



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

**Shades of learning:
A Visual, Material and Cultural History of the
Academic Dress of Trinity College, Dublin**

Volume 1

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Master in Letters**

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis investigates the representation and material culture of academic dress and its role in communicating personal, institutional as well as societal purpose and achievement. While the representation of this form of dress has seen little attention in the canons of art history, the iconography of academic dress is often present, yet unnoticed, in the university environment. Trinity College Dublin (TCD), as the earliest of the Irish universities, with a strong tradition of academic dress and ceremonial, provides a convenient basis for such a study. The work draws on a wide range of research resources including documentary and textual sources, prints and engravings, portraits, sculptures and photography, interviews with wearers and artists, and the objects themselves.

Clothing and costume have long been a sign of social distinction, the richness of the fabrics, complexity of design and ornamentation providing visual clues to the status of the wearer. Whilst its practical origins may have faded with time, academic costume has endured as a symbol of learning, retaining an attraction and social purpose for both the wearer and viewer. Academic dress is imbued with meaning and invested with emotion. For the individual, the gown and hood are symbolic of endeavour, self-esteem and affiliation. Academic institutions employ costume and ritual as a reinforcement of culture and reputation, conveying visual messages of hierarchy, prestige, and celebration.

Beyond its symbolic meaning, academic dress has also served individual and political purposes. Significant shifts in ‘sumptuary’ regulation appear to map closely onto times of upheaval and heightened social tensions in Irish political history. In the early years of the College, dress was employed as a means of exerting discipline and control, and in demonstrating political loyalties. Students used robes both as symbols of prestige and instruments of protest. For women, academic dress became a powerful emblem of inclusion and achievement. Early female scholars embraced robes and hoods as arguable gender-neutral symbols of hard-won academic status, while high-profile supporters such as Princess Alexandra helped normalize and celebrate women’s participation in higher education through visual media.

The emergence of an independent Ireland created an identity crisis for institutions like TCD, originally founded as instruments of colonization. Preoccupation with sartorial customs and ‘sumptuary’ regulation, including codification of TCD academic dress may have reflected a desire for stability and continuity in an era of social-political upheaval. Vesture was important to the new State, Douglas Hyde conspicuously employing costume and portraiture to fashion a visual and political identity for the presidency.

Academic dress emerges as a key instrument in conveying identity and scholarship in portraiture. In a collection with a public and private vocation, portraits in TCD are social documents. Unwritten etiquettes of academic costume in portraits and their display are apparent. Evolutions in design can be discerned while fashions in their representation reflect evolving cultural norms and attitudes to tradition, academic prestige and educational trends. An understanding of the iconography of academic dress therefore offers the art historian, and indeed the artist, a useful didactic and research tool.

Clothing protocols materialize and objectify academic organization and governance, though the signalling can be subtle. In the secular ritual of Commencements dress is a statement of commitment to scholarly continuity and fellowship, and a reminder to participants that they are concelebrating an inherited, though evolving tradition. Here achievement is rewarded, and precedent recognized by the right to wear a particular costume. The transformation of these clothes from object to occasion brings together a range of complex interactions, ranging from the quality of the craftsmanship, the dignity of the ceremonial, and the *mise en scène*, to the personality and bearing of the wearers.

The mid-twentieth century saw a decline in interest in academic dress, and faculty in robes, teachers in gowns and clergy in hoods are now a rare sight. Nevertheless, the latter part of the twentieth century has seen a resurgence in attention to this form of attire. This may be driven by expectations to celebrate success and rite of passage in societies where formal social and religious rituals are in abeyance. Costume traditions, carefully curated, have an important role in reinforcing institutional identity in an increasingly competitive higher education sector.

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This research came about from a schoolboy interest in gowns and hoods worn by teachers at Wesley College, Dublin and perhaps an overly ambitious objective to promote scholarly research on academic dress in the realms of art history and costume studies. I thank Prof. Rachel Moss, Department of the History of Art and Architecture, TCD, for her encouragement to undertake this challenge via a research degree. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Dr Peter Cherry for his courage in taking on an art history novice and guidance in structuring and giving direction to the work. Dr Philip McEvansoneya, who enthusiastically took up supervision following Dr Cherry's retirement, provided wise counsel, academic clarity, and an editor's attention to detail which were invaluable in steering the thesis to a conclusion. Dr Angela Griffith is thanked for her keen interest and valuable advice as Reader. Dr Billy Shortall, who has undertaken a similar career journey, shepherded me as I found my feet in a new academic discipline.

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Abbreviations

General abbreviations follow the standard given in Oxford Art Online (www.oxfordartonline.com/page/1661). Abbreviations for degrees are for the University of Dublin as laid out in *The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin*. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 2010 (www.tcd.ie/registrar/assets/Statutes_February_2022.pdf), unless otherwise indicated.

ARA	Associate of the Royal Academy
ARHA	Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy
attri.	attributed to
b.	born
BA	Bachelor in Arts
BAI	Bachelor in Engineering
BAO	Bachelor in Obstetrics
BCC	British Colour Council
BS	Burgon Society
BMus	Bachelor of Music
BSc	Bachelor in Science
c.	<i>circa</i>
<i>Cantab.</i>	Cantabrigiensis, Degree from the University of Cambridge
chap.	chapter
d.	died
DCL	Doctor of Civil Law/Doctor of Canon Law
DD	Doctor in Divinity
DPhil	Doctor of Philosophy (Oxford)
DS	Doctor of Science
DU	Dublin University
E&R	Ede & Ravenscroft, robemakers London
<i>et al.</i>	and others

exhib.	exhibition, exhibit(s), exhibited
FBS	Fellow of the Burgon Society
<i>fl.</i>	<i>Floruit</i> , when a person lived or was active
fn.	footnote
FTCD	Fellow of Trinity College Dublin
<i>h.c.</i>	Honoris Causa, honorary degree
Hist.	College Historical Society (TCD)
ill.	Illustration
LittD	Doctor in Letters
LLB	Bachelor in Laws
LLM	Master in Laws
LLD	Doctor in Laws
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MA	Master in Arts
MAI	Master in Engineering
MAO	Master in Obstetrics
MD	Doctor in Medicine
MLitt	Master in Letters
MP	Member of Parliament (UK)
MPhil	Master in Philosophy
MS	Manuscript
MSc	Master in Science
MusB	Bachelor in Music
MusD	Doctor in Music
n.d.	not dated
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NGI	National Gallery of Ireland

NLI	National Library of Ireland
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NPG	National Portrait Gallery, London
NUI	National University of Ireland
<i>Oxon.</i>	Oxoniensis, Degree from the University of Oxford
p.	page sequence
PhD	Doctor in Philosophy
pl.	plate; plural
pls	plates
pp.	multiple pages
PRA	President of the Royal Academy
PPRA	Past President of the Royal Academy
PPRP	Past President of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
RA	Royal Academy, London
RCM	Royal College of Music
RCPI	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RDS	Royal Dublin Society
RHA	Royal Hibernian Academy
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
RUA	Royal Ulster Academy
ScD	Doctor in Science
SCR	Senior Common Room
SFTCD	Senior Fellow Trinity College Dublin
TCD	Trinity College Dublin (University of Dublin)
TRIARC	Trinity Irish Art Research Centre

UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UCG	University College Galway
UL	University of Limerick

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Introduction

A Sub-Committee of the Trinity College Historical Society on *Academic Nudity* concluded that the purpose of academic dress was ‘the identification of the wearer as a member of the University’ and, as with conventional nudity, academic undress ‘is such absence of academic costume as a reasonable man would consider indecorous or unseemly’.¹ They went on to consider what does and does not constitute a gown, and the etiquette of dress in the Society’s rituals.² Though a short, witty apprentice piece by students of the liberal professions of the 1930s, the report nevertheless goes to the heart of questions addressed in the present work: what is academic dress, what is its purpose, how is it deployed and represented and how has the interpretation of academic attire changed over time?

Dress, beyond its obvious functional purpose, is a visual statement of culture, endeavour, social interaction, or self-esteem. The felt need for distinguishing dress remains universal as a statement and reinforcement of culture, endeavour, social interaction, identity, or self-esteem. Whilst their practical origins may have faded in collective memory, the costumes worn by the liberal professions have endured as symbols of learning, status, and power retaining an attraction and social purpose for both wearer and viewer. The academic profession is no different. Like the church and judiciary, academic institutions use codes of dress and ritual to convey visual messages of authority, hierarchy, prestige, and celebration.

Often viewed ambiguously, academic dress with its rich history stemming from medieval monasticism also connects faculty and students to their academic heritage and sense of belonging. Incorporated into institutional ritual dress symbolizes and celebrates collective heritage, community, and fellowship. With this comes an awareness of participation in an inherited, though evolving, tradition of learning and shared enterprise, more akin to

¹ Declan Budd and Ross Hinds, *The Hist and Edmund Burke's Club : an anthology of the College Historical Society, the student debating society of Trinity College, Dublin, from its origins in Edmund Burke's Club 1747-1997* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997), 138-40.

² In the present work a “gown” refers to black gown worn by members of the College community, while “robe” the scarlet festal robes as worn by Doctors, or University Officer’s robes such as those worn by a Chancellor.

guilds and confraternities. Academic dress thus signifies not only scholarship and status but also carries social purpose.

While the forms of contemporary academic costume have changed little since the early eighteenth century, the purpose and attitudes to this attire have varied over time both on the part of individuals and collectively. Initially fulfilling practical functions of warmth and protection, this dress rapidly assumed other roles. In addition to expressing community and association it provides visual clues to hierarchy, academic status and wealth, as well as a means of discipline and control. The relative importance of these functions waxed and waned as institutions and individuals responded to social and political change with all its dimensions of gender, age, class, religious and cultural norms.

Academic dress traditions have also been adapted and (re-)invented in response to social, educational and technological change. It has been appropriated globally as a signifier of learning and achievement, though often with local cultural overlays. Alongside wedding pictures, graduation photographs still take pride of place on the walls and mantelpieces of family homes as tokens of achievement and purpose, sacrifice, and shared history.

Academic dress is therefore a cultural practice and social performance underpinning both institutional and self-identity.³

How academics dress is guided by statute, status and function, societal expectations, gender and personal preferences, economic factors, and the occasion, overlain by evolving fashion, material, and social trends. In 2009 *English Studies in Canada* addressed the subject of *Academic Fashion*.⁴ They asked what distinguishes academic dress in the workplace? What does it signify and what are the implicit messages conveyed? Do the implied boundaries separate or create communities? And are there gender, class, age or cultural dimensions to academic fashion? Although applied to contemporary university

³ Cecily Devereux and Michael O'Driscoll, "Introduction: Academic Fashion," *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 35, no. 2 (2009), 3.

⁴ Devereux and O'Driscoll, "Introduction: Academic Fashion," 1-4.

faculty daywear, these questions are equally useful to an art historical study of formal academic costume, an area hitherto little researched.

For these authors academic fashion is both an expression of the person, the institution and an expression of their perception and response to the world they inhabit. They noted that a university like any other place of work, has its own codes and symbolism of representation and identity when it comes to dress, bearing and behaviour, modes of expression and attitudes to intellectual trends. For them the “neutral style”, as in the white dress-shirt, is arguably the dress code best adapted to the life of the mind. In the same debate, Christopher Keep noted that the uniformity of the black gown released Victorian academics from the tyranny of fashion and class.⁵ Traditionally worn by men, from when higher education was a male preserve, academic dress is now treated as gender neutral. Thus, it might be argued that sombre academic dress, formerly clerical garb reworked for the secular environment, functions as a class and gender-neutral symbol of academic pursuit.

Visual and material studies of academic dress can complement written history, enriching understanding of individuals, the academic profession and institutional culture. The symbols and colours of academic dress do the work of the attributes of saints and martyrs or heraldic achievements in the art of medieval Europe. As such, academic dress and drapery and their symbolism are a legitimate area of inquiry for the art historian that has seen little or no serious work to date. The art historian requires the tools and vocabulary to read and interpret the symbols and semiotics of academic garb.

The depiction of academic dress (and, or the reality of such dress) in the portraits and sculptures of scholars and teachers ubiquitous in institutions of learning, reveal evolving design, construction and customs. Beyond representation, the material culture of academic dress, that is how these clothes are invested with meaning by the wearers and viewer through association and usage deserves attention. Confronting these objects with

⁵ Christopher Keep, "Academic fashion: system and practice," *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 35, no. 2 (2009), 11.

their representation in figurative art (mediated by the artist and principals involved) provides the historian insights into how the attitudes of people to these garments and their social purpose(s) have evolved.

The iconography of scholarship is permeated by continuity. In an era of image-led communications, institutions of learning are increasingly using their object and visual patrimony to transmit their history, culture and ethos.⁶ Academic costume with its explicit visual appeal and implicit symbolism, has been enlisted in communicating these ideas.⁷ Scholarly apparel, both in individual art works and as collections, and as memorabilia in university and museum collections, are deployed to convey academic status, scholarly achievement and academic discipline to peers, civic, national and world publics. Collectively academic dress, whether in portraits or in the wearing, are used to fashion institutional identity. Combining the representation of academic dress together with the material record allows evolving culture within the institution and how it displays itself to others to be better read and understood.

These costumes are central to bringing university ceremonial to life. Commencements, with their quasi-religious roots, their own liturgy and special clothing rich in symbolic and cultural meaning, have become rites of passage or staging points in a lifetime.⁸ Though they have evolved with social change, they retain the inclusivity of secular rituals with participants at all levels from eager undergraduates to the most august of Chancellors. Activating the robes, via human reaction to the object and the functions they fulfil in the performance underpins the success of their transformation from objects to occasion. The social significance of academic dress and ceremonial as rites of passage and in reinforcing institution identity has seen little scholarly attention, at least as concerns higher education institutions in Ireland and the UK.

⁶ e.g. Dublin Trinity College, *Trinity in 50: The Story of a University* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, 2024). "A History Through Objects: Research and Innovation at the University of Birmingham," University of Birmingham, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/rcc/exhibitions-and-displays/temporary-exhibitions/current-exhibition-hto>.

⁷ Trinity College, *Trinity in 50: The Story of a University*, 21, 31, 56.

⁸ Garff B Wilson, "Commencement at the Large University," *Journal of Higher Education* 23, no. 2 (1952), 89.

Despite the trend to informality in society generally, the rites and rituals of third-level education have endured even as the sector has expanded exponentially, and academic dress remains a feature and preoccupation of more recent institutions of learning. Indeed, having reached the kindergarten, this democratisation carries with it the dangers of trivialisation. There is a danger that academic dress and ceremonial become 'an empty sigil or a tradition lost to understanding and, ultimately lost to practice...'.⁹ As Galloway points out understanding of ceremony and its symbols can recede with time. Reduced to the decorative, ceremonial risks becoming devoid of value, or 'shrivelled and pointless ritual that achieves nothing'.¹⁰ But he nevertheless admits that meanings and purpose can evolve with societal change, keeping what is relevant and abandoning others.

But while the rituals of academic life should contribute to a sense of association, they may act both to bring communities together and emphasise separateness. By reflecting on dress traditions and rituals and exploring their meanings scholars can decode their cultural significance and share their meaning and purpose with students, faculty and administrators.¹¹

⁹ R. Eric Platt and Lauren Huffman Walker, "Regalia Remembered: Exploring the History and Symbolic Significance of Higher Education Academic Costume," *American Educational History Journal* 46, no. 1 (2019), 139.

¹⁰ Peter Galloway, *The Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor* (London: Spink, 2021), 66.

¹¹ Platt and Walker, "Regalia Remembered: Exploring the History and Symbolic Significance of Higher Education Academic Costume," 138.

Chapter 1: Research Purpose and Context

Introduction

Whilst the history of academic costume has been a growing area of research, notably through the activities of learned associations such as the Burgon Society, there has been less focus on the study of these costumes in the canons of art history.¹² Similarly, the social significance of academic dress and ceremonial as rites of passage and in reinforcing institution identity has seen little scholarly attention, at least as concerns higher education institutions in Ireland and the UK.

This thesis considers the materiality, representation, and interpretation of academic dress at Trinity College, Dublin (TCD). As Ireland's oldest University with a long tradition of academic dress evolved from the ancient English universities, gowns and robes has been a constant feature of the cultural landscape. Even if not now in everyday use, these costumes are proudly displayed in university ceremonial and the iconography of the institution. With its rich art and research collections, the College provides a convenient petri dish in which to investigate these themes while keeping the work within manageable parameters.

The research examines the representation and customs of academic dress at TCD via documentary evidence including current and historic regulations; a visual art and object-based examination of the clothing and finally, performance imaging. The work accordingly draws on wide range of visual materials aimed at multiple audiences, including portraits and sculptures by leading (and some less well known) artists of the day, prints and engravings, caricatures, photographs as well as the objects themselves. A study on the Dublin robemakers serving the College 1730-1980 was also fully developed in the course of this research, but only a summary is provided in this document for reasons of space.

¹² "The Burgon Society," The Burgon Society 2025, accessed August 25, 2025, <https://burgon.org.uk/>. See also its peer reviewed journal "Transactions of the Burgon Society," New Prairie Press, 2023, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://newprairiepress.org/burgonsociety/>.

This chapter sets out the research questions to be addressed in this thesis, together with sources, methodology and their limitations. It also reviews the, admittedly sparse, literature concerning academic dress in art history, supplemented by analogous scholarly work on the representation of the professions and their costumes in painting and sculpture. An overview of the literature and vocabulary of academic dress through the lenses of its iconography aims to accompany the narrative and guide the reader.

Research approach

Why we do it? If wearing, and being depicted wearing, quasi-medieval ecclesiastical costume seems to matter to individuals and communities of scholars, can the tools of art history be used to better explain why?

This research draws on the visual and documentary history of dress at TCD to investigate the material culture, representation, and interpretation of academic dress via three principal lines of enquiry:

- What is the purpose of academic costume and how has this evolved over time?
- How has academic dress been represented and interpreted in the visual record?
- How is it activated and employed in the material culture and ritual life of the university?

By taking an integrated approach, combining object-based studies with the representation of academic dress in art, the changing symbolism and social attitudes to this form of dress and its deployment can be decoded. As such, this work is positioned across the humanities spectrum, integrating aspects of art, social and costume history as well as the history of education in Ireland.

Through these lenses this work hopes to describe, interpret and enliven an evolving culture of academic costume at TCD, building on its material, visual and object-based patrimony, and looking beyond written rules and regulatio

Methodology and Sources

This research combines empirical fact and observation, as well as information on the normative values, beliefs and judgements from which our interpretation of culture derives. While the work builds on a variety of primary and secondary sources primarily in TCD, the scope is extended to include material associated with its graduates in related professional and educational institutions in Ireland and UK.

The work draws on a variety of research materials, not only documentary and archival sources, portraits, sculptures and the printed images, but also where possible, the robes themselves. Information on academic culture, costume and ceremony can also be gleaned from College histories and accounts. Autobiographies and diaries of former students and professors are also valuable sources on day-to-day dress habits in university life. Where practical, selected individuals involved in the contemporary portraits discussed have also been interviewed.

Unless otherwise stated, biographical information and dates are taken from the Dictionary of Irish Biography, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford Art Online, Strickland, Crookshank and Webb, and Snoddy.¹³ For convenience Table 1 provides a list of the College Provosts and their dates. Table 2 presents a list of degrees awarded by the University of Dublin, their dates of creation and the hoods and gowns prescribed. Academic dress terms used in this thesis are provided in the glossary and by Plant *et al.*¹⁴

Primary Sources

As an ancient University and influential seat of learning in the heart of a capital city, TCD offers an unparalleled source of primary research material. Numerous scholarly histories open access to these sources. While none address academic costume specifically, they can

¹³ "Dictionary of Irish Biography," Royal Irish Academy, 2025, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.dib.ie/>. "Oxford Dictionary of National Biography", Oxford University Press, 2025, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/>. "Oxford Art Online," Oxford University Press, 2025, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.oxfordartonline.com/>. Walter George Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (London: Maunsell, 1913). Anne O. Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin Press, 1990). Theo Snoddy, *Dictionary of Irish Artists: 20th Century* (Wolfhound Press, 1996).

¹⁴ "Glossary of Academic Dress," The Burgon Society, 2024, accessed June 11 2025, <https://burgon.org.uk/academic-dress/glossary>.

be sifted for images and accounts of sartorial tradition and indeed controversy. W.B.S. Taylor, J.W. Stubbs, W. MacNeile Dixon, J.P. Mahaffy, C. Maxwell, and K. C. Bailey describe the early history of the College from foundation to 1945.¹⁵ The College Quatercentenary series published in 1992 brought these works up to date.¹⁶ More specialized accounts of the College history and personalities can be found in McDowell and Webb's academic history of TCD 1592-1952 and in Boyle's treatise on the College Provosts 1592-1927.¹⁷ More recently, R. A. Somerville offered a view of TCD through the lens of its architecture, financing and people.¹⁸

Administrative papers such as University statutes and minutes, and calendars listed in the accompanying bibliography, provide the institutional rules and regulations on dress, and their evolution. MacDonnell provides a compilation of the founding Charters, Statutes and Letters Patent to 1878 while the Preface to the current Statutes provides a useful summary of the evolution of the College and University governance.¹⁹ Though later texts are generally legalistic and factual, earlier statutes offer insights into prevailing attitudes and perceived purpose of dress. College record volumes and alumni listings for Dublin and other universities provide biographical details and allow information on matriculation, degrees awarded and dates of sitters to be cross-checked. The College

¹⁵ William B. Sarsfield Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth) : its origin, progress, and present condition, with biographical notices of many eminent men educated therein ; illustrated by views of its buildings, and the academic costumes, etc. worn in this venerable seat of learning* (London: Cadell, 1845); John William Stubbs, *The History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1889); William MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin* (London: F. E. Robinson & Co., 1902); John Pentland Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history: Trinity College, Dublin, its foundation and early fortunes, 1591-1660*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906); Constantia Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892* (Dublin: University Press, 1946); Kenneth Claude Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954* (Dublin: University Press, Trinity College, 1947).

¹⁶ *Trinity College Dublin and the idea of a university*, ed. Charles Hepworth Holland (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin Press 1991); John V. Luce, *Trinity College Dublin : the first 400 years* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Robert B. McDowell and David A. Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Peter Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927* (Dublin: Hinds, 2015).

¹⁸ R. A. Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin : architecture, financing, people* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2021).

¹⁹ Trinity College Dublin, *Chartae et Statuta Collegii Sacroscantae et Individuae Trinitatis Reginae Elizabethae, juxta Dublin*, ed. Hercules H G MacDonnell, vol. 1, 2 & supplements (Dublin: sumptibus Academicis, excudebat M.H. Gill, 1844-78). Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)," (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 2010), accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.tcd.ie/registrar/assets/pdf/Statutes-incorporating-changes-22-May-2024.pdf>. 5-6.

muniments, including Bursar's vouchers and accounts are a rich source of information on purchasing, suppliers and costs.

