visus, procul a patria, ab origine suo abductus est. Nunc tamen ipsius catervae Cubanae eum per viam unam saltem domum direxerunt, nobis semper eum colentibus. Et quamvis cum prima duce sua magna hoc consentiat, per hanc artem verbum ipsum perspicui, iam auctorem, narratorem, scriptorem hunc honorandum salutamus.

Praesento ballatorem maximum decoris unici, apud quem splendor artis et candor affectuum adeo enitent ut ubique spectatores admirentur, Carolum Yuniorem Acosta Quesada, Excellentissimi Ordinis Imperii Britannici Commendatorem, Ballatorum Regionum Birminghamiensium Rectorem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

Here stands Yuli, a Cuban prodigy, in his earliest years a reluctant hero but shortly thereafter an international treasure. As a child he was a neighbourhood break-dancing champion; such were his first steps towards the art in which he came to excel. His father, with forceful but prophetic insight, prescribed dance training as an antidote to youthful waywardness. To his discomfort his audition for ballet school was a triumph; after much resistance and recalcitrance his true moment of vocation came unexpectedly, when his teachers organised a visit to watch the Cuban National Ballet. Astonished by the dancer Alberto Terrera leaping across the stage, then ‘suspended in the air for a full minute and... smiling as he kept time with the heavenly music,’¹ he glimpsed his own future. Distinctions followed rapidly, with successes first in Cuba and soon after in countries throughout the world; we recall his glorious years with our own National and Royal Ballets, and since then his work as director, guide and teacher. His style is vibrant, innovative, eclectic in fusing influences from his Cuban background and a richly varied classical and contemporary repertoire, the immense physical power of his art placed at the service of unforgettable emotional and dramatic depth. His path has been arduous, the competition fiercely demanding and often isolating, and has taken him far from his origins, but now his own Cuban dance companies have given him at least one ‘way home’, while we too remain his devotees. And though he may perhaps agree with his great former mentor that ‘dance is the essence of the word’,² we salute our honorand also as writer, storyteller and novelist.

I present a dancer of unique stature, whose brilliance of technique and beauty of expression have inspired audiences far and wide, Carlos Yuniore Acosta Quesada, CBE, Director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Terpsichores heres dignissime, fortis Havanae / Scenarumque heros terrarum magne per orbem, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Terpsichore’s noble heir, worthy hero of Havana and of stages throughout the world, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

¹ See his autobiographical *No Way Home* (HarperPress, 2019), p83

² A favourite saying of the prima ballerina assoluta Alicia Alonso (d. 2019), founder and director of the Cuban National Ballet

ADJOA ANDOH

Nunc histrionum majestatem produco, cuius forma insigni et voce canora notata est domina illa novissima, inter regales inauditissima, Agatha Danbury. Et meritissime ascendit haec filia firma atque aperta mente praedita, quae parentes suos libenter meminit eo tempore praeter modum sui iuris fuisse ubi populi benignitas scilicet rarius videbatur. Ex virtutibus suis patriciis, ut ita dicam, quasdam matrem suam habitu bene confidentem tradidisse opinata est, quae olim magistra ingeniosa semet ipsam animis adversis opposuisset. Pater autem, cum in patria sua Gana diurnorum narrator pro aequitate atque integritate propugnasset, huc inde fugere coactus sine mora conversus tabulis curandis incubuit. Et ipsa ingenio dotata, adulescens tamen turbulenti quiddam passa, remedio in musica etiam procellosiore reperto – hanc enim ante omnia salutare sibi cordi fuisse, a permultis cultam qui a communi vita semoti libere pro se agere conarentur – non in scholam se vocari cognovit sed in scaenam. Ibi discipula feminas animosas invenit generibus diversis natas, artibus theatri et litterarum eximie praestantes. Ut in gregem Londiniensem admitteretur verba ex libro Thompsoniano de ordine populi plebeio scripto electa recitavit; itidem una cum hac caterva mulierum impigrarum deditarumque hic illic sodalitates, tabernas, ludos visitavit, in scaena agens cantans delectavit. Extemplo permultos partibus praeclare agendis commovebat, ut iam plane prosperis frueretur rebus. Illas longum erat enumerare, sed eas praesertim respicimus quibus non modo facultas eius memorabilis apparet sed etiam sententiae ac verba fabulae aperta ac firma patent. Ut docet, non gloriae causa haec agenda sunt, sed ut ipsam narrandi artem laetanti animo foveres. ‘Et hoc memento, forsitan inter spectatores quemquam adesse quem te solum penes est servare.’

Hanc igitur praesento rerum theatralium peritissimam, quae tamen insuper arte exercenda facultatem suam et gratiam egregiam ad meliora, humaniora efficienda adhibet, Adjoa Aiboom Helenam Andoh, Excellentissimo Ordini Imperii Britannici adscriptam, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

I now introduce ‘acting royalty’, an imposing figure and melodious voice that have characterised that freshest, most original of royalty, Lady Danbury. She has richly earned her mobility, that of the forthright and determined daughter of parents she happily recalls were ‘fabulously independent’ at times when social attitudes were less than fully accommodating. She attributes some of her own aristocratic talent to the stylish ‘swagger’ of her English mother, a gifted teacher who took her own stand against intolerance. Her father, having fought as a journalist for fairness and openness in his native Ghana, fled to this country and quickly retrained as an accountant. Though herself academically talented, after some adolescent turbulence and the therapeutic antidote of punk rock (her saving joy, she says, as it was ‘full of people who didn’t quite fit in and were trying to do things in their own way’) she found her professional calling not so much at university but as a performer, discovering as a student the brilliance of highly motivated women actors and writers from diverse origins. Her audition piece for the London ‘Theatre Centre’ company was a passage taken from Thompson’s ‘The Making of the English Working Class’, and together with this politically active and dedicated women’s group she toured as actor and singer around numerous clubs and canteens and schools. Distinguished and moving roles followed, and crowned, her success. These are legion, but most memorable are those in which she convinces us not only of her extraordinary technical ability but also the conviction and power of the dramatic message and its text. Don’t do it, she tells her students, just to become famous; focus on the joy of storytelling, and ‘remember there may be someone in the audience who needs you to save their life.’

