Editor's Note

Leafy greens frame stone walls and iron gates at Yale, where the Society met in August. A speaker described how the University of the South, in Sewanee, Tennessee, has used academic dress for students since its earliest days—and does to this day—while another showed her examples of mixing media. She chose photographs of cap and gown in use at Yale in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and juxtaposed them with printed matter to emphasize the social points in them.

Their ideas about academic dress come from searches in archives, reviews of obscure books, and even conversations with people who can point us in a direction where a discovery may be waiting. Those who attended the Third North American Colloquium found plenty of examples. The curators at the Yale Center for British Art set before us dozens of prints from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Earnest depictions of students in their gowns were mixed with the jocular. 'The Oxford Macaroni', a 1772 engraving of a student strutting as he holds his gown open to reveal elegant layers underneath, tops his look with a trencher at a jaunty angle.

We later moved to the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Walking through the doors we came face to face with six stories of historic volumes behind glass, reminiscent of the King's Library Tower in the British Library The building's marble walls, also six stories tall, glowed as sunlight bathed the exterior. Heading downstairs we came to a private room. Inside were a half-dozen tables with highlights from the Archives' academic dress documents. Photographs of processions, robemakers' pamphlets, and correspondence from the Yale administration to and from robemakers—which gown for which degree was a theme—engaged us as we walked around the room, taking in the history. A post-war order form that Cotrell & Leonard asked its customers to use included no fewer than ten measurements for a gown. Gowns usually hang loose. Could they really have had a fit so tailored and snug?

All in all, it was a day of breadcrumbs. We saw clues for a curious researcher to sift, perfect for someone looking for connections among the items to investigate to broaden our knowledge of academic dress and its history, design, and use. If you've been thinking of proposing a topic for Fellowship or submitting a paper but you don't have a topic in mind, schedule a visit to a library or an archive. What you find may spark an idea, and soon you'll be working on an article for the next volume of *Transactions*, our twenty-fifth.

—Stephen Wolgast