Press coverage of College events is a rich source of information. Illustrations and printed images in newspapers, periodicals, and magazines provide contemporary descriptions and accounts of the variety of situations and contexts in which academic costume was worn. Reports of university affairs, once more common than now, offer sketches and word pictures of institutional events such as the conferring of honorary degrees, the journalists attracted by the visual impact of the costumes.²⁰ Student newspapers and magazines valuable insights on undergraduate dress customs and habits. Sartorial regulations were a particular preoccupation of contributors to *TCD: A College Miscellany* in the 1920s and 30s. Peter Henry in *Old Trinity*, an occasional series published in *Trinity News* in the 2010s, provided vignettes on College dress, often with acerbic comment.

Art prints and engravings published in subscription editions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, present scenes of College life incorporating figures in academic dress, in particular undergraduate students not often seen in formal portraiture. Mezzotints provide details of the folds and ornamentation not seen in the drapery in original portraits from which they were drawn. Though interpretative, contemporary engravers would have had knowledge of the dress of the period.

Caricatures and political cartoons, usually appearing in tracts, pamphlets and student rag magazines, arguably exaggerate the normative. They are valuable sources, once more common than now, in the revealing implicit attitudes of the wearers and publics outside the College walls to academics and their dress.

Collections of portraits of academics are found in a range of contexts and institutions where learning and scholarship prevail. Universities of course, but also schools, learned societies and professional bodies. These portraits tend for the most part to remain in their institutions, at least in Ireland. In the ensemble, they present an account of institutional

²⁰ Such as the *Irish Times* "Trinity College Notes" column now discontinued.

and sartorial culture unique to each organization, and with both temporal and spatial nuances within collections.²¹

The TCD art collection provides an unparalleled resource for analysis from the earliest portraits of subjects in academic dress from around 1710 to the present. The collection was catalogued by Strickland in 1916 and updated by Crookshank and Webb in 1990 whose introduction also considered collection and commissioning policies.²² Subsequent publications by the Curator of the College Art Collections review the collection and its evolution in a contemporary context.²³ Acquisitions are referred to in various of the College's annual reports, in Board minutes and online.²⁴

Artworks showing academics in scholarly dress are less common in public collections with a few notable exceptions in the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) and the Dublin Civic collections (e.g. Figs 1.1 & 1.2). Portraits in other university, civic, learned society and professional institution collections augment perspectives on the College collection.

Immediately identifiable in their robes and gowns, portraits and sculptures of Dublin graduates in the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI), the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland (RCPI), the Dublin Civic, cathedral and school collections record the influence of TCD graduates in Irish and British life and society since the late 1600s.²⁵

²¹ Imogen Tedbury, *Modern Portraits for Modern Women: Principals and Pioneers from the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Art Collection* (Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, 2020). Imogen Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 2020, no. 31 (2021).

²² Walter George Strickland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures, Busts, and Statues in Trinity College, Dublin, and in the Provost's House*. (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1916); Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*.

²³ Catherine Giltrap, "20:20 Hindsight. Retrofitting research relevance to the University Art Collections at Trinity College, Dublin," *University Museums and Collections Journal* 3/2010 (2011); Catherine Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," in *Provost & President's Retrospective Review 2011-21* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 2021).

²⁴ "University Art Collections," Trinity College Dublin, 2019, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.tcd.ie/artcollections>.

²⁵ For RCSI portraits see "RCSI Presidents Portraits Collection," Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, https://rcsi.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/SO_2f48658c-ce06-4408-b5aa-ca1ea590f5b6/. Anne Crookshank, "Portraits of Irish Medicine," in *A portrait of Irish medicine : an illustrated history of medicine in Ireland*, ed. Eoin O'Brien (Dublin: Ward River Press, 1984). For RCPI portraits see "Lives of the Presidents," Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 2017, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://heritage.rcpi.ie/Projects/Lives-of-the-Presidents>; Mary Clark, *The Dublin Civic Portrait Collection : patronage, politics and patriotism, 1603-2013* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016); F. E. Dixon, "Dublin Portrait Statues," *Dublin Historical Record* 31, no. 2 (1978).

Although TCD women graduates were leading proponents of opening university education to all, the first official portraits of women in academic dress do not appear in the College collection until 1976. However, portraits of pioneering women with Dublin degrees are to be found in the collections of colleges with origins in the early education of women, such as Girton College, Cambridge and Royal Holloway in the University of London.²⁶ At Alexandra College, a school and groundbreaking institution founded in Dublin in 1866 for the education of women, portraits of former headmistresses hang, the sitters proudly dressed in TCD gowns and hoods.

Later in the nineteenth century the photographic record offers a bridge between the figurative of formal portraiture and the reality of costumes as objects and as worn. Photographic studios such as Lafayette's, Lawrence and Chancellors thrived in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Dublin, doing a brisk trade in group portraits and cabinet cards of students and academics in their finery. Photographs memorializing College events are particularly rich sources of images of European costume and academic dress of the late 1800-early 1900s. Published in conjunction with commemorative events and celebrations they provide insights into the deployment of dress at set-piece and ceremonial occasions.²⁷

As a portrait enters a collection, and becomes part of the visual furniture, the motivations for it being made fade and the subjectivity of the observer prevails. Negotiations on the choice of clothing and how it is incorporated in the composition are rarely recorded, nor are there records of the artists' methods, for example the use of photographs for more recent works.²⁸ Insights on costume, composition and handling of drapery, can however

²⁶ Tedbury, *Modern Portraits for Modern Women: Principals and Pioneers from the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Art Collection*; Tedbury, *Modern Portraits for Modern Women: Principals and Pioneers from the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Art Collection*. Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges."

²⁷ E.g. Charles Hubert Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial : containing an account of the founding and growth of the college: A Ter-Centenary Souvenir* (Dublin: Thom & Co., 1892). Fergus Mulligan and John Jordan, *The Trinity year : a portrait of Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009).

²⁸ Aileen Ribeiro, "Truth or Imagination: How real is dress in art?," *The Journal of Dress History* 1, 1 (2017), 4.

be gleaned from commissioning records and accounts of sittings in memoirs and interviews with artists and their subjects.

In an era before mass consumption, the Dublin tailoring and clothing trade held a status we would not recognize today. Whilst its social and political influence have been well documented, the specialist robemaking trade in Dublin is less well known. Nevertheless, advertising in the press, College magazines and elsewhere demonstrate a vibrant ecosystem of robemakers and ecclesiastical tailors existed around TCD, serving students, academics, church, and establishment figures. Documentary sources concerning Dublin tailors and robemakers exist in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI), the National Library of Ireland (NLI), the Archives of the Burgon Society and in private collections. Tailors' notes and workbooks, order books, colour charts, customer correspondence, billing dockets and other ephemera allow a picture of the localised economic ecosystem that developed around the College to be reconstructed.

Examples of the costumes themselves are scattered. Academics possess gowns and hoods for their own use. Robes are also found in private collections, often inherited from colleagues and family. In TCD collections of historic robes are held, loosely curated, in the Provost's House and in the foyer of the College Chapel, assembled by interested students. Items of TCD dress can also be found in the Burgon Society Archives, the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) and occasionally in UK museums and archives.

Compilations and catalogues of academic dress began to appear in the 1850s in response to the expansion of degree awarding bodies through the nineteenth century. The academic dress schemes of Irish institutions were catalogued Haycraft, Shaw and Franklyn in various editions and updates between 1923 and 1972.²⁹ Dublin robemakers Walter Conan and Bryson's, the official robemakers to the University of Dublin are credited with providing the information on Irish institutions. Historian and TCD graduate

²⁹ Frank W Haycraft, *The degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges* (Ware: Jennings & Bewley, 1923); Frank W and Frederick Roderick Samuel Rogers Haycraft, Charles Aubrey Hamilton Franklyn, George W. Shaw and Hugh Alexander Boyd, *The degrees and hoods of the world's universities and colleges*, 5th ed. (Cheshunt, Herts.: Cheshunt Press, 1972).

Hugh Alexander Boyd contributed to the 1972 revised edition of Haycraft.³⁰ Smith and Sheard's *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World*, published in 1970 however, remains the most comprehensive catalogue because it includes officers' as well as academic dress schemes.³¹ With the growth of third-level education and new institutions formulating their own systems of dress these compendiums have since expanded vastly with Groves' catalogue being the most up to date.³² Groves also published an illustrated classification system of hoods and gowns, and a key to the identification of academic dress in the UK and Ireland. Classification diagrams are accessible along with archive photographs on the Burgon Society website.³³

Secondary Sources

A comprehensive bibliography of academic dress is provided by Alex Kerr.³⁴ It includes an overview of the key references, catalogues covering the history, design and deployment of academic dress from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards. Much of the recent literature on academic costume is to be found in the *Transactions of the Burgon Society*. While other publications such as *Costume: the Journal of the Costume Society* and the *Journal of Dress History* also include relevant scholarship, though few papers with a specific focus on academic dress.³⁵

Research on academic dress in Europe since the nineteenth century has tended to focus on dress history and cataloguing, with less emphasis on critical analysis of trends, ritual and social purpose. Standardization of academic dress systems in North America seems to

³⁰ Haycraft, *The degrees and hoods of the world's universities and colleges*.

³¹ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*; Smith Hugh H and Kevin Sheard, *Academic dress and insignia of the world : gowns, hats, chains of office, hoods, rings, medals and other degree insignia of universities & other institutions of learning* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1970). This work remains the definitive catalogue of the gowns, hoods, hats, robes and insignia of office for universities and third level institutions outside the UK and Ireland.

³² Nicholas Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3rd ed. (Bridport: Burgon Society, 2011).

³³ Burgon Society, "The Burgon Society."

³⁴ "Bibliography of Academic Dress," Burgon Society, 2023, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://burgon.org.uk/research/bibliography>.

³⁵ "Transactions of the Burgon Society."

have released academics there to turn their attention to deeper thinking around social and anthropological significance of academic costume and ceremonial.³⁶

Accounts of academic dress in Ireland have tended to be included within British dress, with less attention to custom and practice in Ireland in its own right. Information on academic dress at TCD can be gleaned from various histories of the higher education institutions in Ireland. These include valuable lists of primary and secondary sources informing the historical and educational backdrop for the present study, including the influence of TCD on their systems of academic dress. More informal diaries and College memoirs provide insights into attitudes to dress and its deployment both in everyday life and on formal occasions.

The role of costume and ceremony in TCD can be equally analysed building on historical accounts of commencements, Statutes, commencement programmes and protocols, media reports, and the work of TCD scholars such as Helga Robinson-Hammerstein and Elizabethanne Boran.

Research Limitations

The limitations in researching portraiture apply equally to the study of clothing and textiles in art. Representational bias favours elite sitters.³⁷ University Officers and administrators and higher doctorates are well represented, and portraits of women academics have only recently found their place. School collections present women and men portrayed in the gowns and hoods of bachelor's and master's degrees. Portraits of undergraduates typically favour the offspring of well-to-do families. They are better represented in more popular media such as prints, engravings, newspapers and photographs.

Contextual bias favours formal settings for portraiture (though this is changing in more recent commissions), yielding less insight on daily use of costume, though sometimes

³⁶ E.g. Platt and Walker, "Regalia Remembered: Exploring the History and Symbolic Significance of Higher Education Academic Costume." Kathleen Manning, *Rituals, ceremonies, and cultural meaning in higher education* (Westport CT: Bergin & Garvey/Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000).

³⁷ Anna Reynolds, *Style & society : dressing the Georgians* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2023), 6-7.

backgrounds and accoutrements can provide clues. Evidence of day-to-day use of academic dress is often better found in images appearing in more popular media.

Clothing is ephemeral, further hampering the study of dress in painting. The representational bias privileging elite sitters also favours the clothing that remains. Garments made for grand ceremonial or state occasions are more likely to survive.³⁸ The record is inherently patchy and historical robes are rare, and we are left with only a partial record of these objects. Articles of dress decay with time, fall out of fashion, are recycled and reused or indeed thrown away. Their curation requires particular methodology and often expensive storage and their importance as art and historical objects often ignored. Where they have been kept, preservation difficult and provenance overlooked or neglected.

Robemakers, like many artisans, are unattributed and forgotten as the life cycle of their trade, age, technological innovation and changing trends exact their toll. Although some garments carry a maker's label, the historical trace rapidly peters out, their origin is not easily established and only a partial record remains.

Documentary accounts of ceremonies and graduations inadequately capture the theatre of the occasion and the role of dress in activating ritual. Although these accounts can be enriched by observation of contemporary university ceremonial and interviews with participants, they may understate cultural memory and the understanding of ritual in the more informal environment of contemporary universities.

Academic costume in the literature of Art History

Although drapery and costume are fundamental to portraiture there has been surprisingly little written by art or costume historians on academic dress, its representation, conventions, and material culture. Indeed, Kerr's bibliography demonstrates that scholarly work on academic dress in the art history canon is sparse.³⁹ Dress historians

³⁸ Reynolds, *Style & society*, 6.

³⁹ Kerr, "Bibliography of Academic Dress."

such as Anne Hollander and Aileen Ribeiro, who pioneered the study of clothing in an art-historical contexts, neglect academic vesture in illustrating their arguments.⁴⁰

Foundation texts on portraiture focus on the analysis and semiotics of aristocratic and political elites, the bourgeoisie, and specific genres such as civic and social groups, children, and country folk.⁴¹ Although they are not short of figures in various types of professional garb they are rarely illustrated by portraits of academics. The same can be said for the standard texts on Irish painting and portraiture.⁴² The Crookshank-Glin Archive in the Trinity Irish Art Research Centre (TRIARC), which might be expected to be a representative overview, contain only a few examples of subjects in academic costume.⁴³ Where portraits of academics in their regalia appear in catalogues or exhibitions, textual supports tend to focus on the biographies of the subjects, and are often underinformed or inaccurate as concerns their dress.⁴⁴ This hesitancy on the part of academic art historians to critically address representations of their own institutions and the scholarly metiers may stem from a reluctance to seem parochial, unfashionable, pompous or self-serving. It could also be perception of the undoubtedly mixed quality of portraiture in university collections.

Yet it is important. At its most basic level, academic dress can reveal, through its design, cut and colour, indicators of time, place and identity: important clues to help with the

⁴⁰ Anne Hollander, *Seeing through clothes* (New York: Viking Press, 1978). Anne Hollander, *Fabric of vision : dress and drapery in painting* (London: Bloomsbury/The National Gallery Company, 2002); Aileen Ribeiro, *Clothing art : the visual culture of fashion, 1600-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁴¹ E.g. Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991); Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the head : portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1993); Norbert Schneider, *The art of the portrait : masterpieces of European portrait-painting 1420-1670* (Cologne: Taschen, 1999); Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴² Anne O. Crookshank and Knight of Glin, *The painters of Ireland, c.1600-1920* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1978); Anne O. Crookshank and Knight of Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland: Works on Paper in Pencil, Pastel and Paint, C.1600-1914* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1994); Fintan Cullen, *The Irish face : redefining the Irish portrait* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2004); Jane and Ruth Kenny Fenlon, Caroline Pegum, Brendan Rooney, *Irish fine art in the early modern period : new perspectives on artistic practice, 1620-1820* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2016).

⁴³ This archive contains over 2600 images of Irish art, c.1600-c.1940 assembled over some forty years. The collection formed the research basis for foundation texts on Irish art including Crookshank and Glin, *The painters of Ireland, c.1600-1920*; Crookshank and Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland: Works on Paper in Pencil, Pastel and Paint, C.1600-1914*. TRIARC, "Crookshank-Glin Collection (Digital Image Collection)," (Dublin: Trinity College, July 4 2024). <https://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/6737>.

⁴⁴ E.g. Strickland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures, Busts, and Statues in Trinity College, Dublin, and in the Provost's House*. Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin.*; Ireland, "Lives of the Presidents."; "Collections," University College Cork, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/heritage/collections/>.

provenance and interpretation of a particular artwork.⁴⁵ An art historical approach, combining the representation of academic dress in portraits with the documentary record, enriches our understanding of the motivations behind their commissioning, the intended narrative(s) and the underlying power structures. Awareness of the symbolism of academic costume can yield deeper insights into the wearer and the institutions from which they emerged. Understanding how they have been manipulated by the artist adds further meaning to the work. The artist's interpretation of costume as both object and drapery, accoutrement or prop reveals how university and college collections commemorate and honour their own, both publicly and privately. It also yields perspectives on the sitters - their self-perception, their relationship to their dress, status within their profession and as representations of the wider institution.

For the dress historian, portraits and sculptures bridge the empirical and normative, offering insight on costume design and evolution, and how they are worn in formal and ceremonial contexts. Portraiture also offers insights into prevailing fashion, etiquette and how the items were worn at different periods, setting them in cultural and historical context.⁴⁶ Anne Hollander recommended that evolving fashions should be not only be viewed as social or personal expressions but part of a continuum of image-making.⁴⁷ Beyond the utilitarian, she argued that how we see dress in art is influenced by the customs and conventions of the periods when the object was made and is being viewed, i.e. then and now.⁴⁸

Ribeiro, investigating how dress and drapery are employed to communicate emphasis and impact in portraiture, advocated a holistic approach combining study of existing garments with documentary sources.⁴⁹ She noted that a painting is 'an imaginative and sensitive encounter with the portrayal of clothing' the medium allowing the viewer to experience

⁴⁵ e.g. Andrew J. C. Hogg "Letter: Robert Dudley Edwards and David Quinn." *History Ireland* 33, no. 6 (2025): 12.

⁴⁶ Ribeiro, "Truth or Imagination: How real is dress in art?" 3-5.

⁴⁷ Hollander, *Seeing through clothes*. Xvi.

⁴⁸ See Ingrid Erica Mida, "Refashioning Dechamps: An analysis of the waistcoat ready made series and other intersections of art and fashion" (PhD York University, 2019). 26-28, for a helpful review of dress in art theory.

⁴⁹ Ribeiro, *Clothing art : the visual culture of fashion, 1600-1914*.

clothes beyond what might be described in documentary sources or captured in photographs.⁵⁰ As Hollander points out, how the artist chooses to represent clothes is part of conscious decision process. Clothing integrated 'with the faces and gestures, will do its work – direct the eye, adjust the emotional temperature, make subtle allusions whether noticeably or unnoticeably'.⁵¹

Where items of dress or near contemporary versions survive, garments matched with a particular portrait allows the observer to assess the choices made by the artist in their depiction of drapery including the accuracy of colour, cut and fabric, what they have chosen to highlight, simplify, or indeed ignore.⁵² Conversely, the work of art may show how the costume was worn and influenced the deportment of the sitter as well as details of construction, wear and tear.⁵³ Portraits can also, within reason, help provide some examples of the colours described subjectively in robemakers' documents and catalogues (and vice versa).

As a long flowing length of fabric, an academic robe in a portrait can be viewed both as a worn object or as drapery, i.e. a piece of cloth placed artfully in the composition. In her essay *Desiring Drapery*, Allyson Keehan provided a useful framework for analysis.⁵⁴ A robe, like drapery whether hanging, veiling, or resting, responds to what it is covering, another form, generally the sitter's body. The representation of the drape, in our case the robe, requires an understanding of the principal point of support, the point where the garment hangs from the neck, head or shoulder.⁵⁵ The hang of the fabric has a logic governed by where it is in contact with the body and where gravity takes over the weight the cloth. The seams and gathers of an academic robe, often made of several fabrics, add complexity to this. By understanding the interplay of fold, fabric and gravity the underlying form can be interpreted.

⁵⁰ Ribeiro, "Truth or Imagination: How real is dress in art?" 4.

⁵¹ Hollander, *Fabric of vision*, 8.

⁵² Ribeiro, "Truth or Imagination: How real is dress in art?" 4.

⁵³ Reynolds, *Style & society*, 7.

⁵⁴ Allyson Keehan, "Desiring Drapery," in *192nd Royal Hibernian Academy Exhibition*, ed. Una Sealy RHA (Dublin: Royal Hibernian Academy, 2022), 42-49.

⁵⁵ Keehan, "Desiring Drapery," 43.

This is illustrated in portraits of John Hely-Hutchinson (1724-94) Provost of TCD by Joshua Reynolds RA (1723-92) and Lorcan Sherlock (1874-1945) Lord Mayor of Dublin by Ephrem Hickey (1872-1955). Both portraits show their subjects in scarlet and pink Dublin LLD robes (Figs 1.1 & 1.2).

Hely-Hutchinson is painted three-quarter length in a classical setting framed by columns and drapery, with the quills, papers and seals of his legal profession on a green baize covered table at which he sits. He wears a black velvet boot sleeve jacket with lace cuffs. The robes are the rich scarlet cloth and pink silk of an LLD awarded by the university in 1765, the lace fall instead of bands indicating this was an honorary degree.⁵⁶ Painting Hutchinson seated, his robe hanging from multiple points, shoulders, right forearm and left elbow, allowed Reynolds more opportunity to use highlights on the folds of the pink facings to re-create the lustre and flow of the silk fabric. The dark paint at the shoulder gathers and folds across the knee convey the impression of the heavier, less reflective scarlet cloth

Hickey uses the same technique for his portrait of Sherlock. Painted standing, the robe hanging from his shoulders, he presents a rather more static figure than Hely-Hutchinson. Sherlock, short in stature, is draped by his robe, whereas Hely-Hutchinson wears his, opening the potential for a deeper discussion of the relationship of the sitters to their regalia and how the artist has interpreted it. For the Provost his robes are working dress, they are real and belong inalienably to him. For Sherlock they are costume, hiding or disguising his identity their meaning elsewhere, institutionalized, as with civic mace resting on the table beside him.

Professional portraitists with a large clientele made extensive use of drapery specialists particularly in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Specialists and student assistants employed by Reynolds to paint drapery included Giuseppe Marchi (c.1735-

⁵⁶ W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963), 147, makes this observation concerning John Hoppner's portrait of Edmund Burke LLD *h.c.* hanging in the Public Theatre, TCD (Fig. 5.18). In it, Burke is wearing a lace fall.

1808), Thomas Beach (1738-1806), and James Northcote RA (1746-1831).⁵⁷ Comparison of the brushwork on the drapery in Reynolds' self-portrait, 1776 with the portrait of Hely-Hutchinson painted two years later, reveals different hands (Figs 1.1 & 1.3). Reynolds' Oxford DCL robe, presumably by himself, does not have the finesse and detail of the folds and fabrics of the gown in the Hely-Hutchinson portrait, in which the drapery was possibly done by Beach or Marchi, Northcote having left Reynolds' studio in 1776.

Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, in her expansive study of representations of scholars of medicine and law in medieval Italy and France, explores the idea that a social group constructs its identity by seeking to visualize itself. The codes and iconography of academic dress as portrayed in group portraits play a fundamental role in communicating social cohesion and professional status.⁵⁸ Similarly, the portraits of Primates in Church House Armagh, combine ecclesiastical authority with the trappings of scholarship. According to Thompson, these provide evidence of evolving customs of academic garb which set the trend for sartorial practices in the Church of Ireland over the past 150 years.⁵⁹

John Turpin, in his 2022 essay on the *ex officio* gowns of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) explores the notion that dress objectifies the otherwise abstract concept of an Academy and fashion an identity for the group.⁶⁰ While there is no evidence for these gowns existing at the foundation of the academy in 1823, nor an identified designer, they began to be used from around 1861. They are always worn, with varying levels of enthusiasm by the President, at enrolment of members, and at other times optional. More akin to uniform, Turpin contends, these differ from academic gowns in that they signify a fellowship of equals, whatever their individual achievement and distinctions.

⁵⁷ M Kirby Talley, "All good pictures crack': Sir Joshua Reynold's practice and studio," in *Reynolds* (1986), 57.

⁵⁸ Andrea von Hülsen-Esch, *Gelehrte im Bild: Repräsentation, Darstellung und Wahrnehmung einer sozialen Gruppe im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). reviewed by Bénédicte Sère, "Hülsen-Esch, Andrea von, *Gelehrte im Bild. Repräsentation, Darstellung und Wahrnehmung einer sozialen Gruppe im Mittelalter*," *Revue de l'IFHA. Revue de l'Institut français d'histoire en Allemagne* (2008).

⁵⁹ Peter A Thompson, "An Odd Habit: A study of the use of the Academic Hood in the portraits of the Archbishops of Armagh," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 23 (2023), 110-28.

⁶⁰ John Turpin, "The Wearing of Academy Gowns," in *192nd Royal Hibernian Academy Annual Exhibition*, ed. Una Sealy RHA (Dublin: Royal Hibernian Academy 2022), 34-41.

Yet university group portraits and ceremonies are surprisingly rarely illustrated in early modern and contemporary painting, especially when compared to the numerous set-piece portraits of parliamentary meetings, clubs and debating societies, though some include prominent academics.⁶¹ This may be a reflection of scholarship as a relatively solitary occupation, at least in the humanities, or the sensitivity of the internal politics in the selection of subjects and sitters.

In her book *Defining Features* Ludmilla Jordanova considers how portraits of scientific and medical professionals communicate individual and institutional identities.⁶² She considers however, only lay dress in assigning personal attributes to the sitters and, even though many of her subjects were academics, only two are illustrated in academic costume.⁶³ In the majority of these portraits professional status is conveyed not by clothing but by culturally transparent, recognizable accoutrements such as lab equipment, models, diagrams, and books in identifiable settings.⁶⁴ These props follow established conventions, providing visual interest, and acting as symbols conveying valuable clues to the viewer.

Yet, academic costume arguably carries all these attributes acting simultaneously as drapery and accoutrement, either worn or included as a prop, nuanced by varying degrees of formality. This duality may have a particular attraction for academics in disciplines such as philosophy and humanities lacking the visual infrastructure of the sciences, beyond books, papers and the odd bust, yet seeking to represent their personae, status and professional achievements in their portraits.

Jordanova also considers portraiture in practice and institutional collections. Scientific portraits, she observes are most often commissioned by academic or professional

⁶¹ For example, Prof. R. B. McDowell FTCD (1913-2011) is seen in a group portrait of members of the Kildare Street and University Club by Andrew Festing (1941-), *The Members' Bar*, 2000, oil on canvas, 46 x 80 cm. Dublin, Kildare Street and University Club.

⁶² Ludmilla. D Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*. (London: Reaktion in association with the National Portrait Gallery, 2000).

⁶³ William Cullen (1710-1790), *Professor in the Practice of Medicine, Edinburgh Medical School and Richard Mead (1763-1754)*, by Allan Ramsay, 1747. Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 17, 28.

⁶⁴ Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 80, 163.

organizations, closely controlled by the institution, each with its own commissioning practices, choice of medium, artist and hanging arrangements.⁶⁵ Jordanova also hints at the spatial distinction between collections of portraits for public display and those hung in more intimate College settings. But whether for private or public viewing, such collections she contends, speak to both 'institutional' and 'intellectual' continuity.⁶⁶

In her study of portrait collections of early British women's colleges memorializing pioneering women educators (many in academic robes), Imogen Tedbury suggests that these paintings hung together in an institutional context help define a collective identity.⁶⁷ Depending on their setting, these portraits can perform multiple roles, as familiar likenesses, memorials to history or simply as works of art.⁶⁸

Caricatures have been long used for poking fun, fond recognition of beloved characters, embarrassing targets, deflating hubris or political point scoring. In his survey of satirical prints with Irish themes from the long eighteenth century, Nicholas Robinson points out that costume is critical to the narrative. Although academic dress is infrequently represented, clothing allows the individuals being lampooned and the context in which they appear to be readily identified. Through exaggeration of both physical appearance and clothing, caricatures have the capacity to inject life and visual commentary beyond formal portraiture though, like portraits, are biased towards representation of elites and curiosities.

Portraits are a visual biography, not only of the physiognomy and personality of the sitter, but also their academic achievements (in both senses of the word). Explanations of the latter are often relegated to textual supports and footnotes, yet they are important to the conception of the work itself and the messages being conveyed. In a university setting it is arguably academic dress that is a leading vehicle for communicating both institutional identity and intellectual continuity. Although portraits are admittedly biased towards an

⁶⁵ Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 136-37.

⁶⁶ Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 53, 140.

⁶⁷ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," 3.

⁶⁸ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," 28.

elite group, without dress, or other accoutrements of scholarship, we are relegated to textual supports to discern group identity from a procession of paintings of long lamented worthies.

Academic Dress and Materiality

Object based studies, i.e. of the robes themselves, provide additional insights to better interpret these artworks. Kate Strasdin advocates that object-led research be applied to clothing can reveal otherwise hidden aspects of the wearer's life.⁶⁹ For sociologist Sophie Woodward the things we use have the capacity to influence behaviours and facilitate certain cultural practices.⁷⁰ This is because people invest the objects they use with emotional and symbolic meaning, associating them with particular rituals, behaviours and relationships that can change over time. For Gaskell and Carter, things taken as historical evidence collectively deepen understanding of individuals and communities.⁷¹ Objects resonate via the ways they are transformed and used to 'think with, to achieve practical goals, to meet spiritual needs, to mark and create social distinction and to memorialize and shape ideas about the past'.⁷² Arguably, academic costume fulfils all these needs in a university setting, though with changing emphases through time.

In *The social life of things*, 1986 Appadurai *et al.* considered the meaning that people attribute to things in how they are used and circulated.⁷³ For them, transactions and regulated processes of transmission illuminate the ways in which people find value in things and things give value to social relations. Things can be categorised as 'items of display, devotional objects, gifts, souvenirs, symbol of identity and... collectibles' which can be associated with individuals and shared collectively as institutional souvenirs.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Kate Strasdin, "Rediscovering Queen Alexandra's Wardrobe: The Challenges and Rewards of Object-Based Research," *The Court Historian* 24, no. 2 (2019), 181-96, 195.

⁷⁰ "What is Material Culture?," Research Methods in the Humanities, University of Manchester, 2014, accessed July 23, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLo1mxtRPhA>.

⁷¹ Ivan Gaskell and Sarah Anne Carter, *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁷² Gaskell and Carter, *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, 12.

⁷³ *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁷⁴ Gaskell and Carter, *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, 621-24.

Jane Schneider in her essay on *Cloth and Clothing* observes that dress embodies the names, memories and life stories of previous owners, enriching their meaning.⁷⁵ As revealed below, academic dress is frequently traded and passed on within families and between generations of scholars. Items of academic dress are also carefully preserved as secular relics and memorabilia in national and institutional collections. Robes owned by Nobel prize winner Ernest Walton (1903-95) in the National Museum of Ireland, and Irish nationalist educator Louise Gavan Duffy (1884-1969) in the National Library of Ireland are invested with associations of intellectual distinction, national achievement and cultural identity.⁷⁶

Schneider asserts that the 'spirituality' or the inherent value the wearer and viewer ascribes to the clothing, and the aesthetic, or the richness of the fabric and craftsmanship, are essential to the self-enhancement of the wearer. Combined, spirit and beauty expressed in the richness of fabric together with the symbolism of colour invoke moral weight, adding impact and connection to human rituals, or courtly occasions such as initiation, investitures or, as concerns the present study, graduation ceremonies. Here 'sumptuary paraphernalia' is employed to materialise and communicate rank and hierarchy, with the most significant and beautiful vesture attributed to the higher echelons.⁷⁷ Though it might be argued that while access to beauty and aesthetics become more readily available with technological advances, the spiritual may remain elusive.

Attention to the material also allows the involvement of the artisan and craftspeople, historically less well represented in the documentary and art record, in dress conception and fabrication to be analysed.⁷⁸ Schneider distinguishes between the 'courtly' cultures which privilege artisans and craftsmanship in the service of elites and post-modern

⁷⁵ Jane Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," in *Handbook of material culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuechler, Mike Rowlands, Patricia Spyer (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 204.

⁷⁶ Bryson Ltd. (fl.1912-1981). *Academic gown [PhD Cantab.] and hood [MA Dublin], Ireland, worn by Professor Ernest Walton of TCD, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1951, c.1934*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. DT:1993.32.1, DT:1993.32.1-3.1, DT:1993.32.2. J. Wippell & Company (fl.1789-2024). *Academic Hood for Louise Gavan Duffy Honorary Degree [LL.D.] by the National University of Ireland, 1948*. National Library of Ireland, Louise Gavan Duffy Papers, 1884-1982. MS 46,274/6.

⁷⁷ Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," 206.

⁷⁸ Gaskell and Carter, *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, 4, 13.

capitalist societies of mass production opening access to all.⁷⁹ Both courtly and capitalist approaches arguably co-exist and interact in university settings.⁸⁰ Whether the expensive 'courtly' apparel worn by the platform party during commencements or the mass-produced rental gowns worn by excited graduates, academic dress is used to enhance the person and the settings it is displayed in.

The need for expression through clothing and accompanying ritual endures, and the idea of 'self-enhancement' is equally true for institutes of learning as for the individual.

Clothing in particular open insights into the non-verbal, the sensory, and emotional.⁸¹

Academic dress, plays multiple roles with both practical function and aesthetic quality, acting as both accoutrement and symbol in university ritual and display. Wearing such dress empowers, denotes prestige and position, engenders respect of others, reinforces self-worth and creates group identity.⁸² Decoding these roles provides the levers to understand how this form of dress underpins and displays cultural and social structures and changes over time.

The iconography of Academic Dress

The ability to describe academic dress has many imperatives with varying degrees of subjectivity and objectivity. Universities need to be able to define and protect distinctive schemes of institutional dress; tailors require accurate reproducible patterns and guidance on colours; participants and organizers of graduation ceremonies to be able to identify the apparel appropriate to the ceremony and degree, and the art historian the language to interpret dress as represented in art and objects. This section examines the textual, visual and graphic means that have been deployed over time to describe academic costume, illustrated by images relevant to TCD.

⁷⁹ Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing."

⁸⁰ At Aberdeen for example, The University Court is the University's governing body with ultimate responsibility for the institution.

⁸¹ Woodward, "What is Material Culture?"

⁸² Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," 203.

The vocabulary and origins of academic dress is well documented and has been the subject of numerous scholarly works. Mary Galway Houston and others have described the origins of academic dress in medieval monastic attire in England and France between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁸³ Norman Hargreaves-Mawdsley's volume on the history of academic dress in Europe from the medieval period to the end of the eighteenth century continues to be the definitive work in this area, despite its imperfections.⁸⁴ Kerr helpfully maps the essential layers of medieval academic dress - cassock, gown, habit and hood - onto the scheme of academic dress recognizable today.⁸⁵

The iconography of scholarship is permeated with images of tonsured and robed medieval scholars, recruited to convey antiquity and continuity of learning.⁸⁶ Houston's drawings for example depict medieval academics, hands in prayerful position, have the graphic flat quality of the effigies, monumental brasses, incised stones and stained glass on which she based her work (Fig. 1.4). These have been later reproduced by historians of medieval scholastic dress such as Kerr.⁸⁷

Classifiable academic dress first appears in the fifteenth century, based on the dress of monastic teaching orders. Schools were located within the confines of monastic establishments and, as scholars were considered to clerks in minor orders, cross-over with ecclesiastical costume was inevitable. Dress emerged early on as a signifier of community, status within it and a visual representation of organization around the now familiar university classes of Doctors and Bachelors of Theology, Canon and Civil Law and Physic,

⁸³ Mary G Houston, *Medieval costume in England and France : the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries* (New York: Dover Publications ; London : Constable, 1996), 153-157. Sally Barker, *Dressing by Degrees: The academic dress of Oxford University*, (Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council, 1988).

⁸⁴ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*. An *Irish Times* reviewer considered the book "eminently pleasing...of considerable scholarship and well-illustrated" R.A., "Dressing up," Book review, *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 23 1963, though Kerr points out numerous corrections Alex Kerr, "Hargreaves-Mawdsley's History of Academical Dress and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 8, no. 1 (2008).

⁸⁵ Alex Kerr, "Layer upon Layer: The Evolution of Cassock, Gown, Habit and Hood as Academic Dress," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 5, no. 1 (2005), 58.

⁸⁶ von Hülsen-Esch, *Gelehrte im Bild: Repräsentation, Darstellung und Wahrnehmung einer sozialen Gruppe im Mittelalter*.

⁸⁷ Kerr, "Layer upon Layer: The Evolution of Cassock, Gown, Habit and Hood as Academic Dress."

Masters and Bachelors of Arts and undergraduates.⁸⁸ The details of various garments came to denote function and rank. All members of the university wore a sub-tunica or cassock under their gowns, scarlet for doctors of divinity and law. The shape, colour, quality of fabric and linings of hoods indicated academic qualifications. Doctors were permitted to wear a Pileus or cap.

The agency and reach of monasticism ensured that academic dress was essentially similar across fifteenth century Europe, but by the sixteenth century the foundations of modern academic dress in England began to emerge.⁸⁹ Hargreaves-Mawdsley asserts that while academic dress fell into abeyance in Europe of the seventeenth century, academic dress continued to be worn in the English universities evolving 'until the end of the eighteenth century as dress will if worn from day to day'.⁹⁰ By then, the essential elements of academic dress had stabilised and a national system of academic dress seems to have emerged, albeit with some differentiation between Oxford and Cambridge. TCD, chartered in 1592, arguably preserved sixteenth century practice of wearing 'the robes proper to the various degrees...with no concept of a particular university being indicated by unique robes' though largely following Oxford models.⁹¹

The flourishing academic fashions of Regency England were documented by Anglo-German publisher Rudolph Ackermann (1764-1834) in lavish histories of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge published in 1814 and 1815.⁹² Students and academics in their official dress are presented in superb hand-coloured prints of lithographed by John Samuel Agar (1773-1858) based on watercolour portraits by Thomas Uwins RA (1782-1857) of mostly known sitters. Some examples relevant to later chapters are shown in

⁸⁸ Initially Professor, Doctor and Master were synonymous, signifying a teacher or learned man. The distinction between Doctors and Masters emerged in southern Europe during the fourteenth century.

Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 3.

⁸⁹ Houston, *Medieval costume in England and France : the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries*, 156. Kerr, "Layer upon Layer: The Evolution of Cassock, Gown, Habit and Hood as Academic Dress."

⁹⁰ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, viii.

⁹¹ Nicholas Groves, "Historical English Academic Robes: A Basis for a 'National' System," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 4, no. 1 (2004). Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 146, asserts the Dublin scheme is tilted toward Cambridge, though this is debatable see Bruce Christianson, "In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 4, no. 1 (2004); Kerr, "Hargreaves-Mawdsley's History of Academical Dress and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections."

⁹² Nicholas Jackson, *Ackermann's costumes of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge*, Burgon Society Historical reprints, (Bridport: The Burgon Society, 2016), v.

Figure 1.5. These somewhat idealistic illustrations, created for a wealthy, educated buyers show thoughtful and serene academics together with earnest and composed students confident of their position and rank in a well-ordered and enlightened world. Their work arguably set the standard for this genre and may have given impetus to William Benjamin Sarsfield Taylor (1781-1850) to publish his illustrated *History of the University of Dublin*, 1819 and 1845 (discussed in Chapter 3).⁹³

Meanwhile political, social, and economic changes in nineteenth century Europe extended equally to innovations in academic costume and ritual. With the remarkable expansion of new universities, theological and music schools in mid-nineteenth century Britain and Ireland academic dress began to diversify from its origins in Oxford and Cambridge.⁹⁴ A flurry of new universities and theological colleges, precipitated the emergence of new schemes of academic dress. Bourgeoning interest in academic dress in period may also have been inspired by the mid-Victorian fashion for gothic revivalism, which sought to restore use of medieval Gothic forms in art and architecture, closely linked with the revival of Anglo-Catholic ritualism. Flowing robes and vibrant colours of medieval costume suffuse the style and decorative arts of the pre-Raphaelite movement. Costumes in works such as the Oxford Union murals 1857-59 commissioned by John Ruskin (1819-1900), paintings by Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and John Everett Millais RA (1829-1896). The pre-Raphaelites were informed by their study of such sources as Bonnard's, *Costumes historiques* which included illustrations of fourteenth century doctors of medicine and law in scarlet. James Robinson Planché's *A Cyclopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress*, 1879 would also have been a familiar and fashionable influence on students, academics and robemakers of the period.⁹⁵

⁹³ William B. Sarsfield Taylor, Bluck, John, Havell, R., Del Sarto, B., *History of the University of Dublin* (London: W.B. Taylor; R. Jennings, 1819-1820); Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*.

⁹⁴ Christianson notes that in 1819 there were only 8 universities with academic dress schemes in Britain and the Colonies, but by 1901 this had increased to 39 (including the federated universities). Prof. Bruce Christianson, email to author, July 5, 2024.

⁹⁵ Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Arthur Hughes et.al. *Oxford Union murals*, (1857-1859), Oxford University Union, Oxford. Camille Bonnard, *Costumes historiques des 12me-15me siècles, tirés des monuments les plus authentiques de peinture et de sculpture* (Paris: A Lévy Fils, 1860). James Robinson Planché, *A cyclopaedia of costume or dictionary of dress, including notices of*

Victorian robemakers created schemes of dress for new institutions without, according to Hargreaves-Mawdsley, a true understanding of their inheritance and what went before.⁹⁶ In an attempt to restore order, lists of academic dress compiled by enthusiasts began to appear in the 1850s with the publication Gutch's tables of University hoods in *Notes & Queries* in 1858.⁹⁷ Debates on correct dress could be heated. Trinity resident John Ribton Garstin (1836-1917), who had earlier contributed to Gutch's tables for Dublin, conducted a lively exchange through the pages of *Notes & Queries* in defence of TCD. Garstin complained that Gutch had relegated Dublin to after London and Durham rather than in its rightful position next to Oxford and Cambridge saying 'it is too much the fashion to consider everything Irish as necessarily inferior'.⁹⁸ The error was corrected in the September number.⁹⁹

Further catalogues followed under the imprints of ecclesiastical publishers and tailoring companies serving clerical clients.¹⁰⁰ The first to be published in Ireland was in the 1865 edition of the *Church of Ireland Directory* compiled by James Charles.¹⁰¹ Despite early disputes, and subjectivity in descriptions of colour, the information in these earliest publications rapidly stabilized, at least for Dublin. They filled a void in official guidance from the College, which seems to have relied on custom and practice, and robemakers, to regulate a relatively simple scheme of academic dress. It was not until 1922-1923 that the regulations on the colours of hoods and gowns Dublin degrees appeared in the University Calendar.¹⁰²

contemporaneous fashions on the continent, vol. 2, A general history of costume in Europe (London: Chatto and Windus, 1879).

⁹⁶ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*. vii.

⁹⁷ J. W. G. Gutch, "Colour of university Hoods," *Notes and Queries*, May 15, 1858, 402.

⁹⁸ John Ribton Garstin, "University Hoods," *Notes and Queries*, April 17, 1858, 324. John Ribton Garstin, "Letter in response to Mr Gutch's Table of University Hoods," *Notes and Queries*, June 19, 1858, 502. Garstin (1836-1917) BA 1857, MA 1860, went on to become President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (1902-1905) see James B Leslie, "In Memoriam [J Ribton Garstin]," *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* 4, no. 2 (1917).

⁹⁹ J. W. G. Gutch, "University Hoods," *Notes and Queries*, September 11, 1858, 211-2.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas William Wood, *Ecclesiastical and Academical Colours. (Of the various colours used in the Service of the Church-University Dresses, etc.)* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1875). Thomas William Wood, *The Degrees, Gowns and Hoods of the British, Colonial, Indian and American Universities and Colleges* (London: Pratt & Sons, 1883). John Woodward, "Academic hoods, &c.," in *Year book for the Episcopal Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh: R Grant & Son, 1899).

¹⁰¹ James Charles, *Irish Church Directory* (Dublin: James Charles, 1865), 137.

¹⁰² Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis & Co., 1881-1985), 1922-23, 18.

These early catalogues were limited to tables listing degrees, colours and fabrics. Shapes of gowns and hoods and colours seem to have been left to local custom and practice and robemakers to regulate. Information also passed between robemakers. A page from Cambridge robemakers Northam's workbook includes a simple hand drawn diagram dated 1913, along with technical instructions, for the making of a Dublin undergraduate gown (Fig. 1.6). Together, these provide sufficient instructions for an experienced tailor to reconstruct the garment.

In response to expansion of higher education and a sign of increasing demand for gowns and hoods *Vincent's Tailors and Cutters Guide* published around 1897/8, devoted a section to 'Cutting and Making Various Kinds of Robes, Gowns, Surplices, Hoods, Vestments, etc.' including Dublin University dress. Tailor & Cutter was a prominent training institution for tailors in London that also sold equipment, correspondence course and technical publications such as the *Tailor & Cutter* magazine.