I present a consummate actor, but more than that one who uses her gift, her charisma, to combine art with a drive for a better world, Adjoa Aiboom Helen Andoh, MBE, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Ut Melpomenes atque Thaliae sic et proavorum tuorum proles, quae iamdiu spectatores acerrimos et latissime diffusos recte animavisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Offspring of the dramatic Muses and of your own forebears, you who have for long rightly inspired the broadest and keenest of audiences, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

PROFESSOR HENRY LOUIS GATES JR

Procedit Pedemontiensis Occidentis, stirpe subtiliter variata natus; rationem suam studiumque secutus descriptiones generum scrutatus est modo veras modo ineptas – illas ‘cistas nigras’ dico et veras et per translationem vocatas, quae observandae vel incolendae iampridem apud nos adstant ad genera humana respectanda deditos. Hunc videmus inter primores studiis Afroamericanis insistere. Quomodo homines inter se distent vel differant, hoc capiendum esse affirmat; quot homines atros, tot modos esse quibus ita esse possunt. Neque esse, neque unquam fuisse modum quendam solum quo ex cista effugeretur, quae revera ex ratione praeiudicata et malevola ficta orta esset. Investigator semper se ipso fretus, nunquam aurae vulgatae addictus, cognoscere firme constituit quibusnam momentis, sententiis, opinionibus civitas Americana condita fuisset et respublica evolvisset. Quare discrepari? Praecipue scilicet maioris ordines populi referre quam genera hominum. Alumnum honoramus Yalensem, Cantabrigiensem, nuntium, narratorem cinematographicum, auctorem, doctorem qui declarat se hoc voluisse, discipulos suos tueri ne talia timidi refugere cogerentur qualia fanaticis lacessentibus ipse olim cum aequalibus vi passus esset. Et scribendo et docendo copiose patefecit quam multa, ampla, varia, essent a civibus atris confecta inter opera litterarum, artium, musicae, scientiae civilis. Multa in lucem relata narrat quae nos valde commoveant: quam saepe hi cives celebres palam contionando se indignitati immodicae hominum descriptionis se opposuerint, seque ipsum olim arreptum esse quod ostium suum ipsius aperire conatus esset. Civium diversorum propinquitates, societates nil minus quam distantias commentatus est, qui itidem minas odiumque obire soliti sunt. Et libet audire haec studia apud Universitatem insignem ita foveri, argumento ac ratione sustineri, prope caput rerum doceri atque indagari posse.

Praesento doctrinae Afroamericanae ducem, opinionum praeiudicatarum ut in academia ita apud populum ultorem, Henricum Ludovicum Gates Iuniorem, apud Universitatem Harvardianam Professore, Academiae Britannicae socium, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris.

Paraphrase

Next in our line comes a Western Piedmontese of intricately mixed family roots, one who has sound personal as well as academic reasons to probe the realities and the absurdities of racial categorising – those ‘black boxes’, real and metaphorical, that have been there for the ticking and, worse, for the inhabiting – in our identity-obsessed modern world. In so doing he has been among the finest champions of African American studies. It is the differences, the nuances, that we must understand; there are, as he says, as many ways of being Black as there are Black People, and there is not, nor was there ever, one ‘right’ way of escaping from the box, itself a ‘malign construct’ originally created by racism. His scholarly work has consistently shown his essential underlying independence from fashionable orthodoxies and a determination to stress the true forces, attitudes and allegiances that have formed American society and effected political developments – prominently class, more than racial, differences. We honour an alumnus of Yale and Cambridge, broadcaster, filmmaker, writer and teacher whose declared aim is to spare his students the fears and anxieties that were imposed on his own generation by ideological ‘bullying’. His case studies, brought to light in numerous presentations and publications, reveal the scale and the rich variety of Black writing, art, music and political thought. He has rescued from obscurity many moving stories of eminent Black lives in American history, and publicly argued and fought against the outrage of racial profiling – he was once famously arrested for trying to open his own front door – and has studied the mutual relations, alliances and divisions of different communities facing threats and hostilities. We take heart that in a distinguished university such a field of study can be so fostered, securely grounded in evidence and brought to the centre of teaching and research.

I present a doyen of African America scholarship, scourge of prejudice in both society and academia, Henry Louis Gates Jr, Professor at Harvard University, Fellow of the British Academy, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Admission by the Chancellor

Historice laudande, censor morum populi, qui in veritate sequenda ad recta consilia et iudicia considerata nixus es, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Litteris honoris causa.

Worthy historian and social critic, who has striven for reason and balanced judgment in pursuing the truth, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.

Degree of Doctor of Science

PROFESSOR KATALIN KARIKÓ

Valetudinis discrimen ubique perlatum adhuc dolentes in memoria tenemus, unde multum dissentitur, acerbè angitur. Interea tamen et industriam hominum mirabilem recordamur, qua ad salutem nostram prosperam servandam indagatum, cogitatum est. Sed haec femina scientiae ipsius oblectamenta cognovit, quae magis incensa esse dicit cum, inquisitoris more, studio sedulo ad quaestiones petandas, aestimandas, solvendas contendatur. In ludo Ungarico vicino puella a magistris optimis animata est; quae eam perspectam affirmaverunt indagatricem fieri posse. Ut paulo post apud universitatem eniteret. Cum postea in Americam transvecta ibique cursum secuta saepe aliquando obnixa resistere cogeretur, tamen propter vicissitudines fortunae suas iunioribus consilia verissima dare sufficiebat: quae tibi in dicione tenes, illa quidem respice; neque aemulatio curanda neque certatio, neque aliis spei tuae malis obstantibus nimis vexandum. Haec una cum collega item laureato moleculam in utilitatem beneficam patefactam adhibuit quae natura omni cuique nostrum inest, prius tamen in usum nunquam verti potuerat; nam vires in corpore iam insitae contra eam repugnantes ad tumenda quaedam duxissent, culpa in ‘nuntium’ collata. Parte una mutata poterant eam bene arMARE NE infeste in cellulam intraret. Ita amice ingressa effectura erat ut *προτείνουσαι* obortae propugnacula nobis innata apte erudirent. Itaque corpus ipsum se exercet ut hoc genus artificiosum vaccini praesidis bene gerat. Inde quot et quanta beneficia evenire possint quis satis edicet? Quae tamen iam clare videntur, recte laudantur. Sed insuper vitam huius observa et quam eloquenter, quam venuste eam exposuerit; quocumque tendamus, verba eius nobis sine mora legenda censeo.

Praesento investigatricem assiduam, assidue firmam, Marathoniam peritam, quae plane nobis ostendit quemadmodum quoque consilio scientiae cursus tenendus sit et dirigendus, Katalin Karikó, praemio Nobeliano nobilitatam, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphrase

Memories of a world-wide health crisis are still fresh, still raw, still the source of much dispute and anguish. Yet they are memories also of great human endeavour, of the application of ideas and research to our protection and wellbeing. But this lady knows that science is also its own reward, fired by curiosity and honed by dogged determination to find, assess and solve problems, as does the detective. As a young schoolgirl in Hungary she was inspired by excellent teachers at her local primary school who saw, and told her, that she could be a scientist; consequently at university she distinguished herself. Her later move to America and her subsequent career tested her resolve at many points, but her varied fortunes have enabled her to give the best of advice to younger scientists: you should focus on what is within your control, unfazed by rivalry and competition or by professional disappointments determined by others. With her fellow laureate she harnessed the potential beneficence of a molecule that is an essential presence in every one of us, one that could not previously be used as a medicine because the immune system would reactively cause dangerous inflammation and blame the ‘messenger’; through the tweaking of one of the basic ingredients of this ‘mRNA’ they enabled its safe entry into cells, whereby it could instruct them to build the necessary proteins to train the immune system; it is the body itself that does the work in this ingenious type of vaccine prophylaxis. The therapeutic possibilities are immensely exciting, already evident, justly lauded. But let me draw your attention also to our honorand’s life story and the beauty and eloquence of her account of it, a ‘must read’ for scientists and non-scientists alike.¹

I present a tireless and tirelessly positive detective, a Marathonian veteran who shows how, and for what purposes, scientists may be, and stay, in the running, Katalin Karikó, 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

Decus almae matris tuae Segedinensis, inter doctores insignissima, quae moleculam nuntiam in usum salubrem, salutarem promovisti, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Pride of your distinguished alma mater Szeged, and most renowned instructor, who have stewarded the molecule into action along with its salutary and healing message, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

¹ Katalin Karikó, *Breaking Through: My Life in Science* (London, Vintage, 2025)

BILLIE JEAN KING

*O carissime, quae cupis cernis omnia apud me.
Nonne quae petis hic vides, scis me talia habere?
Tu me respicias velim regressus, modo paullum,
Paullulum studeas mihi, paullulum mihi cedas.*

Accidit aliquando – saepe nimium rariusne haud ego sciam – ut in ludis quicquam ponderis maioris quam ipse lusus inesse videatur. Nonne tamen fortasse omnia et in corpore et in mente apud nos saniora fieri possint si in harena vel in campo vel in palaestra dissensiones nationum discordiasque experti resolvamus? Ubi haec competitrix fortissima abhinc amplius XL annos ‘proelium sexuum’ iniit, multum vero in discrimine erat. Adversarius eius palam censuerat feminas nusquam decere in campo teniludi videri. Ipsa autem initio quodam suo simul facto extemplo repulso quam certissime intellexit nil aliud faciendum quam ut vinceret. Quod visum ita effectum; iste opinione ita clare revicta rete superavit, haec verba edixit: ‘perperam te minoris feci!’ Et quod haec coniecit revocemus: ut adversantes semper observentur, ne unquam minoris aestimentur. Quid? Satisne hoc praeceptum perpendimus? Quam hodie honoramus, ea ad hoc impertiendum institit. Victoria illa admodum memorabili parta gradatim orta sunt permulta qualia ludum ipsum exsuperarent; suadere enim incepit ut deliberaretur quaenam mererent feminae, ut iuribus aequis non modo mulieres sed alii etiam prius tenuiter aestimati fruerentur, sive eruditionem vel quaestum laboris peterent sive apud populum observantiam. Hic igitur in urbe a ludo campestri ‘tenesia’ nullo modo aliena – quod posthac dilatabo –

praesento teneludi verum sidus, iustitiae communis tutricem, Billie Jean King, Libertatis Nomismate inter multa alia praemia decoratam, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphrase

*What you want, baby, I got it
What you need, do you know I got it?
All I'm askin' is for a little respect when you come home
(Just a little bit) Hey, baby
(Just a little bit) When you get home
(Just a little bit) Mister
(Just a little bit)¹*

Sometimes – some will say too often, some too rarely – sport apparently means more than the game itself. But conversely we may feel that the world would be healthier in mind and body if ideological and political tensions could be played out and settled in arena, playing field or court. When the formidable competitrix who stands beside me entered the ‘Battle of the Sexes’ fray in 1973 there was much at stake; her opponent was vocally of the opinion that women had no place on the tennis court; she herself realised as clearly as anyone, after her serve was broken in the first set, that she simply had to win. Win she did; her antagonist, his prejudice clearly confounded, jumped the net, saying ‘I underestimated you.’ Let us recall her own conclusion: ‘Always respect your opponent, and never ever underestimate anyone in your life.’ I do not know that we have fully learnt the lesson, but today we honour one who has done much to teach it. Her victory in that memorable match is seen by many as the start of a process that transcends tennis itself, a career and advocacy in which she ‘got people thinking about what women deserved,’² and advanced equal rights not only for women in athletics but for minorities in education, workplace and society. Here, in a city that has its place in tennis history (I’ll explain later!),

I present a star of the game and defender of social justice, Billie Jean King, winner of the American Presidential Medal of Freedom,³ to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Ludorum lumen egregium, bellatrix pro aequitate et observantia mutua audax, qua visa per lustra spectatores innumerabiles capti obstipuerunt, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Outstanding luminary of sport, bold fighter for fairness and respect, who over many years have captured and held the attention of millions, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

¹ Aretha Franklin’s version of the song, the first of our honorand’s 2018 ‘Desert Island Discs’

² Words of Tracy Austin, former Women’s Tennis Association world No.1

³ Awarded by Barack Obama in 2009

PROFESSOR SHUJI NAKAMURA

Fiat lux!