In these publications academic costume is represented in yet another way. The illustrations are graphic and utilitarian, presenting technical patterns and measurements together with lists of prescribed colours and fabrics (Fig. 1.7). Line drawings of male academics in costume half turned to the viewer, with exaggerated openings and stiffly lying folds and contours, guide the craftsman on the shape and look of the final garment (Fig. 1.8).¹⁰³ These illustrations were themselves based on drawings of costumes of the University of Oxford, printed by Thomas Shrimpton (1806-1885), a prominent Oxford bookseller and publisher of caricatures of University and student life.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ William Deskett Foot Vincent, *The Cutter's Practical Guide Jacket Cutting and Making: Embracing Lounges, Reefers & Patrol Jackets in All Their Varieties ; Also Including the Cutting and Making of Robes & Gowns* (London: John Williamson, 1898). 69-84. "More About W.D.F. Vincent." The Vincent Conglomeration, 1991, accessed July 15, 2024, <https://vincents.org.uk/family-history/w-d-f-vincent-tailor/more-about-w-d-f-vincent>. William D F Vincent (1860-1826) cutter, journalist and educator, ran an integrated portfolio of business activities as editor of the *Tailor and Cutter* and other technical publications from 1895 to 1924. He was also head of the Tailor and Cutter Academy, a prominent training institution in Drury Lane, London that also sold equipment and correspondence courses for tailors. Reginald Lloyd "Reggie" Bryson (1910-1992) of Bryson Ltd, Church Lane, official robemaker to the University of Dublin, 1963-81, was trained by the Academy.

¹⁰⁴ A. Thomas Shrimpton, *Shrimpton's Series of the Costumes of the Members of the University of Oxford* (Oxford: A.T. Shrimpton & Son, 1885). Colin Harris, "'Shrimpton & Son's 'Oxford Caricatures': a new resource for the study of student life in nineteenth-century Oxford," *Bodleian Library Record* 30, no. 1-2 (2017).

Home seamstresses also needed guidance. An article in the *Girl's Own Paper* in 1880, welcomed the opening of degrees to women by the University of London in 1878 with a 'sketch of the various shapes and colours of such, with a few simple instructions for the making of these complicated looking vestments'.¹⁰⁵ The demurely written piece aimed at making academic dress more accessible and affordable for women, opening the way to engagement in academic life.¹⁰⁶ It was however too early to show a woman graduate, and the article is illustrated by a male Oxford BA, looking incredulous, together with some basic patterns for Oxford and Cambridge hoods (Fig. 1.9).

With increasing access to higher education, interest in academic costume became further popularized and in the early 1900s illustrations, including TCD academic dress, began to appear in magazines and encyclopaedias catering for flourishing middle-class audiences. Through the first quarter of the 1900s the *British Medical Journal*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the popular press such as the *Girl's Own Paper* and the *Boy's Own Paper* featured descriptions and compilations of academic dress.¹⁰⁷ With the emergence of cheaper offset colour printing technology University dress schemes proliferated in the British popular press and encyclopaedia of the 1920-40s. Articles accompanied by images with the lifeless quality of collector's figurines were recycled in popular publications such as *Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia* (1920-22), *The New Book of Knowledge* (1930s - 1940s) and *Everybody's Enquire Within* (1938) (Fig. 1.10).¹⁰⁸ Despite University degrees having already been open to women for over 50 years, exclusively male academics display their finery in a variety of 'mansplaining' gestures. Sometimes presented accompanied by university coats of arms, including TCD, readers were reminded of power of the patriarchy and medieval roots of academic dress and its iconography.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ "University hoods and how to make them," *Girl's Own Paper* (London), August 28 1880, 564.

¹⁰⁶ Mike Ratchliffe, "Disrupting Academic Dress: The Girls' Own Paper," *WordPress.com*, June 11 2017, <https://moremeansbetter.wordpress.com/2017/07/08/disrupting-academic-dress-the-girls-own-paper/>.

¹⁰⁷ e.g. *British Medical Journal*, "Academic Costumes," *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2586 (1910), 202-05. See also Kerr, "Bibliography of Academic Dress."

¹⁰⁸ Charles (ed.) Ray, "What hood or gown is that? What colours are university hoods?," in *Everybody's Enquire Within* (London: Amalgamated Press, 1938), 1513-14.

¹⁰⁹ e.g. Frank Collins, (illustrator), *British University Hoods and Coats of Arms*, ed. Gordon Stowell, vol. 9, *The Book of Knowledge*, (London: Waverley Book Co., c.1959).

Cigarette cards attest to the continued interest in academic dress in the inter-war era. Cards issued by W.D. & H.O. Wills in 1926 illustrated by A.V. Wheeler-Holohan (1889-) with texts by Charles Franklyn present Dublin BA and MA hoods and gowns with variable accuracy (Fig. 1.11).¹¹⁰

Shaw's 1966 (with updates in 1995 and 2011) and Smith and Sheard's 1970 compilations presented the first illustrations of gown and hood shapes in catalogues of British and Irish academic dress including TCD (Figs. 1.12 & 1.13).¹¹¹ In these, the hoods and gowns are represented by Kate Douglas diagrammatically with flattened, simplified folds without volume.¹¹² Smith's drawing of a Dublin undergraduate gown (Fig 1.13a) recalls the flattened outlines of monumental brasses in Mary Houston's images of medieval scholars.¹¹³ Lacking the information on volume and dimension of Vincent's patterns for tailors, these images focus on shape in service of classification and taxonomy. The subjective niceties of colour and fabric is left to textual supports.

English aesthete Thomas Baty opined against over-prescription in academic dress schemes and colours.¹¹⁴ As colours tend to mellow and fade with time, military precision is best avoided and 'the poetry of colour is offended by rigid rules'. For him while the logical application of a colour scheme may make sense, inflexible application can lead to unfortunate combinations. He argued that aesthetic sensibility should be applied in the selection of colours, juxtaposing light and dark colours, separating colours of the same intensity by paler tints. In practice colour is influenced by the vagaries of description, robesmakers interpretations, the preferences of wearers, and economic considerations.

¹¹⁰ A.V. Wheeler-Holohan, *University Hoods & Gowns*, 1926. W D & H O Wills/Imperial Tobacco Company; Nicholas Groves, "Popularizing University Hoods and Gowns: Wills's Cigarette Cards, 1926," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 7 (2007).

¹¹¹ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*. George W. Shaw, *Academical dress of British and Irish universities* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1995); Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*. Smith Hugh H and Sheard, *Academic dress and insignia of the world : gowns, hats, chains of office, hoods, rings, medals and other degree insignia of universities & other institutions of learning*.

¹¹² Douglas, Kate. *Drawings of gowns, hoods and hats*. Illustrations in Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*.

¹¹³ Smith Hugh H and Sheard, *Academic dress and insignia of the world : gowns, hats, chains of office, hoods, rings, medals and other degree insignia of universities & other institutions of learning*, 428. Drawings in this work were by Hugh Smith and his wife (unnamed).

¹¹⁴ Thomas Baty, *Academic colours* (Tokio: Kenkyusha Press, 1934), 4. These views were coherent with Baty's fluid stance on gender and sexuality. Described as transgender Baty, along with Eva Gore-Booth and others, co-edited *Urania*, a feminist gender studies journal under the pseudonym of Irene Claude.

In an early attempt to introduce objectivity and order to colour description, the British Colour Council (BCC) published its Dictionary of Colour Standards in 1934.¹¹⁵ The Council was not embarrassed to 'place colour determination for the British Empire in British hands, obtain advance information about fashion colour tendencies and provide standard names for colours, with a view to eliminating the confusion which at present exists'. The Dictionary contained fabric swatches, with colour names often tinged with colonial overtones, together with a BCC colour code and technical specifications for each sample (Fig. 1.14). Robemakers' descriptions of the colours of hoods are fraught with subjectivity and the opportunity to use the BCC system to standardize academic colours was recognized by Shaw, 1966.¹¹⁶ Bryson's provided the colour information for the University of Dublin based on the BCC 2nd edition published in 1951. Despite the logical attractions, the BCC system was not widely taken up by robemakers or institutions.¹¹⁷

Deprived of a common lexicon, universities and colleges use different or imprecise terms to describe the same dress objects. In response the 2001 Groves Classification proposed a taxonomic key to identify and describe in specific order, the shape of any academic gown or hood in the same way as heraldic blazon allows a coat of arms to be drawn.¹¹⁸ The system has since seen several iterations and has been adopted as standard by robe makers and scholars of academic dress.¹¹⁹ Although relatively successful as regards cut and shape, objective standards for describing colour in academic costume remain elusive.¹²⁰ Groves' personal workbooks, however, include hand-coloured drawings showing the range of TCD hoods depicted with the charm of a botanist's field notebook (Fig. 1.15)¹²¹

¹¹⁵ British Colour Council.

¹¹⁶ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 34, 50-52.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Scott, "The BCC Numbering System: Back to the Future?," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 5 (2005). The University of Melbourne includes BCC codes for degree colours in its Regulation 12.6.R1 made under Statute 12.6.9, July 10, 2006.

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Groves, "Toward a standard terminology for describing academic robes," *Burgon Society Annual* 1 (2001), 9.

¹¹⁹ Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*. 7-40 and "Groves classification system," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2010-2024, accessed July 11, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Groves_classification_system&oldid=1229212401

¹²⁰ Groves, "Toward a standard terminology for describing academic robes", 9. Scott, "The BCC Numbering System: Back to the Future?."

¹²¹ Nicholas Groves, (1956-2023), "Dublin" in *Hoods for British degrees & diplomas 2nd edition*, 1990. Unpublished sketch book, with hand drawings, ink and coloured pencil on paper. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. GROV/1/1/2.

Chapter 2. Regular Habits: Codification of academic dress at TCD

Introduction

Academic dress communicates both the sense of association and collective endeavour as well as a visual key to the hierarchies observed in collegiate life. As with medieval guilds of scholars and the RHA, dress is a physical manifestation of the corporate body and a distinguishing feature of the institution. In universities, where more elaborate systems of dress are developed, academic dress is both ‘a physical representation of the University’s structure and a reward’.¹²² Although academic dress has been deployed as a uniform, identifying college functions, conveying status, authority and organization since foundation, it was not until the early 20th century that a formalized system of academic dress and usage emerged at TCD. Prior to this, academic dress was a *de facto* and unquestioned aspect of College life, while from around 1970 academic dress becomes largely confined to the ceremonial fringes. This chapter examines the community and governance of the University of Dublin and TCD, and the codification of its attendant system of academic dress and etiquette.

Mater Universitatis: The University of Dublin and Trinity College

Incorporated by royal charter from Elizabeth I in 1592, Trinity College *juxta Dublin* formed part of Tudor strategy to reinforce its influence in post-reformation Ireland by promoting a Protestant ethos and educating its future elites.¹²³ The new College was modelled on Trinity College, Cambridge in terms of organization and constitution, at least at the outset.¹²⁴ The foundation charter refers to the institution as the *mater universitatis* (“mother of a University”), suggesting that the founders envisaged the College would

¹²² "Academic Dress," Oxford University, 2020, accessed September 6, 2020, <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/The-University-Year/Encaenia/academic-dress>.

¹²³ This section (2.2) is drawn from the preface to Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)." 5-6, and Andrew J C Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800–2020)," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 22 (2022), 63-65. The College retained a distinct Protestant ambience well into the 1970s. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 5.

¹²⁴ Thomas Fuller, *The church-history of Britain from the birth of Jesus Christ until the year M.DC.XLVIII (1655)*, 3rd ed., vol. 3, ed. James Nichols (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, 1842), 124.

eventually form part of a larger University, and was vested with the powers and functions of both a College and University. At the root of this ambiguity, according to McDowell and Webb, is that that TCD was the last of the medieval collegiate universities in the mode of Oxford and Cambridge, and the first of the eighteenth-century colonial institutions such as Harvard and Yale.¹²⁵ Degrees awarded at foundation included the BA, MA, BD, DD, LLB and the LLD (Table 2).¹²⁶

Trinity remains the only constituent College of the University of Dublin, and it was not until 1857 that a governance structure for the University was legally formalized. In practice both are one and the same, operating under the auspices of the Board which the principal governing body of both the College and the University. The Board performs the functions of the Body Corporate of the College, known as the “Provost, Fellows, Foundation Scholars and other members of the Board of the College”. Chaired by the Provost until September 2023, when the function passed to an independent external chair, the Board acts as the College on all matters concerning finance, education, scholarship, external relations, ethics, and discipline.

The Letters Patent of Queen Victoria, 24 July 1857, confirmed the University Senate as a ‘body of dignity but little power’, styled as the “Chancellor, Doctors and Masters of the University of Dublin”.¹²⁷ Its principal function is to confer degrees of the University of Dublin, earned at Trinity College, Dublin. The Senate approves Graces proposed by the Board and no degree can be awarded without its approval. Meetings of the Senate must take place in the presence of the University Caput, comprising the Chancellor (or the Pro-Chancellor) along with the Provost and the Senior Master Non-Regent. Any member of the Caput may veto a Grace for a degree proposed by the Board.

The interfaces between College and University can be fluid, as attested by the composition of the Caput where the Chancellor (or the Pro-Chancellor) represents the University while

¹²⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 4-5.

¹²⁶ Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 43.

¹²⁷ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)," 6.

the Provost and the Senior Master Non-Regent represent TCD. The Registrar is uniquely a member of both bodies. Business to be put before the Senate must be approved by the Board of Trinity College.

Statute and Status: regulating academic dress at TCD

The Statutes constitute the documents on which the life of Trinity College and University of Dublin are founded. In the seventeenth century these concentrated largely on the curriculum, moving to employment and residence in the eighteenth century, and governance in the nineteenth century.¹²⁸ Statutes between 1637 and 1926 did not go into great detail on matters of sartorial regulation. Nevertheless, concepts of academic dress as symbolizing community, identity and achievement have always been implicit in the basic laws of the College and the University, as remains the case today.¹²⁹

TCD dress tradition was drawn from Oxford and Cambridge and, as a largely unified system of dress existed across all three institutions until the mid-nineteenth century, it seems there was no imperative to legislate.¹³⁰ Where seventeenth century Dublin statutes did pronounce on costume, their focus was on correct dress as a sign of dignity and a tool of discipline, reflecting political tensions between non-conformist and traditionalist parties of the period. Later statutes came to view dress as symbolizing status and accomplishment, with new regulations being instituted in response to the diversification of degrees with the educational and curriculum reforms of the late 1800s.

Dublin has historically been less prescriptive than Oxbridge on matters of dress. In the seventeenth century Oxford issued regular reminders on the dress to be worn by various

¹²⁸ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)," 5.

¹²⁹ Degrees awarded by the University together with the hoods and gowns are prescribed by the University Senate and set out in the Table of Degrees in the Schedule 1 of the University Division of the Statutes, while the regulations for the wearing of Academic dress are given in Schedule 3 of the Statutes - Community Division Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)", 170-175, 236. *Ex officio* robes worn by the Chancellor and Pro-Chancellors, are dealt with elsewhere: Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800–2020)."

¹³⁰ Wood, *The Degrees, Gowns and Hoods of the British, Colonial, Indian and American Universities and Colleges*, 3. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 146. Christianson, "In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin."; Nicholas Groves, "Historical English Academic Robes: A Basis for a 'National' System," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 4, no. 1 (2004).

ranks of the University.¹³¹ In Cambridge academical dress continues to be regulated closely, with Proctorial Notices concerning dress posted annually online and prominently on the University and College premises.¹³² In contrast, in Dublin informal external sources took the place of statutory regulation on dress, and detailed prescriptions on academic only began to appear in the Calendar from 1922 and the Statutes from 1926.

Vestarian controls

The earliest TCD Statutes were prepared by Provost William Temple (c.1555–1627) between 1614-1617, apparently in the hope of securing a separate Charter for the University.¹³³ They mainly concern College organisation and duties, though it seems from the scraps of manuscript which remain that dress regulations were influenced by the Cambridge tradition, where Temple had been a Fellow of King's College. Temple's statutes stipulated that following admission to the MA degree masters should continue as Regents, that is undertaking teaching duties for five years, as in Cambridge. They were also obliged to attended meetings of the University when summoned dressed in academic costume'.¹³⁴

A stand-off between the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot (1562-1633), also Chancellor of the University, and Temple on the wearing of surplices became a proxy for wider concerns regarding the non-conformist climate developing in College.¹³⁵ The Provost and Fellows were anti-vestment, opting to dispense with surplices in Chapel. In February 1613 Abbot wrote to the Lord Deputy on behalf of the King condemning the

¹³¹ University of Oxford, "At a meeting of the heads of houses, April 28, 1690. Whereas great care hath been taken for regulating the apparel and habits of all scholars of whatever rank or degree within the University," (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1690), accessed, August 25, 2025, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2248531932/62369517?accountid=14404&parentSessionId=RxjvxUNs8VFk9CbOO2XCRz%2BnGn3GYUVjBRiYnSNBnNo%3D&sourcetype=Books>.

¹³² Markus Gehring and Fraz Mir, "Proctorial Notice - Academic Dress" (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2024), accessed August, 25, 2025, www.proctors.cam.ac.uk/files/media/academical_dress_2024_o.pdf.

¹³³ Stubbs, *The History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 45-46.

¹³⁴ Non-Regents were no longer involved in instruction. Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 45-46.

¹³⁵ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 37-38.

practice of Provost and Fellows who 'refuse to come into the quire, or to the chappell on Sundays and Holy Days in their Surplices and hoode fit for their degrees' (Fig. 2.1).¹³⁶

Temple seems to have won the day, arguing that as a layman he did not come under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop and as a married man had come to College in a civil capacity.¹³⁷ Furthermore as students were required to wear surplices as part of their preparation of the ministry, the rule did not apply to him as Provost, being 'no more obliged to use the surplice than to perform the scholastic exercise required of the Students' (Fig. 2.2).¹³⁸ For Temple, dress was clearly a means to denote status and function which, as might be expected of a non-conformist, he considered should be a matter of local custom and regulation.

William Bedell (c.1571-1642) succeeded Temple as Provost in 1627 and went on to draw up the Statutes of 1629 building on the work of his predecessor. This earliest complete set of regulations focused on restoring discipline, attendance at Chapel and cultivating good manners, not least in burnishing public perceptions of the College'.¹³⁹ In 1627 Bedell wrote to the Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher (1581-1656) outlining his reforms and railing against 'new fangledness in apparel and long hair, and ruffles, wherein this city, and the very greatest of clergy are, methinks, very exorbitant'.¹⁴⁰ These trends were also observed in the English Universities. Fifteenth century Oxford was forced to regulate to prevent undergraduates wearing hoods adorned with silk or furs normally reserved for higher degrees, classes, or the ranks of nobility. By the sixteenth century however sombre black gowns began to be imposed, the uniformity believed to encourage good behaviour.¹⁴¹

Described as a 'semi-puritan' Bedell's emphasis on sobriety and decorum in dress and comportment is not surprising.¹⁴² Undergraduates were forbidden to go into the city, on

¹³⁶ Copy of a portion of "A letter from the Lord Archbp of Canterbury to the Lord Chancellor of Ireland 25th Feb 1613..." 25 February 1613/14. TCD/MUN/P/1/72.

¹³⁷ "The Provost for the considerations hereafter specified, humbly pray that the use of the surplice may not be urged up on him." TCD/MUN/P/1/70.

¹³⁸ Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 28.

¹³⁹ Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 327-375, provides a transcription of Bedell's 1629 Statutes in Latin.

¹⁴⁰ Ussher's *Works* vol. XVI, p. 458. Quoted in Harold Lawson Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co, 1951), 75.

¹⁴¹ Alan B Cobban, *English university life in the Middle Ages* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 48-49.

¹⁴² Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 354.

pain of fine, without written permission of their guardians. Fellows and students (except for Doctors and Bachelors in Divinity) were required always to wear gowns in College, and in town at their own discretion provided they walked 'decently and dressed in dark coloured clothes'.¹⁴³ Further afield, in the country around Dublin, students did not have to wear academical dress but were nevertheless required to wear sombre clothing.¹⁴⁴ The wearing of gowns in the street became a matter of debate between Bedell and Abbot. In question was whether students should be obliged to wear their gowns when they went, with their tutor's permission, into the City of Dublin. Bedell was of the view that they should not because 'the streets were very foul' in which case the Chancellor suggested that they should carry them under their arms.¹⁴⁵ For Abbot the visibility of the student body in the community and perceptions of TCD as a disciplined place of learning are objectified by the students' gowns and their adherence to regulations.

Bedell's Statutes were rapidly superseded by those prepared by William Laud (1573-1645) Archbishop of Canterbury (1633-45). Laud was already Chancellor of the University of Oxford when he became Chancellor of Dublin in 1633. He had drawn up the statutes for Oxford in 1636 and his statutes for Dublin were formalized a year later by the Charter of Charles I on Trinity Monday, June 5th, 1637. Laud's Dublin Statutes built largely on the work of Temple and Bedell, but centralized fundamental powers of governance, reserving the right for the Crown to appoint the Provost and promulgate statutes and ordinances, while strengthening the Provost's powers in matters of discipline.¹⁴⁶

Laud was a loyal Anglican, authoritarian and traditional high churchman, finally executed for his opposition to Puritanism. He was also the son of a well-to-do clothier. It is therefore not unsurprising that his Statutes employ provisions on dress to reinforce principles of tradition, uniformity, order, and ceremony in church and state affairs. For Laud dress is intended as means of identification, control and discipline. Modesty,

¹⁴³ Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 346.

¹⁴⁴ Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 200.

¹⁴⁵ For Mahaffy this alternative was undignified, presuming 'from these gowns costing so much, that they were ampler than they now are, and that he meant tucking them up under their arm' Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 206.

¹⁴⁶ Luce, *Trinity College Dublin : the first 400 years*, 18.

restraint and respect for hierarchy ‘which befits an Academical State’ was expected of students, their heads uncovered in the presence of Fellows.¹⁴⁷ During the Provostship of Robert Ussher (c.1592–1642), 1629–1634, everyone under the degree of MA was ordered to uncover their heads when meeting the Provost in the quadrangle, though the sons of noblemen and heirs were exempted.

The fracas concerning surplices in chapel continued under the provostship of traditionalist William Chappell (c.1582 – 1649), 1634 – 1640. The promotion of Nathaniel Hoyle to Senior Fellowship had been rejected by the Provost in 1635 for not wearing a surplice to services in College Chapel.¹⁴⁸ The affair eventually reached the Lord Deputy exclaiming ‘all this for a Fellow’s sake that never wore a Surplice’.¹⁴⁹ In response Laud moved to enforce the traditionalist stance on dress by Statute, stipulating that all ranks from the Provost downwards should attend services in clean Surplices, together hoods as appropriate, under pain of a five shilling fine.¹⁵⁰ Costume was likewise used as a pretext for the expulsion of Richard Coghlan as Senior Fellow in October 1647 as ‘the habit of his dress was unstatutable’.¹⁵¹

Laud’s Statutes also ruled on the hoary issue of the appropriateness of attire expected of students going about town, including curious attention (to modern sensibilities) to appropriate footwear and coiffure: ‘no one shall wear Boots with his Gown or affect the Pomp of a Court in his Dress, Hair, or Gait’. This was an issue that seems to have continued into the 1670s, judging from a copy of the Oxford Statutes on the topic preserved TCD.¹⁵² Fellows and students of all ranks were now obliged to wear a gown both in College and in the city, restricting the latitude given in Bedell’s regulations.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Bolton, *A translation of the charter and statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, together with the library statutes, and the rules of the university. To which is added a table of expences of each degree* (Dublin: Oli. Nelson, printer for the Translator 1749), 55.