Ecce et lucem ex oriente impertitam decet laudare, si nunc contra morem fas est illam regionem ita vocare. Virumque hunc accipimus qui ab ortu et suo et nostro ad occasum iter confecit, Barbaropolim dico ab urbibus Ikata et Tokushima. Tum consensui communi et negotii curatorum consiliis ita fortiter obstitit ut nobis universis lucem novam insolitamque promissam machinari posset. Cuius genus album iam stabili Determinatum erat inter maxima remedia contra sordida terrarum conductum iri, sed iamdudum colores viridis et ruber soli confici poterant. Ad album lumen creandum coloribus commixtis opus est, inter quos caeruleus maxime necessarius videtur. Hic, quamvis palam identidem et tempus et opes officinae nequiquam consumpsisse diceretur, nihilominus occulte perseverabat ut diodum caeruleam pareret. Itaque modum tandem invenit quo nitridum gallii – quod nemo prius crediderat in usum talem verti posse – ad colorem diu appetitum creandum adhiberetur. Collegas discipulosque sic monet: 'Etsi stultus vocaris, nil cedendum!' Pertinacia, patientia, animo forti paratus materiem collatam accommodavit, rationemque operandi perfecit; cum tandem res prospere, immo luculente processissent, sibi usque ad cacumen montis Fuji ascendisse visus est. Quod lumen candidum ex ingenio firmo huius fabricatum est, id cottidie nunc ubique fere sentimus; et propter hanc rerum novitatem aliquid ad mundum aliquanto salubriorem per orbem putamus afferri posse, necnon ad vitam hominum, ut putamus, innumerabilium aequiorem, clariorem. Sed et alia hic nobis adhuc investigans offert, quibus angustiis et minis quibusdam etiam saevissime vitae ipsi imminentibus obviam eamus, quantumvis adhuc durae et indomitae esse videantur.

Praesento indagatorem, inventorem luciferum, ubi dubitatur castigatorem, Shuji Nakamura, apud Universitatem Californiensem Barbarapolitanam Professore, praemio Nobeliano nobilitatum, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphrase

יהי אור

If we may defy fashion and still call our East the Orient, then we may also so praise the light that comes therefrom. And now we welcome also a man who himself made the journey from his origin in our East to our West, from Ikata and Tokushima to Santa Barbara, having brought all of the world the promise and the reality of new light by defying both scientific consensus and the bidding of 'corporate management'. White LED lighting, it was known, could prove to be among the greatest antidotes to the pollution of our planet, but for long the only colours achieved were green and red. White light is achieved by blending colours, and blue is an essential member of the mix. Our honorand, though repeatedly told that he was wasting time and resources, worked on in secret to develop the blue-light diode, and found the technical means to use gallium nitride, previously considered an impossible medium in such a project, in generating the longed-for colour. 'Don't give up, even when others call you a fool,' he advises researchers and students. Knowing the value of persistence, patience and a fighting spirit, he assembled and modified his own materials and a new technical system, whose eventual dazzling success led him to feel he had 'reached the top of Mount Fuji'. The artificial white light that came from his ingenuity and determination is all around us in our everyday lives, a lighting revolution that may significantly contribute to a cleaner environment across the globe, and in all likelihood to a fairer and brighter life for many millions. But his further investigations give us hope of yet more inventions to solve hitherto intractable problems we face in averting some of the greatest threats to our survival.

I present a trailblazer engineering scientist, scourge of doubting detractors, Shuji Nakamura, Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Taedifer Phoebi, qui animo fido atque alacri nobis viam in clariora, saniora ducentem illustras, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Phoebus's acolyte, whose deft and steadfast mind has for all of us lit the way to a brighter and safer future, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

DAME EMMA WALMSLEY

Agmen dux curatrix claudit, negotii peritissima super omnia salutem, ut libeat credere, conservantis. Dominam alumnam Aedis Christi induco, quae et affirmata et commoda, postquam per annos trans medicamina ultra ornata intendit, in campis ambiguis excelluit medicinae et machinarum admodum recentium. Unde intellegimus quanta in alta ei conduci possint qui apud nos studiis antiquitatum incumbant, dummodo ingenio prompto sint praediti – quod omni inclinatione seposita censeo. In conciliis audimus eam exordientem mente ita mire acuta de rebus percontari ut pernoscendi avida appareat, ratioque congressus omnino novata videatur. Conclave quoddam colloquii Lutetiense ‘certationis sedem’ apte vocari opinatur; ibi se solitam fuisse alacriter deliberare, sine acerbitate dissensiones incitare, saepe disputando mature ‘ante mortem’ providere quatenus infauste evenire possent. Quod caveo, haec vitia scilicet latinitatis sicut investigationum negotique percipit ubi in salute administranda plerumque deficere dicit. Adhuc tantum abest ut iniquitates molestas etiam apud nos, ut alienas omittam, submoveamus, sed intelligentia, ut vocatur, confecta cum ingenio humaniore coniuncta spes ostenditur nobis morbos multo melius explorare, aegrotantes mirum in modum curare datum iri. Interea vaccinis excultis multo facilius erit remedia adipiscenda praebere. Quibus haec praeposita est, inter clarissima nomen insigne sibi impetraverunt quod effecissent ut populi egentiores medicinas maxime requisitas accipere possent; et hoc maximi momenti est eritque, quod tali exploratione novanda ita bene gesserunt. Ideoque praesertim haec laudatur, quod satis saepe se officio curationis functa dure obstantibus obviam iit demumque superavit, quod animo fidenti parata fuit consilia consociare, ante omnia denique successioni facili et explicatae intuita consuluit.

Praesento ducem mentis integrae, in rebus excogitandis exsequendisque impigram, quae ut decrevit ita ea agit qualia apud nos omnes pondus gravissimum habent, Emmam Natasha Walmsley, Excellentissimi Ordinis Britannici Dominam Commendatricem, ut admittatur honoris causa ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia.

Paraphrase

Here to form our rearguard is a veteran executive of what we would wish to be a protective industry *par excellence*. I introduce a Christ Church Lady, a leader widely known as both steely and personable, whose career over many years adorned and transcended the cosmetic, distinguished her in the uncertain arena of pharmaceutical and technological industries, and shows what heights an Oxford classical education – I here cast aside all partiality – may promise a gifted and resourceful graduate. In board meetings, we hear, she starts proceedings with impressively insightful questions that attest her innate curiosity and ‘change the dynamic in the room’. In Paris a boardroom was – aptly, she believes – called the ‘*salle de confrontation*’; there she was accustomed to thinking on her feet, encouraging positive disagreement, and managing what, Latin notwithstanding, she calls ‘pre-mortem’ discussions on what can go wrong. I am on my guard; she has an eye for shortcomings, no doubt as much in Latin grammar as in scientific research and business, where she observes that in the field of healthcare ‘90% doesn’t work’. We are still far from conquering problems of inequity even within our own country, let alone across the world, but artificial intelligence combined with critical human insight gives the prospect of wondrous advances in diagnosis and treatment. Meanwhile the development of vaccines allows greatly increased access to preventive medicines; our honoree’s company has ranked among the highest in making crucially important medicines available in lower-income countries, and innovation in diagnostic methods is, and will continue to be, key to its success. It is, I think, particularly for her performance of the role of leader that our final guest is praised, experienced in facing, and finally winning over, harsh opposition, bold in initiating collaboration, and perhaps above all mindful of the importance of smooth succession.

I present a leader of firm principle, imagination and energy, who stands on her convictions in a field of unparalleled importance to all of us, Emma Natasha Walmsley, DBE, to be admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Admission by the Chancellor

Novandi atque efficiendi fons et clara vox, cuius ardor animi negotique collegis et adiutoribus exemplo fuit, ego auctoritate mea et totius Universitatis admitto te ad gradum Doctoris in Scientia honoris causa.

Source and voice of innovation and efficiency, whose own zest for life and business has been an example to your colleagues and employees, I on my own authority and that of the whole University admit you to the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

2 Encaenia

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

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

Chancellor: *Licet.*

Orator: A colleague once told me that my English often sounds like a translation from Latin. Was this praise or censure? In the hands of ancient orators, language was disciplined and precise. But our former student of ‘speech acts’, the Oxford philosopher (and Classicist, I might add) J.L. Austin, in his pathbreaking work *How to Do Things with Words*, suggested that ‘in ordinary life, a certain laxness is permitted; otherwise, no university business would ever get done.’

On this joyful day it seems rather party-spoiling to cite a recent article in *The Economist* reporting, as is now customary, that the ‘Anglosphere’ is increasingly miserable. This year 2 senior historians, one each of Oxford and our friendly competitor Cambridge, have published door-stopping studies of national decline. *The Land Where Nothing Works* is the Cambridge title, and Sir Brian Harrison’s Oxford one is the somewhat more sober *Yesterday: The United Kingdom from Thatcher to Covid*. Read them both – put aside the necessary time – while holding on to your seats as you follow the precipitous downward path. But then comfort yourselves with a droll, but I hope persuasive, Oxford reviewer in *The Times*, who argues that for all its thorough scholarship the case has been just a little overstated. After all in the end, he says, we Brits are comfortably able to ‘shrug off’ a constitutional crisis ‘with the insouciance of a country too accustomed to muddle through to panic properly’.

Are we, as one of our numerous national leaders warned not so long ago, in danger of accepting a ‘tepid bath of managed decline’? Well, says my reviewer colleague, there are ‘worse places to soak’. Yes, services are ever more costly and inefficient, student fees ever more oppressive, the weather ever more British – or should I say now unBritish? – but there are some positives too. The President of France has commented that the United Kingdom ‘pull factor’ for migrants over the English Channel is what he calls, with Gallic delicacy of expression, our ‘informal economy’. He did not mention the many other allurements, nor, among possible ‘push factors’, the migrants’ experience of the formal economy of France.

It remains the case that plenty of people have respectable and defensible reasons – push and pull – for wanting to come here. Certainly in Oxford we welcome our gifted newcomers and refugees from across the seas

and oceans, including the Atlantic. Bring ‘em on. They enrich our learning, our culture, our lifeblood. As for the Atlantic, in this their 250th year of freedom we rejoice with those of our friends who are divided from us by a common language; now is the time to say: divided we stand. The truly critical study of migration, I must add, is a subject which our ‘establishment’ clearly respects; our own specialist expert, a recently appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor, has been elected this year as a Fellow of the British Academy.

So here in the University, how is life and business? Well, it gets done to some extent. This year we sadly say farewell to 3 Heads of House, namely Sir Nigel Shadbolt of Jesus, John Bowers of Brasenose, and Miles Young of New College. But we feel no urgent call to change our leaders. We have had you, Sir, as our Chancellor for over a year now and the same Vice-Chancellor – from this year an Oxford Honorary Doctor to add to her other distinctions – for all of 3 and more, and both happily seem up for a few more. Now there’s stability for you.

A possible future government of this still often green and pleasant land will be promising ‘delivery’. In default of the ‘delivery’ of results, the latest promise is of the ‘delivery of ideas’, if I heard correctly the other night on the BBC. Well, I’d say that here in the University the delivery of ideas is our enduring legitimate business, and especially those ideas that are built upon results, and on the immense contributions made by such as today’s honorands as well as our own colleagues and forerunners.

Taking the even longer view, Harris Manchester is now in its 30th year as a constituent college. Next month it will be 100 years since work started on building Rhodes House, on land purchased from Wadham College, and in that same year 4 of the 5 then women’s colleges, now happily mixed – St Hilda’s, Lady Margaret Hall, Somerville and St Hugh’s – received their royal charters to become autonomous entities with corporate status.

And for continuity over many centuries we celebrate with Oriel College its 700th year, each generation having, as the Provost says, protected and nurtured it with ‘careful and diligent custodianship’. Note also his next words, which all of our colleges will wish to echo: ‘It is now up to [the] Governing Body to ensure the future of not just our heritage but the education we offer and the spirit of free inquiry that underpins the whole academic enterprise.’

In the nearly 60 years since I first came to Oxford, I have seen several new colleges confirmed as constituents of the University, some started from scratch, and each with its own distinctive culture. Unusual among these is Kellogg, founded, in the words of its late Fellow the

theologian Vincent Strudwick, by its first president Geoffrey Thomas on a ‘counter-cultural’ programme, namely to support students wishing to study on a flexible, part-time basis. While the college now also houses a truly ‘pluralist fellowship’ of full-timers which, again in Strudwick’s words, brings together people with opposing and certainly diverse political, cultural, secular and religious, and gender backgrounds, the mission of high-level continuing education and life-long learning remains, and flourishes.

Coming to University departments and research teams, the Union Bank of Switzerland has supported the launch of our Centre for Applied Artificial Intelligence, an interdisciplinary partnership between UBS, our Business School and our Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) Division. And the Erol Foundation, founded in 2011 by Julie Lepinard, with a mission, in her words, to ‘support effective organisations and courageous leaders with the potential to move our world to a more sustainable, just and prosperous future’ is backing the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford Saïd, and more specifically research and practical outputs that help social impact organisations, funders, investors and capital owners better understand how to create and scale systemic change.

Our Medical Sciences Division has been much favoured by donations from 3 institutions represented here today. The Fondation Docteur Sadok Besrouer has enabled us to establish a Centre for Global Primary Care and a professorship in this subject, as well as supporting collaboration between Oxford-based researchers and primary care leaders in Tunisia. The Paul Foundation has followed its 2025 gift for the new Oxford Centre for Emerging Minds Research in the Department of Experimental Psychology with continuing funding for the investigation of how to promote good mental health among children and adolescents, including the development of new therapeutic methods. And also this year the Bukhman Foundation and Bukhman Philanthropies have made a significant donation which will result in the establishment of a Centre for Research in Type 1 Diabetes as well as furthering research in young people’s psychological welfare.