¹⁴⁸ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592–1927*, 71.

¹⁴⁹ Hoyle was eventually confirmed as a Senior Fellow in 1660. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592–1952 : an academic history*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Bolton, *A translation of the charter and statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, together with the library statutes, and the rules of the university. To which is added a table of expences of each degree*, 43.

¹⁵¹ Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 88.

¹⁵² Copy of “Oxford statute against long hair and ostentatious dress, November 24 1674”, TCD/MUN/P/1/481.

Nonetheless, students not in Holy Orders could dress as they please outwith the College and the City of Dublin, provided they appeared decent and in dark-coloured clothing.¹⁵³

Royalist Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), appointed Vice-Chancellor following the Stuart Restoration in 1660, regretted the deterioration in dress habits under the puritan regime. In a letter to the Chancellor, James Butler (1610-1688) he deplored the lack of regulations pertaining to the proper functioning of a University including 'scarce any ensignes academical'.¹⁵⁴

Restoring order

Laud's Statutes required that amendments be promulgated by the Crown, with the effect that statutory changes were enacted by an accretion of some 35 Letters Patent issued by the Crown over a period of 300 years from 1637, culminating with the Letters Patent of George V on May 24th 1911 which restored to the College the right to amend its own Statutes.

As might be imagined, dress regulations were not a legislative preoccupation over this long interregnum. The vacuum in guidance was filled initially by an unofficial handbook for matriculating students privately published by an enterprising graduate "A. B. Late Student" in 1823.¹⁵⁵ Echoing Laud's strictures, the author emphasized expectations on student discipline, notably the importance of the Night Roll, at which gowns were obligatory. Matriculated students were not permitted to come into College without the proper academic dress, and surplices were to be worn on Sundays, Holydays and on the eves of those days. At other times they were required to wear a gown and, despite the time passed, boots were still forbidden with academic dress.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Bolton, *A translation of the charter and statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, together with the library statutes, and the rules of the university. To which is added a table of expences of each degree*, 59.

¹⁵⁴ Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 107.

¹⁵⁵ A.B. Late Student, *Discipline of Dublin University: Being a Concise Account of All the Duties of Students in Trinity College from Entrance to time of being Candidates for the Degree of A.M.; Designed for the Use of the Students*, (Dublin: 1823), 7-9.

¹⁵⁶ One of a series of caricatures *The Rake's-Progress at the University* by James Gillray (1756-1815) shows that practice of wearing boots with academic dress was also still frowned upon in England in the early 1800s. James Gillray, (1756-1815) published by Hannah Humphrey (c.1745-1818), *The Rake's-Progress at the University - No. 4 - "Expulsion waits that Son of Alma Mater who dares to shew his face in Boot or Gaiter"*, 1806, etching with aquatint, hand-coloured on paper, 24.7 × 35.3 cm. New Haven, Yale Centre for British Art. B.1995.23.26.

The first edition of the University of Dublin Calendar appeared in 1833, possibly as a response to the Late Student publication.¹⁵⁷ It contained an expansive history of the College and a good summary of the earliest commencements and statutes, but with no mention of dress. Soon after the College took over responsibility for the Calendar, and regulations on dress were gradually introduced. In 1892 a requirement appeared that gowns be worn at meetings of Senate. Dress took on additional significance with the admission of women in the Hilary term 1904. While the new women students were considered subject to the same discipline as men, the 1906-1907 Calendar provided that 'Except when entering or leaving College, [women students] shall wear their College Caps and Gowns in the College Squares and Parks, unless accompanied by a chaperon'.¹⁵⁸ They were also required to vacate the College by 6 pm each evening. Academic dress thus became a means of identification, in effect legitimizing the presence of women students and their right of access to the College grounds.¹⁵⁹ This constraint only disappeared from the Calendar in 1931-1932.

The gender norms of courtesy and dress current in wider society of the time were nonetheless respected. Women, unlike men, were not expected to doff their caps to the Provost and Fellows, nor required to remove them during lectures, an exception dropped in the 1908-1909 Calendar. The authorities were also faced with the new problem of what costume women should wear to Chapel services. Unsurprisingly, at a time when women priests were unimaginable, the 1926 Statutes ruled that men should be 'clad in white surplices, or, if women students, in black gowns, and the hood suited to the Degree, if any, of each'.¹⁶⁰

The early 1920s saw a marked increase in attention and rigour concerning academic dress in College. In 1922 a Committee was appointed with future provost William Thrift (1870-

¹⁵⁷ Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar* (Dublin: William Curry, Jun. and Co., 1833-1839). much of it written by James Henthorn Todd (1805-1869) then assistant librarian. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 528.

¹⁵⁸ Trinity College Dublin. *Dublin University Calendar*. Dublin: Hodges Figgis & Co., 1906-1907, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ Trinity College Dublin, "The Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin," (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1926). Chapter XX Statutes relating to the College Chapel, 107.

1942) as Secretary, to impose order on an unwieldy situation as concerned University and College governance. Their work resulted in the Consolidated Statutes 1926 which regrouped and replaced almost 300 years of Charters and Letters Patent. It was also an opportunity to address costume. Chapter XVIII *Relating to the degrees and licences conferred by the University* of the new Statutes laid out for the first time the academic dress regulation for the University.¹⁶¹ These included comprehensive rulings on the robes, gowns and hoods to be worn, when they should be worn and in what precedence. Specific regulations were set out for the dress to be worn by the Chancellor, Caput, Doctors and Masters on ceremonial occasions and meetings of the Senate, including Commencements. While materials and colours attributed to the various degrees were stipulated, patterns were to be those 'heretofore in use in the University', apart from some clear requirements on the design of the Chancellor's robes.¹⁶² The committee, limited by the scope of an unillustrated legal document, were obliged to leave these aspects to prevailing custom and the responsibility of robemakers.

The impetus to codify dress regulations at this time is uncertain. Clearly the revamp of the Statutes was an opportunity to impose order on sartorial practices which had evolved since foundation. There had also been a notable increase in number of degrees on offer. Up to the mid-nineteenth century there has been ten degrees available but by 1926 the University provided for twenty-nine. The requirement for a colour for the PhD instituted in 1920 may have added to the imperative. Imposing structure and order would no doubt have appealed to the physicist Thrift, who is better remembered as a natural administrator and for his skills as committee man.¹⁶³ He was also a Senior Mason in the Grand Lodge of Ireland no doubt well versed in matters of costume, precedent, and ritual.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Trinity College Dublin, "The Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin," 104-05.

¹⁶² Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800–2020)."

¹⁶³ H. H. Poole, "Dr. W. E. Thrift," *Nature* 149, no. 3791 (1942/06/01 1942), 726. Luce, *Trinity College Dublin : the first 400 years*, 143.

¹⁶⁴ "R.W.Bro. Professor William E. Thrift, W.M. 1917," *Irish Masonic History and the Jewels of Irish Freemasonry*, 2014, accessed September 20, 2024, <http://www.irishmasonichistory.com/rwb-ro-professor-william-e-thrift-wm-1917.html>.

The creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 left Trinity to defend its loyalist tendencies 'on the rather sterile ground of symbolism', with a number of incidences involving the continued use of loyalist flags, anthems and toasts as Trinity came to terms with Independence.¹⁶⁵ The move to codify dress, reinforce traditionalist values and loyalty to the *ancien régime* may have had the support of the Vice-Chancellor James Henry Mussen Campbell, 1st Baron Glenavy (1851–1931). Glenavy was known to take a close interest in regalia and understood the importance of costume as a symbol of power and identity, having later been at the centre of a lively debate on the design of the robes to be worn by the judiciary in post-independence Ireland.¹⁶⁶

Notions of rank and precedence are explicit throughout the 1926 regulations, expressed by richness of fabric and ornamentation as privilege of status, though paradoxically the Provost simply wears the robes of their highest degree.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the tableau recalls Schneider's courtly cultures relying on sumptuary paraphernalia to objectify and communicate hierarchy.¹⁶⁸ Seventeenth century vestarian controls continued to echo, with instructions that instead of gowns white surplices with hoods were to be worn at Chapel.¹⁶⁹ Surplices being white by definition, this tautology was perhaps a delicate reminder of the seventeenth century enjoinder that they should be worn clean to holy office.

In parallel to the revamp of the Statutes, the 1922-23 Calendar presented the academic dress scheme for the University for the first time, with a list of hoods of degrees and gowns in order of precedence. This was also the first year that the Calendar recorded an official

¹⁶⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 433.

¹⁶⁶ James I. Dougherty, "'Ocular demonstration' or 'tremendous treasure'?", *History Ireland* 18, no. 3 (2010), 34-37. Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800–2020)", 94. See also John Biggins, "Afterlives of the 'Brehon Laws'", *History Ireland*, 32, no. 4 (2024), 24-25.

¹⁶⁷ The regulations are silent on what the situation would be were the Provost to hold their highest degree from another University and whether it would be appropriate for them to preside as a member of the Caput at Commencements dressed as such.

¹⁶⁸ Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," 206.

¹⁶⁹ Although the College Calendar stipulated that Sunday Chapel was mandatory for resident students, by the 1920s attendance was not strictly enforced but rather encouraged as a prudent habit for students seeking approval of College hierarchy. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 386-87.

University Robemaker: A. & F. Thompson, 8 Westmoreland Street, Dublin, a firm with active masonic links.¹⁷⁰

Calendar regulations began to impose more rigour on dress in term time. All members of College were expected to wear their caps and gowns while performing their respective academic duties (though these were undefined). Students were still expected to raise their caps to the Provost and Fellows and on Sundays wear the hoods proper to their degrees. By the end of the decade gowns and hoods were required for meetings of the Senate and students were obliged to wear academics at all Arts Examinations after entrance.¹⁷¹

The Arts faculty maintained a conservative approach to dress through to the 1950s, perhaps as a statement of purpose and reinforcing identity, lacking the white lab coats of the scientists and medics. The 1952-1953 Calendar introduced the obligation for Arts students to wear academics at all Arts lectures as well as examinations after matriculation. Nevertheless, sartorial cultures and observance varied by department. By the early 1960s gowns were frequently worn in Classics as might be expected but seldom seen in English Literature.¹⁷² In 1964 some deft language, no doubt to appease traditionalists, began to appear in the Calendar, moving 'students must wear' to 'students may wear', finally becoming 'students wear academics' by the end of the decade. By 1977 academic dress was no longer required for Arts lectures and examinations.

The 1926 Statutes and implementation via the Calendar give a glimpse into the sartorial culture of the College a century ago. The regulations illustrate the role of dress in objectifying the inherent tensions in reconciling a traditionalist institutional culture with a changing social and political environment. Provisions to accommodate women demonstrate a somewhat grudging response to change, albeit calling on prevailing social norms. The defence of a courtly sartorial culture, with its echoes of seventeenth century

¹⁷⁰ Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*. 1922-1923. 18, 25, & 44*. "Death of Mr Frederick J. Thompson," *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 2 1929.

¹⁷¹ Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*, 1926-1927, 3. Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*, 1929-1930, 77.

¹⁷² Deborah de Vere White, "Turning Cartwheels," in *Trinity Tales: Trinity College Dublin in the Sixties*, ed. Sebastien Balfour, Laurie Howes, Michael de Larrabeiti, Anthony Weale (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2009), 121.

disputes concerning attire in Chapel, would have met with Laud's approval but was at odds with an Ireland of the mid-1920s emerging from colonial authority.

The 1966 revisions to the Statutes left academic costume and the outward aspects of precedence and trappings of hierarchy largely unchanged, with little concession to evolving social climate.¹⁷³ However by the late 1950 attendance at Chapel was no longer mandatory and the revamped Statutes omitted any mention of surplices in Chapel regulations, and from 1960-61 the requirement for surplices to be worn on Sundays disappeared from the Calendar. Thus petered out 400 years of sartorial controversy.

Social and educational trends at TCD are reflected in the Calendar (admittedly often lagging behind prevailing practice), which records a gradual move through the 1950s and 1960s from the regulation of academic dress in everyday life to focus on dress in the ceremonial life of the College.¹⁷⁴ Commencements demanded more resources with the rapid growth in the number of primary degrees awarded from the 1950s and higher degrees thereafter.¹⁷⁵ There was also a notable increase in the number of different degrees, including more qualifications in the professional disciplines. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century there had been ten, rising to eighteen including the creation of the ScD and LittD in 1890.¹⁷⁶ The 1926 schedule provided for twenty-nine degrees, but by 1966 this had increased to thirty-two.

The 2010 Consolidated Statutes were the next restatement of the Statutes in response to legislative changes in higher education together with developments in both the College and University. These are now kept updated and revised on an ongoing basis. The Chapters completed in 2010 and the Schedules in 2016, reflect a vastly changed social

¹⁷³Trinity College Dublin, *The 1966 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin and of the University of Dublin as Amended Up to and Including the Ordinance of January 2006* (Trinity College Dublin, 2006).

¹⁷⁴ The 1974–75 Calendar states that “[s]tudents are required to [wear gowns] when attending Commencements and Night Roll” (p. 185), without offering any explanation of what “Night Roll” was or had formerly been. This requirement seems to have remained fossilized in the Calendar until at least 1977. R.A. Somerville, email to author, May 27, 2026. In another example, the requirement for students to doff their caps to the Provost and Fellows remained on the Statutes until as late as 2006, in the unlikely event they would have recognised them in a much larger College.

¹⁷⁵ Trinity College Dublin, *Trinity College record volume*, ed. D. J. M. Sherlock (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2006), v.

¹⁷⁶ BA, MA, ScD, LittD, BD, DD, LLB, LLD, MB, MD, BCh, MCh, BAO, MAO, B Eng (civil), B Eng (civil), BMus, MusD. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 460.

landscape and dress habits in the fifty years since promulgation of the previous Statutes. There is a greater focus on the values and objectives, community, fellowship and stakeholder rights in a much larger institution. The Statutes nevertheless emphasise respect for traditions and heritage, and the division on *College Community* maintains schedules on *College Chapel*, *Order of Precedence*, *Academic Dress*, *Treasures* and *Heritage*.¹⁷⁷ Dress regulations were abbreviated and simplified with the colours and fabrics of hoods, gowns and precedence helpfully tabulated. By 2024 the number of degrees awarded by the University had exploded to 113 different qualifications though the number of hoods wisely limited to a nonetheless unwieldy sixty-one (Table 2).

While the 2010 Statutes maintain the outlines of the 1929 and 1966 regulations on dress, the attributes of academic status and pomp of academic ceremonial are attenuated, coherent with a more egalitarian institutional culture. The principal occasions on which full academic dress is mandated are at *Comita* (meetings of the Senate) including Commencements. Black gowns are usually worn at meetings of Board and Council. There is also greater openness to the degrees of other institutions. For example, the regulations now permit the Registrar to wear the robes of their highest degree even if from another university.

While the Statutes now essentially associate academic dress with Commencements, the colourful events of Trinity Week, including the announcement of new Fellows and Scholars are promoted as “scarlet days” when full academic gown and hoods are worn.¹⁷⁸ A thread of a tradition of academic dress is nevertheless maintained in TCD, though unregulated. Black gowns of varying stripe are seen, though not in great numbers, in College Chapel, Commons and at the Provost’s welcome to new students at the opening of the academic year. An interested group of students preserve a collection of gowns and hoods for use in the vestibule of the College Chapel.

¹⁷⁷ Trinity College, “The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024),” 231-39.

¹⁷⁸ “Welcome to Trinity Week,” Trinity Week, Trinity College Dublin, 2024, accessed Sept 24, 2024, <https://www.tcd.ie/trinityweek/>.

Dublin University Academic dress scheme

Dublin academic dress tradition was drawn from Oxford and Cambridge, under the influence of early chancellors from both Universities. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the system of dress across all three universities was largely unified and the colours associated with degrees created at their foundation were governed by tradition. Dublin doctor's robes took their cue from Oxford, scarlet with bell-shaped sleeves and facings faced with an appropriate faculty colour and fabric, initially black velvet for divinity, pink silk for law and medicine and later crimson silk for medics. Doctors of Music sported white or cream damask robes faced with peony rose pink. By the mid-1850s Dublin Masters wore blue, Oxford crimson and Cambridge white, whilst in all three institutions sported fur for Bachelor's degrees except the BD, which was lined with black silk (Fig. 1.11). With the expansion of degrees on offer between 1890 and the 1920s additional degree colours were instituted to represent new domains of scholarship.

While the academic dress scheme for degrees of the University of Dublin is relatively coherent with respect to shapes of hoods and gowns, and there is 'a rudimentary system of faculty colours', it is less systematic with respect to colour, at least for degrees created since the 1920s.¹⁷⁹ The current regulations concerning degree colours and fabrics are listed together with the dates of creation of the degrees in Table 2, and examples of Dublin gown and hoods in current use are presented in the Academic Registry webpages.¹⁸⁰ Although the Statutes are clear on dress protocols, what should be worn and when, they are silent on the design and shape of the various garments.¹⁸¹ These are however given in external sources such as Smith and Sheard and Groves (Figs 1.12 & 1.13).¹⁸² Photographs of representative gown and hoods respecting traditional Dublin patterns and colours are

¹⁷⁹ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*. 50, Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 145.

¹⁸⁰ "Graduation Gowns," Trinity College Dublin, updated May 15, 2025, 2024, accessed July 17, 2025, <https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/graduation/dress-code/graduation-gowns/>.

¹⁸¹ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)," 236.

¹⁸² Smith Hugh H and Sheard, *Academic dress and insignia of the world : gowns, hats, chains of office, hoods, rings, medals and other degree insignia of universities & other institutions of learning*. v.1 426-431. Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 145-48.

provided in Appendix 1 and a selection of historically significant robes are described in Appendix 2.

The distinctive full shape Dublin hood has a square-shaped cape, accentuated cowl, and a characteristic curved liripipe (Fig. 1.13d). It is lined and bound 1” on the outside of the cowl and cape with coloured silk appropriate to the degree (Appendix 1).¹⁸³ Where a second colour is prescribed the hood is lined with the first colour then the cowl and cape are bound 1” with the second colour. The curved liripipe and bindings allow Dublin hoods to be distinguished from the full-shape pattern used by Cambridge (compare Fig. 1.12d & 1.13d).

Dublin doctors wear a full-dress robe of Oxford pattern faced with silk, of a colour appropriate to degree, on the sleeves and on either side of the front opening (Appendix 1 & Figs. 1.13d, 2.3). Dublin origin can be distinguished by a scarlet cord and button on the yoke (Fig. 1.12c).¹⁸⁴ This artifact was originally conceived to hold a preaching scarf in place at a time when most TCD academics were in holy orders (Fig. 2.4). Doctors of Music wear a robe of the same shape, but of apple blossom flowered silk damask, with front and sleeve facings of peony rose silk (Fig. 2.5). Unlike at Oxford, doctors may wear the hood of their degree with scarlet robes, but in practice the hood is often dispensed with at less formal College events and in portraits.

Dublin Masters, and Doctors in undress, wear a black gown of cloth, poplin or silk with a cord and button on the yoke. They have hanging sleeves, also known as boot sleeves, comprising a flat strip of material reaching to the hem of the gown with a slit at elbow level to expose the arm. The distal end is closed with the distinctive half-moon crescent shaped cut-out on the inside just above foot of the sleeve, the position of this cut-out distinguishing the Dublin graduate from those of Oxford and Cambridge (Fig. 1.13f, g).¹⁸⁵ This distinctive crescent shape, pictured in Appendix 1, is seen at the base of the boot of an Oxford Master’s gown worn by the lecturer in a 1823 print by Nathaniel Whittock (1822-

¹⁸³ The 2010 Statutes (Schedule 1) refer to the binding as “edging”.

¹⁸⁴ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 52.

¹⁸⁵ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 31.

1840) suggesting that this feature was an import from Oxford, but since fallen into disuse at that university.¹⁸⁶

Bachelors wear a black gown made of cloth, poplin or silk of the Oxford style, but cut at the knee with shorter open bell-shaped sleeves, the lower border hanging to a point (Fig. 1.13b).¹⁸⁷ The BA hood is full shape black, lined and bound with white fur (1.13d, Appendix 1). Earlier Dublin BA hoods were made in the simple shape as illustrated in Vincent's cutter's guide, 1910 (Fig 1.7).¹⁸⁸ At *Comitia* (including Commencements), the Proctors wear the BA cap and gown, though their hood is made in the older simple shape of black silk and lined with ermine (Figs 1.7, 2.6).

The Dublin undergraduate gown, now rarely seen, resembles an Oxford commoner's (or advanced student's) black gown, though much longer, reaching knee-length (Figs 1.6, 1.13a).¹⁸⁹ Shown in Appendix 1 it is of black stuff, with a flap collar and sleeveless. The shoulders are winged from which hang, almost to the elbow, rectangular flaps decorated with three rows of small black tassels. There also three rows of tassels under the arm holes, and on either side of a vent at the back of the coat.

An epitome of a distinctive Irish pattern is used to denote certificates and diplomas, blue for undergraduates and blue and black for postgraduates. This item consists of a single long narrow piece of material broadening into a triangle (a remnant liripipe and cape), or simply a strip of material worn hanging from the left shoulder over a black gown.¹⁹⁰ These accessories are probably derived from European academic dress introduced to Ireland via the Pontifical University of Maynooth, though how this was transmitted merits further investigation.

¹⁸⁶ Whittock, Nathaniel, 1791-1860 printed by C. Hullmandel. *Scholars attending a lecture in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*, 1823, coloured lithograph. Wellcome Collection 544983i. The lecturer was eminent clergyman and geologist William Buckland (1784-1856) frequently portrayed in his academic gown. Christianson, "In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin," 55.

¹⁸⁷ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Now known as the Belfast shape this hood pattern was used by Dublin to c.1909. Adopted by the Queen's College, Belfast in 1849 it is still in use by the Queen's University Belfast (QUB). See Theodore W Moody and J. C. Beckett, *Queen's, Belfast 1845-1949. The history of a university*, 2 vols. (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), 131-32.

¹⁸⁹ Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 211.

Headwear at Dublin for all members of the College community is the familiar square cap (or mortar board) in fine black cloth (Fig. 1.12f). All undergraduates may wear the cap without tassel, which is added after graduation.