In accordance with the brief left us by Nathaniel Crewe, my overriding purpose at this point of our ceremony is to mark these and other subventions with the deepest gratitude, and to record the University’s sincere intention that such philanthropy will be both remembered and put to the best possible use.

Much of this research will sit well both with our medical faculty and with the splendid new home of our Departments of Biology and Experimental Psychology, namely the Life and Mind building in South Parks Road, which I urge you to visit at the first opportunity. Many of us will be equally proud of our now complete and

fully, indeed at times somewhat excessively, inhabited Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, formally opened in an inaugural ceremony just a few weeks ago, the fruit of a momentous gift which I was able to announce in 2019. Have we set a new record (a new British record, that is) in the efficiency and speed of realising a plan and erecting a fine and monumental building? I have myself enjoyed some of the advantages of the centre’s library, exhibition, performance and communal spaces, particularly during the vacation. And now its excellent 500-seat auditorium has been named the Sohmen Concert Hall in recognition of gifts from Andreas Sohmen-Pao and Philip Sohmen in support of students, music-making and the humanities.

Keeping up research and teaching, we find ourselves dealing with both old and enduring questions (‘old chestnuts’) and new and original lines of inquiry. Promising and impressive results and prospects – I believe ‘pioneering’ is the word – are seen in our vaccines research, our robotics and many other sciences. I am told that some years ago, when there was still some doubt over the matter, and some scientist colleagues had debated the question ‘Is Venus Hot’, my predecessor of the time pointed out that this was in fact a question first asked by Zeus. Conversely philosophy, though it has been famously suggested it is essentially a series of footnotes to Plato, surely our philosophers can justifiably claim to be grappling with very new conundrums created by the rising hegemonies of information technology and artificial intelligence. The growth of AI both excites and cautions us as we come to engage more and more with its allurements, its temptations, its startling benefits and dangers. Here we find opportunities for collaboration of ethics and mathematics, business management and financial planning strategy.

These days we and our students are getting interested in humanoid analogues. Perhaps especially in the humanities we muse ever more urgently on what exactly is ‘human’. So I asked my new friend Claude, ‘Do you consider yourself a person?’ and the answer came: ‘I would love to answer this. Please upgrade to Pro to access premium AI models, image generation, file analysis, and much more.’ This seemed to me to show very human entrepreneurship. Being thrifty by nature, I returned to my older friend Gemini with the same question. His/her/its/their answer appealed to me a little more: ‘No, but I am always here to help you out with whatever you’re working on.’ I then enjoyed a refresher session on the pronunciation of a Māori proverb, but I must acknowledge that my first excellent teacher (a year ago) was the Head of the Blavatnik School.

The recent Schwarzman Centre exhibition of work representing possible candidates for our Vice-Chancellor’s Awards was full of evidence of the University’s engagement with challenges and problems in the wider world. Do look these widely varied

projects up, especially if you are having to face those now common accusations that university is a waste of time and money and you need to be persuaded of the shameful folly of that charge.

Our MPLS Division rejoices in scholarship and other funding from G-Research, a leading technology firm that hires and supports talented researchers with expertise in machine learning, big data and emerging technology to predict movements in financial markets. And also with us today are representatives of the estate of the late Mr Hamish Orr-Ewing and the late Mrs Ann Orr-Ewing, earlier already benefactors to our Ashmolean Museum and Botanic Garden, who have left bequests to set up in their name a fund to support postgraduate research in engineering science.

There is much to say about both of these generous friends. Hamish had a passion for engineering, and Ann enjoyed, if I have chosen the right word, a glittering career at MI5. They both exercised blood-related metaphors. Hamish was fond of saying he had gasoline in his bloodstream, having worked for Ford, Jaguar and other such companies, while Ann turned, after retirement, to the rearing of Charolais cattle, whose good temperament and magnificent form she praised, commenting that the reason they did not smell was that they were kept properly, and that ‘anyway, they’re blue-blooded cows.’ Here is a munificent, aristocratic donation to our ever more diverse and inclusive University, one over which we may do better than the Emperor Vespasian and his urine tax – remember this? – and say in a comprehensive sense *non olet*.

And hurray for ecumenism. In memory of the late inimitable and lovable Archimandrite and Metropolitan bishop known to many as Kallistos Ware, the Honourable Michael Huffington has endowed a chair in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, a professorship that will play a central role in expanding our research and teaching in this tradition and help to build on dialogue and on shared understanding of Orthodoxy.

We work and play. For some, Oxford sport is defined by the boat race, in which this year our women’s crew was victorious and our men’s, in what has become a recognisable pattern, gentlemanly runners up. I did not take part this year – I mean, by standing on the bank in a boater – but I did hear lusty cheering in the distance, responding, I think, to coverage by one of the rising competitors to the BBC, who seem unaccountably to have lost interest in what they clearly dismiss as arcane parochialism.

To others, looking at college quadrangles on those sunny days we had towards the end of term, it seemed to be croquet that exercises the minds of our young. A teaching colleague asked me not so long ago whether I had noticed that youngsters are these days more and

more prone to hugging each other at every opportunity, and whether I could think of a reason for this. He could not accept my explanation, but perhaps you can, that it had something to do with global warming. But by contrast croquet is a brutal game that brings out, even in the noblest of us, bestial instincts and seems immune to the values of kindness we now try to foster in our daily lives.

I suppose it has long been so. Call to mind the culture of a croquet game envisioned by a small girl as retold by a famous Christ Church mathematician. Of only 22 known surviving copies of the first, subsequently withdrawn, 1865 edition of *Alice’s Adventures*, the most important for book historians is one which contains the author’s handwritten annotations and 10 original drawings of famous images by its illustrator John Tenniel. This gem, now known as the ‘Michelson Alice’, has been donated to the Bodleian and Christ Church by the distinguished collector, bibliophile and arts funder Ellen A. Michelson, and you may see it on display at the Bodleian for the next few months. Several institutions were invited to make a case for receiving the gift, and were assessed on factors including how significant the work would be for their collections, their capacity to house and preserve the text, its research value to the institution, and plans for public access and engagement. It is cheering to know that the Bodleian easily satisfied these criteria.

I cannot yet announce our Varsity tennis results. But I can surmise, and it seems apt to do so today of all days, that in All Souls College in the last quarter of the 19th century, and perhaps into at least the first of the 20th, you might have heard an enthusiastic ‘Anyone for tennis?’, or perhaps *Ecquis teniludet?* for in those halcyon days Latin was surely still *de rigueur*. Photographs from the year 1880 have come to light, most unlikely to have been generated by Gemini, or Claude, or any foreign power exercising a sense of humour. In them a tennis court is clearly marked out, net and all, on the lawn of the college’s North Quadrangle.

Further investigation has revealed evidence of Oxford’s pivotal importance in the history of lawn tennis, even in the history of what became the championship we are all about to follow. And if you are made of stern stuff you may read mathematician Dodgson’s rigorous criticisms of the tournament system, published in the 1880s and probably irreducible to summaries by any known artificial or human intelligence.

I did consult the Vatican on the Latin for ‘tennis’, having failed to find an older, Ciceronian or other pagan source. Did you know that Pope Leo XIV plays tennis religiously? Sources close to the Papacy tell me that he plays once a week as part of his Augustinian devotion. Nothing much better turned up than *teniludus* and *teniludium*, so I went for one or both of those and also, though with a heavier heart, *tenesia*, the word the French used when, in 1457

after landing at Sandwich and sacking the town, they treated themselves to a game – *ad tenesiam luserunt*. Of course that was Real Tennis, a game in which Oxford has sometimes distinguished itself, perhaps even against the French. An article in last Saturday's *Times*, incidentally, informs us on the basis of serious research that tennis is the best sport for those seeking longevity.

Returning to academia, it is my traditional pleasure to draw your attention to prize winners from each of our academic divisions, those whose exam results have been especially distinguished. Please clap your hands together, all of us for all of them as they stand for a moment, and they too applaud each other before returning to the competitive world of croquet.

This year 12 of our more senior scientists have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society in an unusually wide range of subjects, and Oxford has 8 new Fellows of the British Academy, in ancient history, economic policy, Chinese literary and visual culture, engineering, musicology, the study of religion, literature and, as I mentioned earlier, migration studies. Furthermore as you, my Lord Chancellor, well know, for you are yourself among them, we have several who have been honoured in the King's New Year and Birthday Honours Lists.

Sadly but thankfully on this occasion we also reflect on the countless intellectual and human gifts left us by those who are no longer with us. We remember, with gratitude, affection and admiration for their life and their work in our University, in our community, and often far beyond:

Sir Jeremy Lever, Fellow of All Souls, John Peach and Geoffrey Warner of Brasenose, the Revd Simon Bishop of Campion Hall, Donald Truman, Richard Benthall and William Thomas, Students of Christ Church, Paul Temporal and Alan Berman, Fellows of Green Templeton, Alastair Niven of Harris Manchester, Fellows of Hertford Robin Devenish and Jim Houston, Peter Clifford of Jesus College, Dame Averil Cameron, former Warden of Keble, Vincent Strudwick and Sir Tony Hoare of Kellogg, Margaret Matthews of Lady Margaret Hall, Linacre College's Christopher Garrard and Colin Newbury, Antony Hitchens, Stephen Ashcroft, Robert Campbell and Sue Iverson of Magdalen College, John Carey, Sir Anthony Leggett and Mark Everett of Merton College, Mike Stephens, Fellow and Bursar of Oriel College, Arthur Stockwin and Rosemary Thorp of St Antony's, Sir Peter Hirsch of St Edmund Hall, Margaret Lintern-Ball and Sally Harvey of St Hilda's, St John's Fellows Edward Davies, Oliver Jacobs, Sir Nicholas White and Jack Langton, from last year John O'Connor, Peter Armitage and Robert Twycross, and this year Billy Watson, Tony Hunt and Stephen Baxter of St Peter's, Lady Hazel Fox, Barbara Harvey, Dame Carol Jordan, Dale Dorsey and Frank Prochaska of Somerville, Sir Anthony Cleaver of Trinity College, Sir Christopher

White and Deborah Cameron of Worcester College, and the Revd Richard Turnbull, former Principal of Wycliffe Hall. *Requiescant in pace*.

'May they rest in peace.' Or, for those of us with uncertain knowledge of the afterlife, for whom it will be easier to think in terms of 'legacy' in praying for the departed, perhaps the best of all thoughts is a brief sentence such as you may see on many a Hebrew gravestone, – זכרונם לברכה – 'may their memory be a blessing to us'.

News is often hard to take, as the journalist Mishal Husain stressed in this year's Romanes lecture in this very theatre. Some have been tempted to see history repeating itself, and we have seen many analogies – you know, 'Thucydides Traps', supposedly familiar overtures to wars, 'sleepwalking' and so on – most of them rather imperfect parallels, drawn between the world's present precarious conditions and those of yesteryear. We'll remember Mark Twain's correction: history never repeats itself, but it often rhymes. Are these rhymes good or bad rhymes? Well, often a good rhyme is marked precisely by difference, by contrast and tension. Our Professor of Poetry has spoken illuminatingly about rhyme in poetry, and has fascinated us with her perception of its 'alchemy', the conversion of a word and a thought into something other, or greater, than its initial self. Listen to this and her other lectures online, and enjoy the resulting alchemy in your own understanding. She is herself a fine translator from Latin and Greek; her versions of great ancient classics sound like translations only to the extent that she intends.

Finally, or almost finally, to underline Oxford's engagement with the wider world, and with all respect for Ghana and Panama, as University Orator I represent us in calling: Come on England! But my pleasant task now, as in every second year, is to be upstaged, as prose gives way to poetry. *Nunc praesento vobis Aliciam Elsbeth Stallings, apud Universitatem Oxoniensem Professorem*. Thank you all!

Creweian Oration 2026

The Professor of Poetry prepared the following Creweian Oration ‘in commemoration of the Benefactors of the University according to the intention of the Right Honourable Nathaniel, Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham’.*

**Note: The poet had planned to read a slightly slimmed-down version of this, with certain stanzas trimmed in the interest of time, but as the whole speech was cut from the ceremony owing to the heat, she gives her fuller version here.*

I’m thinking of the human side of work—
Work as a blessing, not just Adam’s curse,
But Eve inventing lullabies—the perk
Of music and of song—not just to nurse
A child to sleep—the task we must not shirk
Of making art, not just making things worse.
I’ll look to Yeats perhaps for inspiration,
In this, my second Creweian Oration.