Although the Statutes stipulate the fabric to be used for Dublin hoods and gowns, they are vague enough that virtually any can be used. 'The material for the hood provided for in the Table of Degrees may be silk unless otherwise specified'.¹⁹¹ Cloth, poplin and silk are all allowed by the regulations, though modern gowns are usually made from polyester and hoods from grosgrain and artificial silks. Black velvet is used for facings for the scarlet robes of Doctors in Divinity (Figs. 2.4, 2.7). Bachelors in Arts, Music and Acting are lined and bound in fur, though Taylor's plates show a BA in 1845 wearing a hood with a white fabric lining.¹⁹² The furs can be real or artificial depending on cost, taste and more recently sustainability and ethics for those with an aversion to using animal products.

College community

The traits of community with shared values and method of organization permeate the Dublin Statutes and their predecessor documents. The idioms of courtly cultures: ritual, ceremony, titles and precedence and orders of rank in the College have been a feature of the Calendar since it first appeared in 1833.¹⁹³ The concepts of social organization and common endeavour are built into the 2010 Consolidated Statutes which provide a specific division on College community.¹⁹⁴

Dress has historically acted as a visual signal of the formal roles and ranks existing in the College. Though not provided for in the regulations before 1922-23, contemporary observers and illustrations offer accounts of an elaborate system of dress based on cut, ornamentation and fabrics to indicate social standing and wealth.¹⁹⁵ Eight degrees 'of rank

¹⁹¹ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)," 170.

¹⁹² Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*, pl. 10. See also Fig 2.9d.

¹⁹³ Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*. Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*.

¹⁹⁴ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)."

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Campbell, *A philosophical survey of the south of Ireland, in a series of letters to John Watkinson, M.D.* (Dublin: printed for W. Whitestone and others, 1778), 16. Marginalia, Samuel Byron (-1795), Plan of Trinity College Dublin 1780, 1780, Dublin Trinity College, TCD/MUN/MC/9 & TCD MUN/MC/10g. Taylor,

or personal condition' were recognized, little changed from the foundation of the College.¹⁹⁶

The Provost is the Head of the College. Originally, the incumbent was required to be in Holy Orders, and a Doctor or a BD over thirty years of age. Up to 1927 all but four Provosts were clerics, usually a Doctor in Divinity, but since then lay persons. Regulations do not provide for a robe of office for the Provost who simply wears the dress of their highest degree. The first portrait of a Provost in recognizable modern academic dress is of Richard Baldwin (c.1668 - 1758) painted by Francis Bindon (c.1690-1765) in 1745 (Fig. 2.7). He is shown full length in the scarlet and black DD robes, a black cassock, scarf and bands. Prior to this Provosts were usually portrayed in ecclesiastical dress, either surplice with black scarf and bands or black costume of the more puritanically inclined.¹⁹⁷

Fellows are elected annually by the Board on the basis of academic merit and contribution and are expected to incarnate the core values and purpose of the institution. Up to 1873, Fellows were usually in Holy Orders except three: the *Medicus*, the *Jurista Juris Civilis* and *Jurista Juris Anglici* in medicine, civil and canon law respectively. Sixteen at foundation, by 2024-25 there were 379 Fellows, seven of whom are Senior Fellows. Taylor shows a TCD Fellow in the early nineteenth century, soberly dressed in a black short, fronted jacket with tails, black britches and knee-length stockings (Fig. 2.8a, 2.9a). His gown is black and rather formless with voluminous sleeves of indefinable shape, along with a square cap. Fellows now wear the dress of their highest academic qualification or a black Masters gown.

From the earliest days of the College *Doctors* in the three faculties of Divinity, Medicine and Law wore scarlet, at least on ceremonial occasions. An eye-witness account of the earliest TCD Commencement ceremony held in St Patrick's Cathedral in August 1614

History of the University of Dublin; Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*.

¹⁹⁶ Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*. 1834.

¹⁹⁷ "Former Provosts: 1592-present," Trinity College Dublin, 2023, accessed October 21, 2024, <https://www.tcd.ie/provost/biography/former-provosts/>.

described doctors in scarlet.¹⁹⁸ A portrait of Vice-Chancellor Arthur Price (1747–52) c.1749 painted from life in the business dress of a seventeenth century DD provides a glimpse of the finery which might have been worn on the occasion (Fig. 2.10).¹⁹⁹ Portraits of Provost Baldwin and John Stokes (1721–81) both painted around the same time as Price, and John Gwynn DD (1829–1917), attributed to Sarah Purser (1848–1943), 1904 all show the subjects in more modern DD Oxford-style robes (Figs 2.7, 2.11, 2.12). In his 1845 publication Taylor shows Dublin doctors in similar robes, though the DD seems to have pudding sleeves (Figs 2.9 b,c).

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth century TCD students were ranked socially along the lines of the aristocracy, gentry, and bourgeoisie, although according to McDowell and Webb the College ‘had always been a fundamentally middle-class institution’.²⁰⁰ In 1778 an English visitor to Ireland, the Revd Thomas Campbell, observed milling around College:

Noblemen – a peer, peer’s son or baronet who could matriculate as *nobilis ipse, filius nobilis or eques* on payment of four times the pensioner’s fees.²⁰¹ They were permitted to dine with the Fellows and could graduate with a BA after two rather than four years. As nobility they were indulged and exempted from the punishments imposed on lesser students.²⁰² Their dress was distinguished by ostentatious robes with panel sleeves hanging behind the arms and ending at the elbow ornamented with gold tassels at the lower outside corner, and on the skirts and sides of the gown (Fig. 2.9a). The cap sported a gold tassel. Their numbers low, rising to only around forty around the time of Campbell’s visit.

¹⁹⁸ John Lodge, *Desiderata curiosa Hibernica: or a select collection of state papers and historical tracts, illustrating the political systems of the chief governors and government of Ireland, during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., & Charles I.*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Printed by David Hay, 1772), 317–18.

¹⁹⁹ Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 112. Kerr, "Hargreaves-Mawdsley’s History of Academical Dress and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections," 144–45.

²⁰⁰ McDowell and Webb provide an overview of TCD student demographic from foundation to the early 1950s in McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592–1952 : an academic history*, 114, 507–08.

²⁰¹ Translated as a noble himself, a noble son, or a knight.

²⁰² *Advice to the University of Dublin. To the senior fellows, ... To the servants of the college*, (Dublin: 1791), 13. Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 195.

Fellow Commoners – named as such because they were permitted to dine, along with the Doctors, at the Fellow’s table and sat next to them in Chapel.²⁰³ They could also take their BA degree six months earlier than pensioners. No qualification of wealth or rank was required but Fellow Commoners were typically the sons of gentry or ambitious families who could afford the additional fees and gratuities for Fellows.²⁰⁴ In Taylor’s 1819 plates the Fellow Commoner is dressed in a fashionable short-fronted tailcoat with double row of brass buttons, worn over a white shirt and neck cloth, knee length britches and black stockings (Fig. 2.8b). His status is displayed by a floor-length gown similar to the nobleman’s, though all black with narrow black facings of a different material (velvet?). The coat and elbow-length sleeves were decorated with elaborate passementerie of black tufts and tassels (Fig. 2.9c).

In the early nineteenth century some 20% of the College population were Fellow Commoners declining to 5% by the end of the century with the last probably matriculating in 1909.²⁰⁵ The ranks of Nobleman and Fellow Commoner lasted, at least in theory, well into the 20th century, persisting in the Calendar until 1924/25, almost a generation of undergraduates since the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

Pensioners were ordinary students who paid for their rooms and commons, dining by themselves in gowns of fine black stuff with hanging sleeves and tassels.²⁰⁶ *Scholars*, of which there are now around 70, are undergraduate students elected annually on the basis of examination in the Trinity term, conferring on them membership of the College Foundation, free Commons and lodging in College. Dress has traditionally been deployed to distinguish this population of elite students nurtured for their academic potential. Scholars have the right to wear the Bachelor’s gown from election. The Foundation Scholar in Taylor’s plates wears a long black gown with slashed bell-shaped sleeves, the

²⁰³ William Pryce Maunsell, *The Idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1850), 19.

²⁰⁴ *Advice to the University of Dublin. To the senior fellows, ... To the servants of the college*, 13.

²⁰⁵ Robert Vincent Walker, son of a Manchester merchant, in January 1909. TCD/MUN/V/23/7 f. 269v and f.270r.

²⁰⁶ Campbell, *A philosophical survey of the south of Ireland, in a series of letters to John Watkinson, M.D.*, 16. Vocabulary in Dublin resemble those of Cambridge - the pensioner paid a rent or ‘pension’ for his rooms. MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, 269.

upper part faced with mid-blue velvet, and a strip of the same velvet at the wrist (Fig. 2.9d).²⁰⁷ Traditionally, Scholars wore caps covered in black velvet without a tassel, though this was omitted from the current Statutes (Fig. 2.9d). Scholars were eligible to wear this cap before and after graduation, denoting their favoured standing in perpetuity.

Sizars were students of limited means nominated on the basis of examination (originally in Classics) who received Commons free of charge.²⁰⁸ Numbering some thirty in 1778, sizars were formerly exempt from all College and tutors' fees. They received inferior lodging, dined apart and having waited on the Fellows ate their leftovers and undertook other menial tasks.²⁰⁹ The sleeveless gowns of coarse black stuff and the distinctive red caps they were obliged to wear were a constant reminder of their lowly status as recipients of charity.²¹⁰ By 1847 these caps were plain black, but without the dignity of a tassel. From the 1790s their conditions improved and Sizarships, now known as Entrance Exhibitions, continue to be awarded in Dublin on merit to undergraduates of limited means in the first two years of their studies.

The backbone of this historic organization is still apparent in the Order of Precedence of the College community listed in the current Statutes, though the appearance of Deans, Professors, academic and administrative officers in the rankings attest to the reinforced focus on the academic purpose of the modern institution.²¹¹

The constructive ambiguity of distribution of power between University and College is arguably reflected in the academic dress worn by the Officers of both institutions. For

²⁰⁷ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 148.

²⁰⁸ Also known as sizars in Cambridge or Servitors in Oxford, the word sizar derives from the sizing of portion of food and drink. MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, 269. At TCD they dined separately until 1843. Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 44-45. Sizars of note included Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) and future Provosts Richard Murray (1795-1799) and William E. Thrift (1870-1942).

²⁰⁹ Campbell, *A philosophical survey of the south of Ireland, in a series of letters to John Watkinson, M.D.*, 16-17. This practice was ended by Provost Murray, following an altercation during a Trinity Sunday dinner when a Sizar objecting to the impolite remarks of a bystander flung a plate of food at a guest. These duties were henceforth done by Porters. Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*, 64.

²¹⁰ William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, 2 ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1847), 311. Ackermann's *Costumes of the University of Cambridge* (1815), Plate XIV, shows a Sizar in a sleeveless black gown of this style Jackson, *Ackermann's costumes of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge*, 63.

²¹¹ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)." Though more detailed than in the 19th century the modern statutes are studiously ambiguous on whether this ranking applies to ceremonial alone or for all College affairs.

example, the Chancellor's robe is markedly less decorative than the Pro-Chancellor's, but at times worn interchangeably. On the other hand, the Provost, who in many ways wields the power, simply wears the gown of their highest degree.²¹² It can be argued therefore that the platform party at Commencements represents through dress the imbricate nature of Dublin University and Trinity College. Provosts have always been Doctors, thus the Caput, in terms of dress, represents the three states of the University "Chancellor, Doctors and Masters". While the Proctors in Bachelor's garb enriched with ermine, supplicate on behalf the College graduands, the Provost and Registrar have feet in both camps.

²¹² Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800–2020)," 100.

Chapter 3. Setting the scene: TCD academic dress in images 1780-1945

Introduction

Clothing and its representation can reveal insights into the culture and social relations of the community of users.²¹³ Indeed, the iconography of academic dress is built into the very fabric of the College, incorporated into the plasterwork ceiling in Regent House, TCD (Fig. 3.1). While Statutes and Charters provide structural context by setting the rules and regulations they yield only a partial account. Regulation often lags behind practice and rules more honoured in the breach than the observance. Clothing is usually ephemeral and fashions by definition are transient. Thus, contemporary images and accounts of costume and dress habits become increasingly important sources. They allow the culture of academic attire, and its purpose (how and why it is worn) to be examined from different perspectives, both symbolic and practical. Conversely, academic robes themselves can illuminate understanding of both textual and visual evidence of costume. This chapter addresses the representation of TCD academic dress in art prints, engravings, selected portraits and caricatures from the eighteenth through to the early twentieth centuries, setting the scene for a consideration of the culture of dress in the College over the same period.

Dublin academic dress in the imagery of the long eighteenth century

Prints and engravings of cityscapes and scenes of university life were popular through the long eighteenth century. Though sometimes formulaic, they often present vignettes of community, social and dress conventions of their time. In James Malton's views of Dublin for example, small groups in conversation, hucksters, horsemen, military officers and students provide charming glimpses of day-to-day dress habits of the citizenry of Dublin as they go about their daily life.²¹⁴

²¹³ Woodward, Sophie. "Material Culture." *Oxford Bibliographies*, May 28, 2013, accessed August 25, 2025. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0085.xml?rskey=3KIIAS&result=7&q=sophie+woodward#firstMatch>.

²¹⁴ James Malton, *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin Displayed in a Series of the Most Interesting Scenes Taken in the Year 1791 by James Malton with a Brief Authentic History from the Earliest*

For McDowell and Webb ‘as far as Trinity was concerned the nineteenth century only began in 1831 as it transitioned from ‘late Georgian brilliance’ to Victorian innovation and reform.²¹⁵ The same period saw an expanding educated middle class interested in aquatints and lithographs of architecture and scenes of public school and university life. Abbey’s panoramic catalogue of scenery of Great Britain and Ireland, for example, includes numerous examples of this genre published between 1770-1860.²¹⁶ Malton’s *Views of the City of Dublin* (1799) with scenes of TCD, Ackermann’s histories of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (1814 and 1815), Taylor’s *History of the University of Dublin* (1819, 1845) and Heywood’s compilation of illustrations of English Universities (c.1843) all point to a lively market for these type of images.²¹⁷ But it was the high quality of Ackermann’s hand-coloured prints that arguably set the standard for this genre (Fig. 1.5).²¹⁸

Amongst the earliest representations of Dublin academic costume with detail are found in the margins of Samuel Byron's *Plan of TCD* (1780) (Fig. 3.2).²¹⁹ Samuel Byron (-1795) trained at the Dublin Society's school of landscape and ornament in 1768 and the school of drawing in architecture from 1773.²²⁰ Following an apprenticeship in England he returned to Dublin in 1779 and was appointed city surveyor in 1782, a position he held until his death in 1795.

Accounts to the Present Time. (Dublin: James Malton, 1799). P. J. Raftery, "Who Was Malton?," *Dublin Historical Record* 19, no. 4 (1964), 110.

²¹⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 74.

²¹⁶ John Roland Abbey, *Scenery of Great Britain and Ireland in aquatint and lithography, 1770-1860 : from the library of J. R. Abbey; a bibliographical catalogue* (London: Curwen, 1952).

²¹⁷ Malton, *A picturesque and descriptive view of the City of Dublin, displayed in a series of the most interesting scenes taken in the year 1791... with a brief authentic history from the earliest accounts to the present time*. Jackson, *Ackermann's costumes of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge*. Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin*. Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*. James Heywood, *Illustrations of the Principal English Universities. [With several Aquatints and Lithographical plates showing academical dress and University ceremonies by R. W. Buss, R. B. Harraden]*. (Oxford: James Heywood, 1843).

²¹⁸ ‘The famous firm of Ackermann published many fine and expensive books, some on large paper and on occasion with a published price as much as 95 guineas per volume, a large sum for those days. I have examined many hundreds of copies of his publications and have found the colouring uniformly high. The only deterioration was due to wear on the copperplate, and this was hidden by the cunning of the hand-colourist’. Abbey, *Scenery of Great Britain and Ireland in aquatint and lithography, 1770-1860*, xvi.

²¹⁹ Samuel Byron, *Plan of Trinity College Dublin*, 1780, Dublin Trinity College, TCD/MUN/MC/9 & TCD MUN/MC/10g.

²²⁰ "Byron, Samuel," *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940* 2024, accessed August 8, 2024, <https://www.dia.ie/architects/view/850/BYRON-SAMUEL>.

Marginalia in the *Plan* include finely executed engravings of academics and undergraduates in costumes which can be identified by cross reference to Taylor's histories and contemporary descriptions of TCD attire.²²¹ In one, a figure in the long flowing gown sits cross-legged on steps deep in thought, surrounded by the instruments and plans of a cartographer (Fig. 3.2a). Bands and the shape of his wig indicate he is a cleric, whilst the shape of the gown signifies that he is a Fellow of the College.²²² The artist combines costume with scientific objects against the backdrop of nature to convey the breadth of interests of the figure. Head propped on hand, his pose conveys the life of the mind (or perhaps melancholy). The setting of the thinker seen in nature, a formula commonly used in the seventeenth century and before, is intended to create a mood, expressing the weight and continuity of scholarship.

In the same margin, a Fellow Commoner stands in his elaborate black gown with ornamented hanging sleeves and a square cap sporting a tassel (Fig. 3.2b). He draws the title information of the plan to the attention of the young undergraduate at his side wearing a short sleeveless gown with flap collar. The undergraduate's cap is square, the absence of a tassel suggesting that this is a pensioner yet to graduate. Here, the architecture of memorialisation also evokes solidity and enduring nature of scholarly endeavour.

As well as cartographic qualities, Byron's plan of TCD displays sensitivity to the prevailing social and material culture of the time. He enriches and humanises the precision of his chart by presenting us with a contemplative neo-classical landscape of trees and sculpture in which figures identifiable by their costumes convey the serenity of learning in a well-ordered community. Church and science in harmony lead thinking at a distance, while the higher status Fellow Commoner guides the humble but grateful pensioner.

²²¹ Campbell, *A philosophical survey of the south of Ireland, in a series of letters to John Watkinson, M.D.* 16. Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, 311.

²²² The fashion for a sort of 'tonsured' skull of the wig to allow an academic cap to fit snugly on the head seems to have developed in the eighteenth century and the bushiness of the sides of the wig grew with it. Prof. William Gibson, email message to author, August 23, 2024.

John Carr (1772–1832) a visitor to Ireland in 1805 observed in his travel journal that ‘students in their collegial habits give much vivacity to the city’.²²³ Transcribed to engravings, such promenading figures provide visual clues linking imposing architecture to collegiality and learning. Henry Brocas the younger (c.1798-1873) depicts the classical revival façade of College designed by Theodore Jacobsen (d.1772) in 1752 with monumentality and solid assurance (Fig. 3.3).²²⁴ In it, a few academics have ventured out, no further than the pavement outside the College gates, the railings separating the institution from the hustle and bustle of city life. In Robert Havell the elder’s (1769-1832), 1816 view of *College Green, Dublin* the same scene is shown looking outwards toward the city (Fig. 3.4). Here, three academics in conversation at the gates of College remind the viewer that this is a place of debate and learning. They wear square caps, with voluminous gowns with slashed sleeves and hoods suggesting they are graduates, possibly Bachelors of Arts or blue-trimmed Scholars (Fig. 2.9d).

Scenes of College life and costume were further developed by William Benjamin Sarsfield Taylor in a portfolio of plates in his *History of the University of Dublin* published in 1819 and a later as a book in 1845.²²⁵ Taylor was born in Dublin in 1781 the son of artist and engraver.²²⁶ Following training in the Dublin Society Schools, he went on to become a professional artist known for his landscapes, seascapes and military scenes. Prominent in the Dublin and later London artistic communities, he was a founding member of the RHA (1823) and exhibited at its first exhibition in 1826. He moved to London in 1829, exhibiting at the Royal Academy (1829-47) and the British Institution (1830-46). He died there in 1850, perhaps better known for his writing and committee work than his art.

Whilst still in Dublin, Taylor published a subscription edition of nine plates of the *History of the University of Dublin* between 1819 and 1820. Nine plates appeared in 3 fasciculi of

²²³ John Carr, *The stranger in Ireland : or, A tour in the southern and western parts of that country in 1805* (London: Richard Phillips, 1806), 53.

²²⁴ Brocas, Samuel Frederick (c.1792-1847). *Trinity College and College Green, Dublin*, 1818, ink and watercolour on paper 24.4 x 40.2 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. NGI.2558.

²²⁵ Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin*; Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*.

²²⁶ Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, 430-32.

letterpress in large quarto with two plates and accompanying text for sale at half a guinea each.²²⁷ The plates comprise seven scenes of College drawn and etched by Taylor and aquatinted by John Bluck (fl.1791-1819) and Robert Havell, and two plates of costumes drawn by Taylor and etched by B. Del Sarto. “Sarto” is Italian for tailor, opening the intriguing possibility that the etching was done by Taylor himself.²²⁸

Taylor is bound to have known and possibly been influenced by the success of Ackermann’s *Histories* and went to lengths to generate interest in his publication. A subscribers list in the National Library of Ireland includes Mr R. Ackermann along with Dublin and London illuminae (Fig. 3.5).²²⁹ Ackermann, along with other prominent booksellers such as Allen & Sons of Dublin and Longman & Co. in London, subscribed for twelve copies each, indicating an active market for these types of publication and a lively commerce between Dublin and London booksellers of the period. The list of subscribers to Ackermann’s own Oxford history also includes several Taylors, one identified simply as ‘Mr Taylor’, indicating possible reciprocity.²³⁰

Taylor’s project ended abruptly and only three of the twelve parts initially envisaged were published though, according to Abbey, not because of Taylor’s ability to generate clients.²³¹ Strickland believed, not without reason, that Taylor’s edition failed for the poor quality of the work ‘badly drawn, and ridiculously coloured, and by no means correct representation of the College buildings’.²³² The same may be said for the costumes in Taylor’s 1819 plates. They are loosely drawn and formless, lacking the sophistication and precision of the

²²⁷ “History of the University of Dublin,” Trinity College, 1819, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/concern/works/79408528c?locale=en>. “History of the University of Dublin , [1819-1820],” YCBA Collections Online, Yale Centre for British Art, 2024, accessed August 25, 2024, <https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:3794773>. The Yale holding is the Abbey’s copy of Taylor.

²²⁸ Alex Kerr, personal communication to author, June 30, 2025.

²²⁹ William Benjamin Sarsfield Taylor, *Under the patronage of His Majesty King George the Fourth a list of subscribers to the 'History of the University of Dublin'*, (London: ca. 1819-1820). National Library of Ireland, EPH D628.

²³⁰ Ackermann, *A History of the University of Oxford, Its Colleges, Halls and Public Buildings: In Two Volumes*, xiii.