Yeats tells us, ‘to articulate sweet sounds
Together’ is a kind of heavy labour,
And then a lady friend of his compounds
The interest, by saying to her neighbour,
That women know the score—and on what grounds—
In short—to slice preamble with a sabre—
Beauty is work; but work too can be beauty—
So our creative work is gift and duty.

The ancient Greeks, who knew a thing or two
About techne and beauty, art and art,
Did not keep these things separate, but through
Their stories, they united work and heart:
The God of Workmanship, though crippled, knew
Pure Loveliness for wife, and from the start,
One element of Aphrodite’s myth,
Was that, *née* Foam, she now was Mrs Smith.ⁱ

And sometimes at the forge, when thick black smoke
Went drifting in her eyes, he used to say,
Working on weapons, or at a bespoke
Suit of armor for some special day
Of slaughter—and it was his oldest joke—
When she would shift to get out of the way,
‘Smoke follows beauty,’ a saying to employ
At campfires everywhere, not just at Troy.

Hephaestus had his robots—cheerful tripods
That moved like Roomba hoovers on their own,
And golden fembots, listening to iPods
Or iPhones—yes, that detail is my own,
Just for the rhyme!—though I think there are ripe odds
That Homer could invent a telephone.
The Muse knows what was, what is, what comes next.
(Are formulae, perhaps, predictive text?)

You might know where I’m headed—with my quota
Of stanzas—for a warning on AI—
Two vowels much like Alpha and Iota—
The way its data centres would drink dry
The famed ten thousand lakes of Minnesotaⁱⁱ—
And don’t ask Claude or Grok the reason why—
It has its use—(burnt scrolls, new drugs)—no fighting
That, but not for thinking or for writing.

Let’s not outsource our thinking to machines.
Writing is thinking, and thinking is—hard—
Even when work is play—imagined scenes
Distract the writer from her desk—the bard
Procrastinates with Netflix, and Caffeine’s
A kind of goddess, too, in this regard—
If inspiration’s nothing you can fake—
The same would go for being quite awake.

AI, if Greek, would spell a wild lament—
Alpha iota—skinned, raw, human vowels.
I take Cassandra for one precedent—
Whose prophecies were understood as howls.
But there’s another story to present—
From Ovid (though as Greek as little owls),
Another ill-starred crush of poor Apollo,
Who always loved and lost, from what I followⁱⁱⁱ.

The god of poetry, bereft, once turned
A poor slain youth into a purple flower,
The hyacinth—and in the story burned,
AI into its petals—though from our
Perspective, there’s no hyacinth I’ve learned
Fits that description—but we might empower
Some license—perhaps it was instead an orchid
With lettered markings on its petals (poor kid).

AI—Alas, alack—the flower said—
The poet making blossom out of error
And turning accident upon its head,
Spinning a kind of beauty out of terror,
And a grave planted in a garden bed,
As art makes sorrow into a green splinter
Springing from buried bulbs that overwinter.

To lift a cool blue light into the air.
Which is to say, I’d rather read a story
That’s flawed, from human hands. I don’t despair
At poems that are sentimental, hoary,
Or badly put together, and thread-bare,
Promiscuous metaphors, thin allegory:
Better something crooked-timbered, failed,
Than one hallucinated and smooth-sailed.

Perhaps I heap a molehill into menace—
 Perhaps, you think, it is a poet's stance.
 Yes, I'd rather sinking piles of Venice,
 One bee, than campuses of Cloud—advance
 The work of noble human games, like tennis—
 (Verse with a net), performance, science, dance,
 Than language models larger than the day
 Is long, that guess what *we* want *it* to say.

Honor thy mistake as an intention,
 So Brian Eno says (or else that comes
 Quite close)—so fairy tales, and all invention,
 Wander in forests where birds eat the crumbs.
 The path itself requires your full attention,
 And not the lollipop chrysanthemums.
 Getting lost is also how you're found—
 The dark way through's the only way around.

Thought is a forest. Let's not cut it down—
 These clearings of the mind, though they seem bright
 And sunny, have no birdsong in the crown,
 No phosphorescent lichen in the night,
 No foxes under twilight's dressing gown
 No bats in the periphery of sight,
 And that meandering that seems to shiver
 Its silver through, the dry bed of a river.

I mean to say, that just as every Mentor
 Has her Telemachus—and each Blue Fairy,
 A wood Pinocchio that will resent her
 Until he learns the whale's inside is scary—
 The Muses try to tell us—*data centre*?!—
 In voices like a coal shaft's gold canary—
 Here's your centre—gardens, rivers, mountains,
 And libraries, that are themselves the fountains

That slake a thirst instead of drink it dry.
 The work of hearts and brains is love and linking,
 And missing the mark, making another try.
 Give machines your writing and your thinking
 You'll find that all your problems simplify,
 Or else that their complexity is shrinking.
 (Yes, if you want to know the right o'clock,
 Or r's in Strawberry—ask Claude or Grok.)

Hesiod tells us potter envies potter,
 And poet, poet. Work comes with healthy strife—
 The urge to make things better. Well, the daughter
 Of sea-foam, yes, Hephaestus' lovely wife,
 Competed for “the fairest”—(or who's hotter?)—
 Hotter? Can it get hotter—on my life!—
 I'd better end here—or face heat's asthenia—
 And wish you coolest blessings on Encaenia.^{iv}

A.E. Stallings

ⁱ I stole this joke from E.E. Cummings, ‘In heavenly realms of Hellas dwelt’.

ⁱⁱ Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes. The name Minnesota itself comes from a Dakota Indian word for sky-blue waters.

ⁱⁱⁱ Originally, there was another stanza here, cut for time:

He loved a lad, once, and while they were throwing
 The discus in a game, the lad was hit,
 And died, because, the West Wind in his blowing
 Blew it off course (the West Wind was a bit
 Jealous himself—That's not where this is going—
 And death is usually the end of it—
 (It's rare, a death by discus, but the risk is
 Slim, but not nothing, if you throw a discus).

^{iv} This stanza was originally this, but adjusted for the warmth of the occasion:

And yet, will verses save you, in a crunch?
 This is enough *ottava rima* for you.
 A poet knows her place, or has a hunch—
 However much a reader will implore you
 In theory, there's the simple fact of lunch—
 Above all, I should never want to bore you—
 Hunger is human too, and no asthenia—
 And so I wish you blessings on Encaenia.