²³¹ Abbey cites “A List of Subscribers Names to the 1st of October, 1819” listing twenty-four copies in large format and ninety-eight in small (slightly fewer than in the NLI subscriber list at 29 large, 153 small). Taylor, *Under the patronage of His Majesty King George the Fourth a list of subscribers to the 'History of the University of Dublin'*, 1820.

²³² Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, 431.

Ackermann's plates of the same period. The colours are careless, varying widely in colour and application from copy to copy.²³³

Taylor nevertheless captures the fundamental elements of University life: teaching, learning, discussion, and examination while playing a pivotal role in wider society. The front-wrapper depicts three figures in academic costume under an improbable triumphal arch opening the way to an arcadian land of learning and classical scholarship (Fig. 3.6). In this well-known subject, the Choice of Hercules, the older scholar shows the younger the hard upward path to the temple of virtue, here topped by a figure of fame blowing a trumpet. Through this formulaic, though emblematic image Taylor sets the tone and direction for what follows. His subscribers, many for whom were Trinity men, are invited to elevate themselves by association with a place of classical learning and tradition.

Taylor's 1819 scenes of College invite the viewer inside College to familiar backdrops of Parliament Square and College Park. Here the groves of academe populated by students and academics, identifiable in their academic dress in various postures of contemplation, discussion, and teaching. In *College Park* undergraduates and academics in voluminous, but undefinable black gowns and square caps are engaged in peaceful conversation in a pastoral evening setting (Fig. 3.7). The same mood of scholarly contemplation is captured in a word picture published around the same time by Samuel O'Sullivan: 'From the streets outside the park, there was only the faint and inarticulate murmur of life, and the solitary forms of a few gowned stragglers who had come out like the owl, at the day's departure, to breath the free air they had earned by toil and confinement...'.²³⁴ The staffage figures in *College Park* also point to the neo-classical Printing House begun by College architect Richard Castle in 1734.²³⁵ By drawing our eye to its temple-like form, Taylor again reminds the viewer of the classical origins of scholarship and the importance of its dissemination.

²³³ In the TCD copy the jacket worn by the Fellow Commoner is blue, whereas it is shown in walnut brown in the version shown in Figure 2.8b. Taylor, William B. Sarsfield (1781-1850) drawn by W.B. Taylor, engraved by B. Del Sarto, *Fellow of T.C.D.*, 1819, coloured aquatint, Trinity College, Dublin. OLS X-1-80-6.

²³⁴ Samuel O'Sullivan, *College recollections* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, 1825), 12.

²³⁵ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 95.

In the *Museum of TCD*, Fellows identifiable by their dress, are seen engaged in an early version of University outreach, demonstrating the exhibits to a fashionably dressed crowd of visitors (Fig. 3.8). A watercolour by Taylor c.1819 showing the interior of Thomas Burgh's (1670-1730) Anatomy House at TCD depicts two figures in black gowns, one wearing a long tasselled cap, apparently in more scholarly debate.²³⁶ The figures in these images recall Malton's earlier plate from his *Views of Dublin* of the interior of the *College Library, Dublin* (1793) in which a student in an undergraduate gown and gentlemen in blue frockcoats and yellow britches browse in the tranquillity of the Long Room Library (Fig. 3.9).²³⁷

The bustle and chaos of *The Grand Square, T.C.D. at the quarterly examination* strikes a contrast with these scenes of contemplative learning and serene exchange (Figs 3.10, 3.11). Here, excited young undergraduates rush hither and thither while anxious examinees wait in gowns on the steps of the Examination Hall on the left.²³⁸ There, elder academics in gowns (and at least one in a red-lined hood), discuss the matters of the day among themselves and with towns folk, possibly even parents. Hucksters, tradespeople, and stray dogs take advantage of the crowded square normally reserved for academe.

In this scene, Taylor uses space and clothing to convey the ideas of identity, class, and role of each participant, establishing imagery that would have been understood by the contemporary viewer. Dress identifies the various players: academics and students in black gowns and caps, townspeople, military men, employees of the College and street hawkers wear the costumes of their roles. Gowns worn loosely hanging and draping

²³⁶ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*. 97. This watercolour may have been the precursor for the Medical Lecture Room plate in Taylor's original prospectus, listed in Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*.), but which was never published.

²³⁷ In dedicating the plate to Edmund Burke, Malton describes the atmosphere he sought: 'We are instantly struck with unspeakable reverence, and respect for the place; as if feeling the air impregnated with an emanation of religion and learning...when in the presence of united efforts and condensed learning of our ancestors, who, with calm serenity, seem here to reign in awful silence; 'tis scarcely possible for the most boisterous and unthinking to enter, but with silent humiliation and whispering enquiry.' Malton, *A picturesque and descriptive view of the City of Dublin, displayed in a series of the most interesting scenes taken in the year 1791... with a brief authentic history from the earliest accounts to the present time*. Trinity College Dublin, XFag.QQ.1.51 unpagged 27.

²³⁸ Undergraduates of the period were typically younger than now. The average age men came up to TCD was fifteen to sixteen and some as young as thirteen or fourteen. TCD was generally more rigorous than Oxford & Cambridge in student assessment. Attendance was less easily monitored in the larger city environment the quarterly examination allowed student progress to be followed and eventually the basis for non-residential student model. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 115, 123.

standing or resting figures convey peaceful listening and civilized debate. The gestures of teaching and explaining are defined and accentuated by the sleeves and folds of the gowns as speakers point in demonstration. Flying cloth and billowing gowns convey movement and the energy of the young students as they sprint around Front Square.

Taylor, back in London, resurrected his *History of the University of Dublin* project some 26 years later with the publication of a book of the same name in 1845.²³⁹ The book, published in one volume octavo, contains an engraving by Taylor and a number of wood-cut illustrations in black and white by E. Williams. A few deluxe versions of the book were produced, with some hand-coloured plates, though poorly executed and slap-dash.²⁴⁰ The order in which the prints appear also varies from copy to copy.

The frontispiece to the *History* shows the West Front of College with a robed doctor in square cap and bands listens in on an animated conversation between his fashionably dressed male companion and mounted gentleman.²⁴¹ Indifferent woodcuts show scenes of the College populated with rather static figures in academic dress accompanied by townspeople now in more up to date mid-Victorian outfits. Four plates of figures in Dublin academic costume presumably complete the five originally proposed for the 1819 series, though the text of itself makes no reference to dress (Fig. 2.9).

The same criticisms can be made of the illustrations of the costumes in Taylor's 1845 book as in 1819. Unidentified academics and students stand or sit in pairs in rather awkward, static, wooden poses. Taylor's execution is indicative rather than meticulous, but perhaps that was neither desirable nor possible for such a work. As a result, his illustrations are frustratingly unclear on the cut of the costumes and the details unreliable. In these prints, Dublin doctors wear long scarlet robes of the Oxford-style with bell shaped sleeves and facings. The pink sleeve facings of the Doctor of Law are consistent with Ackermann's Oxford engravings as is the Dublin habit of wearing a hood with festal dress (Figs 1.5b,

²³⁹ Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*.

²⁴⁰ Coloured editions can be found in the Library, Trinity College, Dublin and the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

²⁴¹ William Benjamin Sarsfield Taylor (1781-1850). *University of Dublin West or Principal Front*, 1845, engraving by McClatchie, in Taylor, William B. Sarsfield. *History of the University of Dublin*. London: Cadell, 1845.

2.9b).²⁴² A DD is shown in a scarlet robe worn over a cassock and bands as expected, but the white sleeve facings are incorrect (Fig. 2.9c). These are clearly black in Ackermann's illustration of an Oxford DD and in portraits of Dublin DDs spanning the period of Taylor's publications (Figs 1.5a, 2.11, 2.12).

The MA hood seems to be a curious throwback (Fig. 2.9b). It is shown as a broad tippet enveloping the shoulders. In the coloured versions held in TCD and the Bodleian, the artist has attempted to correct this by overpainting the drawing, giving the Master a more contemporary form of hood, with the cape hanging down the back.

Taylor's 1845 illustrations suggest that the Dublin MA hood was lined pink which Christianson surmises may be derived from an earlier pre-nineteenth century Oxford MA pink, later crimson (Fig. 1.11). However, Garstin's correction to Gutch's table of 1858 gives the lining as 'dark blue, which is the colour invariably used' and is such in all catalogues since.²⁴³ This would mean that colour of the Dublin MA changed from pink to dark blue sometime between 1845 and 1858.²⁴⁴ Whilst the reliability of some of Taylor's work is in doubt, and the colourist might simply have replicated the Oxford scheme for convenience, some comfort is given by the appearance of a figure wearing a red-lined hood in the Yale University copy of *The Grand Square, T.C.D. at the quarterly examination* (Fig. 3.10).²⁴⁵

In Taylor's book the Dublin Fellow Commoner and *filius nobilis* wear floor-length black gowns with lavish passementerie, tufts and tassels in rich gold for the nobleman and black for the Commoner (Figs 2.9a, c). The Dublin Commoner's dress closely resembles an Oxford Gentleman's Commoners gown while the Dublin *filius nobilis*' gown resembles that worn by the Cambridge Fellow Commoner in Ackermann's plates (Figs 1.5 c,d).

²⁴² At this period both Doctors of Law and Physic at Dublin and Oxford wore festal gowns with pink facings. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

²⁴³ Gutch, "Colour of university Hoods," 402. Garstin, "Letter in response to Mr Gutch's Table of University Hoods," 502.

²⁴⁴ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 147. Christianson, "In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin."

²⁴⁵ The figure in a red hood appears in the assembly of academics towards the front left of the Yale copy, though the same figure must content with black in the TCD copy (Fig. 3.11).

Portraits of two Irish Fellow Commoners at Cambridge allow an impression of the glamour of the young *filius nobilis* in Dublin. Francis Cotes' RA (1726-1770) oil on canvas of Luke Gardiner, 1st Viscount Mountjoy (1745-1798), 1763 shows the young Irishman, son of a successful Dublin property developer, in declaratory pose wearing a splendid burgundy red velvet jacket with prominent buttons.²⁴⁶ His coat combines a fashionable turned-back cuff with the vertically cut cuff *à la marinier* typically worn by workers.²⁴⁷ His gown, that of a Fellow Commoner of Cambridge, is extravagantly trimmed with gold wave lace and ornaments (Fig. 3.12). He clasps a square cap with gold tassel gesturing meaningfully towards King's College, Cambridge.²⁴⁸ His choice of clothing for this portrait, painted the year he matriculated, communicates pride in his social roots, academic status and professional inheritance.

A portrait of Thomas Cherburgh Bligh (1760-1830), attributed by Kidson to George Romney (1734-1802), shows the subject three-quarter length wearing a brown coat and academic robes with gold ornaments, holding a book in his left hand and a square cap with gold tassel at his right elbow (Fig. 3.13).²⁴⁹ Painted in 1783, the robes in this portrait, are consistent with those of a Fellow Commoner of Cambridge.²⁵⁰ Bligh went up to St John's College, Cambridge in 1780 aged 19 where, according to Kidson, he may have known Romney. He became MP for Athboy in the Irish Parliament from 1783 and for Meath following the Act of Union in 1801.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ John Coleman, "Luke Gardiner (1745-98): An Irish Dilettante," *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 15 (1999) gave this as a pastel but confirmed in the course of this work as oil on canvas with the editor of the "Dictionary of pastellists before 1800," Unicorn Press, updated June 10, 2025, accessed July 12, 2025, <http://www.pastellists.com/>. The dictionary has been corrected. Neil Jeffares, email to author, March 25, 2024.

²⁴⁷ Hilary O'Kelly, National College of Art and Design, communication to author, January 20, 2026.

²⁴⁸ Gardiner was in fact admitted as a Fellow Commoner of St John's College Cambridge in 1762. He graduated MA in 1769 becoming in the same year MP for Dublin County and subsequently elevated to the peerage in 1789.

²⁴⁹ Alex Kidson, *George Romney : a complete catalogue of his paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 102.

²⁵⁰ Notes in the Crookshank & Glin Archive surmise that this portrait was of Thomas Bligh's father, the Very Rev Robert Bligh, (c.1704-1778), Dean of Elphin, by Thomas Robinson (1770-). However, the elder Bligh, who took his BA from TCD in 1715, did not have the status *filius nobiliis*, inconsistent with the gown depicted.

²⁵¹ "Bligh, Thomas Cherburgh (?1761-1830), of Brittas, Co. Meath.," *History of Parliament Trust*, 1986, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/bligh-thomas-cherburgh-1761-1830>.

Both portraits of young Irish men in Cambridge are painted to Van Dyckian ideals, in self-assured postures reinforced by their elaborate costumes, a proxy for the trappings of aristocracy to which they were not yet admitted. Gardiner's penetrating, adventurous gaze urges the viewer on to future success via the gold-tasseled academic cap in his right hand pointing to the halls of learning. Romsey's Bligh also looks to the future in formulaic stance, holding a book in his elegant right hand, elbow comfortably resting on the table with academic cap. He is noble, well-fed, confident in his position and education, while avoiding being a studious bore.

In contrast, an undated portrait of a John Whitley Stokes (c.1760-?) by Nathaniel Hone the elder RA (1718-1784), depicts an earnest adolescent, more enquiring and diligent compared with the self-assured and entitled stances of the Cambridge Fellow Commoners. He wears a thick brown woollen jacket with a fashionable double row of brass buttons, a jade green silk waistcoat and white collared shirt (Fig. 3.14). His gown has the slashed sleeves of a BA as illustrated by Taylor in 1845 (Fig. 2.9d).

The Stokeses were a prominent family of Trinity engineers and scholars, but the identity of which Stokes is depicted is uncertain as the family tree makes no reference to a John Whitley Stokes born before 1800.²⁵² This may be a portrait of John Whitley Stokes (c.1760-), son of John Stokes (Fig. 2.11) who matriculated 1773, elected scholar in 1776 and took his BA in 1778 and called to the Irish bar in 1785. The sitter also bears a striking family resemblance to the sitter in another portrait in the College collection of Whitley Stokes the elder (1763-1845) portrayed as an older man.²⁵³ He was elected Scholar in 1781, graduated BA 1783 then Fellow (*medicus*) in 1788. Either man could have been painted as a Scholar (who traditionally wore BA gowns from election) or a Bachelor by Hone, then towards the end of his career. Regardless of which the academic dress would place the portrait between 1776 and 1783.

²⁵² Michael C. W. Sandford, "The Stokes Family in Ireland and Cambridge," in *George Gabriel Stokes: Life, Science and Faith*, ed. Mark McCartney, Andrew Whitaker, and Alastair Wood (Oxford University Press, 2019), 40.

²⁵³ Charles Grey RHA (c.1808-92), *Whitley Stokes the elder (1763-1845)*, exhib. 1840, oil on canvas, 72 x 62 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. TCD.ART.392.

Commissioned by proud parents, these portraits can be examined beyond the personal and familial. They can also be viewed, as in Coleman's study of Reynolds' portraits, in the light of the ambiguous position of Anglo-Irish aristocrats in colonial Britain.²⁵⁴

Confronted by the ebb and flow of power between Britain and Ireland of the eighteenth century, Irish clients harnessed portraiture to consolidate family pedigree and assert their position in civilized society. Gardiner in particular used images of himself and his family to convey sophistication and social status. The three portraits of young students in the present study depict the next generation of confident Irishmen. Their academic dress conveys culture, education and claim to leadership by an up-and-coming bourgeoisie. While Taylor's plates are of questionable accuracy, they are all we have and allow us a glimpse of the society in which they were educated and provides a means to interpret their costume.

Academic Dress in early twentieth century Dublin art prints

By the late-nineteenth century genre scenes of collegial tranquillity had become a reliable staple, no doubt aimed at the custom of nostalgic graduates. Watercolours by Alfred Beresford Pite (1861-1934) and William Percy French (1854-1920) and an illustration by Herbert Railton (1857-1910) from between 1884 and 1895 show silent buildings and parkland trees incidentally populated by diminutive, ghostly figures.²⁵⁵

Some prints however stand out for the quality of execution and animated detail hinting at social and gender distinctions made material by dress. In her *Portfolio of five etchings of Trinity College, Dublin, c.1915*, etching revival artist Myra Hughes (1877-1918) conveys an atmosphere of calm, perhaps tension, in the College towards the onset of World War I.

The spaces seem underpopulated, reflecting a war-time campus when annual

²⁵⁴ John Coleman, "Images of Assurance or Masks of Uncertainty: Joshua Reynolds and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, 1764-1789" (M.Litt. University of Dublin, 1993).

²⁵⁵ William Percy French (1854-1920), *A figure in academic dress walking by the side of the Museum Building*, 1895, watercolour on paper, 16.3 x 12 cm. Trinity College Dublin, and Arthur Beresford Pite (1861-34), *View of the Campanile, Dining Hall and the building which stood on the site of the Graduates' Memorial Building*, 1884, watercolour, pen and pencil, 15.3 x 21.7 cm. Trinity College Dublin. Reproduced in Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin. 177-178*. Herbert Railton (1857-1910). "Front Square with the Campanile, Trinity College Dublin," 1892, accessed August 25, 2025, <https://www.gettyimages.fr/search/2/image?mediatype=illustration&phrase=trinity+college+dublin>.

matriculations were far lower than now, around 310 per year dropping to only 250 around 1916.²⁵⁶ Her characters wear an array of costumes.²⁵⁷ In *The Campanile* a College Porter in his characteristic riding cap strides across the square, while a military officer in his Sam Browne belt is in discussion with a portly academic (Fig. 3.15).²⁵⁸ In *Botany Bay* two gowned male students exchange gossip hands in pockets.²⁵⁹ Hughes' etching of *Parliament Square, TCD* conveys a sense of energy with trembling tree leaves and clothing caught by the wind (Fig. 3.16).²⁶⁰ A student observes birds feeding, his gown fluttering in the breeze while the dress worn by the woman crossing Front Square billows around her. As Angela Griffith observes, her relatively humble attire is a visual reminder of the general exclusion of working classes from access to higher education.²⁶¹ Although women had been admitted to College since 1904, Hughes' omission of women students from her etchings suggests that her public was not yet ready to accept their arrival, though she herself was a pioneer of her craft.

In his etchings *The Campanile, Trinity College* and *Front Square, Trinity College* executed by James Edward Rogers (1872-1938) around 1933, less than 20 years after Hughes', campus has changed radically. Women students now appear in graduate and undergraduate gowns, purposely striding across College or confidently engaged in conversation with peers (Figs 3.17, 3.18). Brian Coghlan (1903-1978) revisits the theme in his etching of *The Campanile, Trinity College, c.1944* presenting a lively atmosphere with begowned members of College and townsfolk criss-crossing a busy Front Square.²⁶²

These idealised scenes present decent citizenry and scholarly endeavour in coexistent tranquillity. Though views of College retain their popularity, academic dress disappears

²⁵⁶ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 500.

²⁵⁷ Myra Kathleen Hughes (1877-1918), *The portfolio of five etchings of Trinity College, Dublin, c.1915*, portfolio of etchings. Trinity College Dublin, OLS Papyrus Case 132.

²⁵⁸ Myra Kathleen Hughes (1877-1918), *The Campanile, TCD, c.1915*, etching, 18 x 26 cm. Trinity College Dublin, OLS Papyrus Case 132.

²⁵⁹ Myra Kathleen Hughes (1877-1918), *Botany Bay, TCD, 1914*, etching, plate mark 19 x 27 cm, sheet 35 x 42 cm. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ET C148.

²⁶⁰ Myra Kathleen Hughes (1877-1918), *Parliament Square, TCD, 1914*, etching, plate mark 18 x 27 cm, sheet 34 x 43 cm. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ET C155.

²⁶¹ "Myra Hughes' Etchings Show a Campus from Bygone Days," *University Times* February 2, 2022, <https://universitytimes.ie/2022/02/myra-hughes-etchings-show-a-campus-from-bygone-days/>.

²⁶² Coghlan, Brian (1903-78), *The Campanile, Trinity College, 1944*, etching, image 21 x 28 cm., sheet 26 x 32 cm. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ET B388.

from more recent work such as Robert Ballagh's (1943-) series of views of TCD.²⁶³ As in real life, academic dress no longer served the artist's purpose as shorthand symbolising a place of scholarship.

Satire and caricature

An undated watercolour possibly by Henry Brocas the elder (1762-1837), takes the viewer into Front Square of TCD framing three disproportionately large figures of prominent Fellows, which Crookshank and Webb describe as caricature portraits.²⁶⁴ This scene hints at alternative glimpse of College society beyond the idealism of the commercial prints and engravings described above. Less common in contemporary university polemic, the College's lively tradition of visual satire has escaped detailed study to date. While the representation of academic costume in images is schematic, they provide glimpses into the sartorial culture of their eras, and the dress habits of the individuals satirized. Caricaturists also use costume extensively as a device to communicate character, emphasise situation and construct the satire.

Provost John Hely-Hutchinson was a notable victim of eighteenth character destruction during a career well documented by McDowell and Webb, and Boyle.²⁶⁵ An unexpected appointment following the premature demise of his predecessor Francis Andrews (1718-74) he was a deeply, though not universally, unpopular choice with the Fellows. A layman who had married well, he had reputation for political cunning in the single-minded pursuit of his own interests. Not naturally academic and choleric, even to the extent of duelling, Hely-Hutchinson nevertheless understood the need for a wider, more liberal education preparing Trinity men to take their place in eighteenth century society.²⁶⁶ Horse riding (earning Hely-Hutchinson the nickname of 'The Prancer') fencing, dancing

²⁶³ Ballagh, Robert (1943-) *View of the Rubrics, Trinity College, Dublin*. 1983, screenprint, 84 x 48 cm. Ballagh, Robert (1943-) *Trinity College (view from the Chapel to the Examination Hall)*, 1983, photolithographic print, 89 x 64 cm.

²⁶⁴ Brocas, Henry (1762-1837). *View of Parliament Square with caricature portraits of Fellows including Jackie Barrett*, n.d., watercolour on paper, 38 x 56 cm. Trinity College Dublin, in Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 179.

²⁶⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 53-56, 175. Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 198-216.

²⁶⁶ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 56-57.

and modern languages were added to activities available in the College. The more conservative Fellows were deeply affronted, seeing these innovations as undermining the more traditional classical curriculum.

He attracted the particular ire of one Fellow, the dyspeptic Patrick Duigenan (1735-1816) who vented his rage against the Provost's vices and affectations, in a series of vituperative diatribes, *Pranceriana* which appeared in 1775-79 under the pseudonym Nathan ben Saddi.²⁶⁷ These were illustrated by a series of unsigned satirical engravings lampooning Hely-Hutchinson in the style popularized by William Hogarth (1697-1764). Curiously ignored by College historians, these images are dense with Hogarthian coded messages and iconography which merit further unravelling.

The vicious caricatures throw accusations and depict in-jokes at the Provost's expense. One shows a gowned and bewigged Hely-Hutchinson bestride a female personification of the College, whip in hand supervising dance and fencing masters. Through the arch behind a student is seen astride a prancing charger while others fence or duel in College Park (Fig. 3.19). This is clearly at odds with the vision of classical scholarship seen through the arches in Taylor's plates forty years later, and also with the conservatism of the dons who wear the outfits of late eighteenth clerics. Their caps, clerical wig and bands, long gowns with bell sleeves favoured by Whigs, worn over jacket and knee length britches and stockings have a professional uniformity unfamiliar in contemporary academic settings.

In another, a gowned academic bestrides Hely-Hutchinson whilst addressing aghast Fellows and a Scholar (Fig. 3.20). Here, the artist confronts the solid, columnar verticality of the Fellows' gowns and the parallel square caps with the vigorous curves and flow of Hely-Hutchinson's costumes. Ironically, in these images the artist has the last laugh,

²⁶⁷ Patrick Duigenan, *Pranceriana. A select collection of fugitive pieces, published since the appointment of the present Provost of the University of Dublin* (Dublin, 1775). Patrick Duigenan, *Appendix Pranceriana : Which completes the select collection of fugitive pieces, published since the appointment of the present Provost of the University of Dublin* (Dublin, 1776). Patrick Duigenan, *Pranceriana Poetica or Prancer's Garland. Being a collection of fugitive poems written since the publication of Pranceriana and the Appendix* (Dublin, 1779).

communicating the petrified solidity and stasis of Duigenan and Fellows in the face of the energetic forces of change.

The Frontispiece to the *Appendix to Pranceriana* published a year later may refer to the controversy over the award of a living to an ally of Hely-Hutchinson's (Fig. 3.21). An enraged Hely-Hutchinson is in a tug of war with a Fellow wrenching a gown the yoke and string just visible. Their actions tear it with church steeple, a spatial trick seen in Hogarth. The gown, symbolizing academia and the church frame the disputed preferments, as in a boxing ring. The same moustachioed Fellow, seen in previous engraving stands by gesturing to the winner's purse. At his feet are dividers and a visual reference to Petty's maps of Ireland. Fellows were not permitted to accept the living of a parish more than fifteen miles from Dublin, and it seems some geodetic contortions were needed for this borderline parish to qualify.²⁶⁸

In the frontispiece to the sequel publication *Pranceriana Poetica* published by Duigenan in 1779, Hely-Hutchinson is further ridiculed as *A. Harlequin P_v_ft. Cognomine Prancer a. duellist. B Scribbler c. fop a dancer. B. a Lawyer*.²⁶⁹ Harlequin, a stock figure of a fool and butt of jokes from commedia dell'arte, though the representation of Harlequin Prancer is sinister. The boots and a sword, the purse on the table, and weapons on the wall refer to the Provost's penchant for duelling while the books strewn in the shadows at his feet his disdain for scholarship (Fig. 3.22).²⁷⁰ Dressed in academic costume, Harlequin Hely-Hutchinson holds a mask outstretched revealing the brutal grimacing face and vicious eyes of the man beneath, characteristics shrewdly captured by Reynolds in his portrait of Hely-Hutchinson completed a year earlier in 1778 (Fig. 1.1). Reynolds presents the Provost as severe and quarrelsome, painting him frontally, face fully lit with 'unnatural roundness and flatness, as if its cheeks have been pulled forward like a mask'.²⁷¹ The dark eyes behind have the menace and cold-bloodedness of a shark.

²⁶⁸ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 207-08.

²⁶⁹ Duigenan, *Pranceriana Poetica or Prancer's Garland. Being a collection of fugitive poems written since the publication of Pranceriana and the Appendix 1*.

²⁷⁰ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 210.

²⁷¹ Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Georgians : eighteenth-century portraiture and society* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1990), 88-89.

The Revd John “Jackie” Barrett DD (1753-1821), one of the figures in Brocas the elder’s watercolour of Front Square referred to above, is also shown in academic gown by Dublin publisher James Sidebottom in his series *Public Characters* (c.1802-1819). Barrett was College Librarian, Professor of Hebrew and later Vice-Provost with many accounts, perhaps exaggerated in the retelling, of his miserliness, misogyny and shabby dress habits.²⁷² In his caricature *A Queer Fellow at College* Sidebottom shows Barrett full length, left hand in pocket, his gown sailing behind him, as he strides muttering to himself across Front Square (Fig. 3.23). His costume of square cap and black bell sleeved gown over a cut-away frock coat, knee-length britches and black stockings are the uniform *de rigueur* for a clerical Fellow at the end of the eighteenth century. In this image fondly memorializing a College character, and frequently pirated at the time, Barrett is perhaps more smartly turned out than anecdotes relate.

Barrett is seen again in an anonymous caricature entitled *Smuggling in - or a College Trick* c.1815 after Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827) (Fig. 3.24).²⁷³ Here he leers, gesturing upwards at four students at a window hauling up an unabashed young woman swinging Fragonard-like in a billowing pink dress.²⁷⁴ The details of the College buildings are faithfully reproduced and the academic dress coherent with Taylor’s plates published around the same time. Barrett is shown in a voluminous black gown of a TCD Fellow replacing the Oxford Proctor in the original version. Two of the men are dressed in short sleeved gowns, possibly tufted, undergraduate gowns. Barrett’s billowing robes and a student’s tasselled square cap falling to the ground add to the frantic, jostling atmosphere of the student capers.

²⁷² Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial : containing an account of the founding and growth of the college: A Ter-Centenary Souvenir* (Dublin: Thom & Co., 1892), 70. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 82.

²⁷³ Anonymous, published by J. Le Petit, Dublin, c.1819, *Smuggling In, or A College Trick*, etching and aquatint, Trinity College Dublin, OLS/CARI/ROB/91 in: Robinson, *Caricature and the Irish: Satirical prints from the Library of Trinity College Dublin, c.1780-1830*, 170-171. The Dublin version was taken from Heinrich Joseph Schütz (1760–1822) after Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827), published by Rudolph Ackermann (fl.1794–1832), 1798, *Smuggling In, or A College Trick* etching and aquatint, 31.9 × 23.9 cm. The Metropolitan Museum, New York. 59.533.530.

²⁷⁴ Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806). *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette (The Swing)*. c.1767-8, oil on canvas, 81 cm × 64 cm. The Wallace Collection, London. P430.

A caricature of Provost John Pentland Mahaffy (1839-1919), a similarly larger than life College personality, appears in a collection of caricatures published by V L O'Connor in 1916 (Fig. 3.25).²⁷⁵ He is instantly recognisable, heavysset, a large head, jowls and sideburns, dressed in black gown and square cap (Fig. 2.4).²⁷⁶ Renowned for his 'transcendental snobbery', sartorial exactness and the accoutrements of preferment his clothing communicating both personality and ideology.²⁷⁷ College portraits by Walter Osborne and Sarah Cecilia Harrison depict Mahaffy in clerical dress, white tie and civil honours.²⁷⁸ Stanford and McDowell observed that Mahaffy's 'clothes were entirely ecclesiastical except for a white tie. In England he would have resembled a 'Squarson', a clergyman the man who devoted as much time to his sport as to his clerical duties.²⁷⁹ The white tie was a consciously outmoded reference to neckwear worn by nineteenth century clergy, demonstrating his aversion for the 'Roman' or 'dog-collar' gaining popularity amongst high church Anglican clergymen.

Mahaffy was also capable of caricaturing himself. The robes of his MusD conferred h.c. in 1891, were apparently his favourite, the white flowered silk faced with peony satin appealing to his flamboyance (Fig. 2.5).²⁸⁰ 'He liked to recall once, when he was wearing this elegant and impressive robe in an academic procession at Louvain, mothers among the bystanders held up their infants for him to bless, thinking that he must be some very exalted prelate – and he blessed them'.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ V. L. O'Connor, *A book of caricatures* (Dundalk: Tempest, 1916).

²⁷⁶ Mahaffy was a staunch Unionist. The banner on which he stands in the drawing refers to his reaction to the celebrations of centenary of the birth of Thomas Davis (1814-45). Davis, a TCD graduate and Irish nationalist, was to be commemorated by the College Gaelic Society in November 1914. Mahaffy as Vice-Provost banned the meeting because 'a man called Pearse' was to be one of the speakers. Austin Clarke, "A Centenary Celebration," *The Massachusetts Review* 5, no. 2 (1964), 307-10.

²⁷⁷ William R Feron, "Gentlemen, the Provost! Memories of Mahaffy Centenary of a great Scholar's birth," *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 27 1939, 4.

²⁷⁸ Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 96.

²⁷⁹ William Bedell and McDowell Stanford, Robert B, *Mahaffy : a biography of an Anglo-Irishman* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 127-28.

²⁸⁰ As Chapel Precentor he ensured that the quality of music in the TCD chapel was maintained and even composed a number of pieces including setting the College grace to music. "Honorary Degrees at Dublin University." *Dublin Daily Express* (Dublin), June 20 1891, 5. Stanford, *Mahaffy*, 55-57.

²⁸¹ Feron, "Gentlemen, the Provost! Memories of Mahaffy Centenary of a great Scholar's birth."

A staunch unionist, Mahaffy saw little educational value in Irish as a living language and voted against the introduction of Celtic languages to the degree curriculum in 1907.²⁸² A postcard *Paddy outside College* published c.1900-1910, possibly by Belfast illustrator John Carey (1861–1943), represents this debate in rather sinister form (Fig. 3.26). In it an Irishman attempts to gain entrance to TCD for his son Mickey, looking on. The image is derogatory on at least two levels, the ignorant Irishman daring to seek access for his son and a jibe against Munster Irish as a ‘dead language’.

The costumes in this vignette define the characters, their roles and attitudes. The father is represented as the stereotypical Irishman, his sideburns and ape-like posture resembling the louring ‘Paddies’ of Erskine Nicol (1825–1904). They are blocked by a portly academic in gown and cap, white tie and clerical suit, legs apart, flanked by a gentleman in a top hat and a College porter in his trademark riding cap standing by in case the Irishman chooses to use the stick he carries. The academic’s ample gown is worn like a pantomime dame, pulled up towards his full stomach and drawn closed around his waist. He is both amused and defensive, but the message of exclusion is clear, Paddy’s son will not be admitted to the plenteous groves of academe. The porter, a College servant, wearing a rough brown overcoat like the Irishman is perhaps conflicted in this conversation.

In contrast, caricatures and cartoons in the *TCD Miscellany* of the 1920s and 30s by talented staff and students such as Denis Hanna (D.H.) (*fl.*1925) and E S Lemass (1890-1970), present charming glimpses of a rather more innocent, sheltered life at a time of political turmoil out with the walls of College. Lemass presents *Trinity in 1920* with style and elegance, with a privileged youth escaping the radical political and social changes ongoing outside the College walls (Fig. 3.27). Chicly dressed women students in the latest fashions promenade with parasols and flirt with men student in blazers and tennis whites in a sunny College Park.

²⁸² Mary Robinson, *Douglas Hyde (1860-1949): The Trinity Connection*, Quatercentenary Addresses, (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 1992), 36. Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 433.

Hanna demonstrates a preoccupation with fashion and clothing in a series of cartoons *People we see in TCD or the College Portrait Gallery*, published in the *Miscellany* in 1926 (Figs 3.28, 3.29).²⁸³ The artist, a member of Common Room who reportedly worked from life, is seen with a palette in hand under the disapproving gaze of possibly Provost Thrift in Fig. 3.29. In his cartoons the principal characters are identified by their clothing. Two men undergraduates debate the width of trousers, Oxford bags or jodhpurs, for the coming season; the ubiquitous fat College Porter with riding cap with, in a visual wordplay, his pint of porter (Fig. 3.28). Dons appear in caps and gowns, their rank recognisable from the cut. A cartoon of a Commencement procession is faithful to precedence. The Mace bearer leads the Chancellor, Bishops, the Clergy, Masters, Bachelors and undergraduate Scholars all identifiable from their dress (Fig. 3.29).

His original ink-wash cartoon of William A. Goliger (1870-1941) shows the Vice-Provost in collar and tie and spats, the distinctive TCD crescent cut-out prominent on the boot sleeves of his Master's gown flying in his wake giving the impression of haste and urgency (Figs 3.28, 3.30). The set face and clenched fists give him a stressed authority, not unlike the engraving of John Barrett, also a Vice-Provost. Arthur Aston Luce (1882-1977), Professor of Metaphysics recognizable by his bald pate, is depicted with warmth in surplice and dog-collar, red and black DD hood, square cap resting by his side as he preached from the pulpit in College Chapel (Fig. 3.31).

In contrast with these naïve scenes of collegiate life, student protests and rag weeks were more rowdy and creative affairs than now, often including mock processions and charades with political comment. Costume and disguise allowed students opportunity for non-violent protest, gently satirise College authorities, comment on international political events and for surprising amount of self-expression.

²⁸³ These drawings can be attributed to Denis Hanna by comparison with printed versions of the same cartoon of W. A. Goliger in TCD *Miscellany* initialled D.H. (Figs 3.29, 3.30) and cartoons of the "Dublin University Dramatic Society at the Gaiety 1926", signed Denis Hanna in *TCD: A College Miscellany*, February 11, 1926, 78-79.

The *Irish Times* describes a mock 'funeral' procession held in March 1908 when students gathered to send off a rusticated student.²⁸⁴ They were observed preparing for the event in 'weird and fearful attire', then processing onto College Green in novelty headgear, a Turkish fez, their sister's cast-off hats, a Kaiser's helmet, and 'detached fragments of academic robes, which might have done duty in the times of Burke and Goldsmith...'. Unusually, at a time when gender distinctions were perhaps more strictly observed, the correspondent commended one male student blending 'the distinctive features of masculine and feminine attire very gracefully'.

A similar scene laden with political comment is depicted in a photograph by William David Hogan (1885-1956) of a TCD Student's Rag in May 1923 (Fig. 3.32).²⁸⁵ The tableau on the steps of the Dining Hall shows a student at the centre in robes modelled on those of the Chancellor Lord Iveagh. The Provost, a College Porter and a male student in pearls and fur are by his side, while other students impersonate the Governor General T M Healy, the marriage of Duke and Duchess of York, and the King and Queen of Italy. Awareness of the rise of fascism is overt and prescient. In the Hogan photograph the crowd looks on as the King of Italy in uniform bows to Benito Mussolini, his sword unsheathed. Chillingly, the students burlesque Black Shirts while elsewhere Mussolini confers the Order of the Bath on a student.²⁸⁶ The Rag in November the following year included conferring of honorary degrees on Adolph Hitler, the Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe and others, then led over O'Connell Bridge by a student in academic robes astride a donkey.²⁸⁷

Authorities were anxious that rags should not extend beyond the walls for fear of rowdyism that would damage the College's reputation, considered in mid-1920s Ireland to be precarious.²⁸⁸ Editorials in TCD Miscellany warned against rowdyism and drunkenness during Trinity Week, deplored the throwing of eggs and tomatoes as vulgar bad taste, the

²⁸⁴ "A College "Funeral", " *Irish Times* (Dublin), March 28, 1908, 17.

²⁸⁵ *Irish Times* photographic coverage of the event allows the players to be identified "Student's Rag," *Irish Times* (Dublin), May 29 1923, 4.

²⁸⁶ The "Order of the Bath" may have been a nod to the Lord Iveagh's donation of baths to the College in 1921. The tradition which seems to have continued into at least 1929. "Report of TCD Rag Week in the Daily Mail," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, May 30 1929, 182.

²⁸⁷ "Degree Day "RAG" in Dublin," *Irish Times* (Dublin), November 1 1930, 5.

²⁸⁸ "Editorial," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, June 12, 1924, 194.

scenes were as injurious 'to College prestige as to College millinery'.²⁸⁹ Asides letting off steam, these tableaux of caricature and satire were nevertheless effective platforms for both political comment and self-expression behind the protective mask of burlesque, costume and disguise.

²⁸⁹ "Editorial," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, June 19, 1924. "Editorial," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, May 21, 1931, 1-2.

Chapter 4. From object to attire: a social life of academic dress

Introduction

With its own microcosm of norms and rituals evolving with social change, academic dress has a purpose beyond the practical. The cap and gown symbolizing scholarship have also been deployed as a means of discipline and control, reinforce community, build reputation and project political power. Attitudes to official dress express the tensions common in university life: student challenge to controlling authority, self-expression and loyalty to group, traditionalism versus modernity.

Costume is a constant thread in contemporary and historical accounts of the College, from the seventeenth century disputes concerning surplices to the surprise expressed in the *Irish Times* in 1958 at a failure to wear white tie and tails to Commencements.²⁹⁰ Concern for regulating and curating material legacy is evident with the inclusion of sections in the Statutes devoted to *Treasures and Heritage* and *Academic Dress*, yet costume has not been the subject of dedicated research.

This chapter addresses how academic dress at TCD is transformed via the various functions it fulfils into a sartorial habitus, with all that it signals for society and the institution it represents. It considers via visual and textual sources, the evolution of the culture of academic dress at TCD and the ways authorities, faculty, individual wearers and communities interact with these costumes. It also examines how academic dress has been activated to express structure and community, create common cause, reinforce hierarchy and control, recompensate achievement and build institutional reputation and identity. The ceremonial and ritual deployment of academic costume is left to a later chapter.

Authority and control

As with uniforms, academic dress not only identifies the individual and their function but is also a means of enforcing power. Correct dress signals adhesion to the prevailing authority, where failure to comply can elicit exclusion or indeed sanction. Regulations on

²⁹⁰ "Morning Dress at T.C.D. Commencements," *Irish Times* (Dublin), November 4 1958, 3.

dress in the earliest TCD Statutes were employed by the rule-setters like sumptuary laws, discriminating rank, reinforcing privilege and social hegemony and exerting control by exacting penalties for incorrect attire.²⁹¹

Provost Thomas Elrington (1799-1807) laid out his case on the importance of academic dress in a letter to Fellows in 1815 condemning their lack of discipline as regards apparel:

As to gowns, I consider the neglect of wearing them as an evil of no ordinary magnitude. They are to the student the mark of his dependence and his responsibility. A single week's exertion on your part would restore the wearing of them. Many of you remember that the practice of wearing hats with gowns was corrected by a single Fellow, and that in a short time, and so effectively that it never has recurred. Much of the neglect of the students in this respect is owing to their seeing Fellows in the Courts without gowns. Let this be corrected. The Fellows Garden too and the Park must never be entered without gowns. And I am sorry to be obliged to add the Library, where I have myself more than once witnessed this enormous indecorum. The capping to Fellows is a practice also connected essentially with discipline. It keeps up a due sense of subordination and should be strictly enforced. Every Tutor should make it his business to instruct and to warn his pupils of this mark of respect and teach him that it is not as an acquaintance that he salutes a Fellow, but as his superior that he marks his respect for him.²⁹²

Echoing the seventeenth century authoritarianism, Elrington clearly saw dress as a means of both materialising and reinforcing hierarchy. It is first an outward sign of the student's place in the scheme of things, as subordinate, dependent and accountable to the collegiate system. Superiors are expected to support authority by being exemplars themselves, setting the standards in matters of dress. Gestures of subservience reinforce discipline and respect for superiors and social order.

²⁹¹ A comprehensive history of sumptuary laws is given by Alan Hunt. *Governance of the Consuming Passions : A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Sumptuary laws as applied to academic dress are examined by Noel Cox, "Tudor Sumptuary Laws and Academical Dress: An Act against Wearing of Costly Apparel 1509 and an Act for Reformation of Excess in Apparel 1533." *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 6 (2006): 15-43.

²⁹² Thomas Elrington Board Notes 1813-17, 28 Oct 1815, Trinity College, Dublin, MS4961, quoted in Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 241.

As a residential college in the centre of a major European city, TCD took responsibility for the safety, morals and behaviour of its students, generally younger than now.²⁹³

Disruptive behaviour over and above normal rowdiness, preoccupied College authorities for most of the seventeenth and into first half of the eighteenth centuries. Tutors were responsible for their students and could be fined if their charges spent too much time in the city, declared by Provost Narcissus Marsh (c.1638-1713) to be a 'lewd and debauched' town.²⁹⁴

Policing student behaviour also fell to the Proctors, Junior Dean and Porters in uniforms distinguishing their function and authority as gatekeepers to College. An entry in the College Register, 1679 records that a porter was to keep the College gate locked and stand guard at the outer gate wearing a gown.²⁹⁵ Students risked being apprehended 'transcending the walls' if they tried to gain entry after the gates had shut for the night, or fines for 'lying out in town or town-haunting'.²⁹⁶ The College also obtained from the City of Dublin the right to control the students while out in town. During the Provostship of William Chappell (1634-40) this authority extended the rights of the Proctors to search taverns and alehouses.²⁹⁷ Their robes identified and gave licence for their authority to search premises, apprehend wayward students and protect them from unscrupulous innkeepers.²⁹⁸

Incidents between 1680 and 1705 included assault and grievous bodily harm, stabbings and frequenting bawdy houses.²⁹⁹ In 1704 a scholar William Bishop, was expelled 'for laying by his gown & taking a sword & cravat...and [he] went to beat another person in a quarrel in which quarrel the gentleman was killd'.³⁰⁰ Though a truant student would also presumably discard the encumbrance of his gown for the lesser crime of town-haunting, seventeenth century regulations on dress clearly aimed at recognizing a student

²⁹³ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 21.

²⁹⁴ Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 198.

²⁹⁵ Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 143.

²⁹⁶ Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 198.

²⁹⁷ Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 200.

²⁹⁸ Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 224.

²⁹⁹ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 64-68.

³⁰⁰ "General Registry from 1640", July 28, 1640 – March 29, 1740, MUN/V/5/2. 396, quoted in Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 67.

legitimately about the city. The uniform of gown acted as a symbol of their subjection to College authority and the practical advantage of being easily recognized.³⁰¹

Dublin City of the 1700s was known for ferocious faction fighting, notably between the weavers and the butchers of city.³⁰² The butchers or “Ormond boys” were Catholics from the north quays of the city. The weavers known as the “Liberty Boys” were associated with Huguenot artisans who arrived in Dublin via London towards at the end of the seventeenth century, settling in the area of the Coombe.³⁰³ Trinity students were not above lending a hand, unsurprisingly siding with the Protestant Liberty faction. Indeed, it seems even Provost Bindon led the charge in a skirmish with the butchers in Patrick’s Market during Lent c.1725.³⁰⁴ Gowns were employed as weapons, the keys of their rooms inserted in the tails or sleeves as makeshift flails.³⁰⁵ During one such altercation on May 11, 1790 several students seized by the butchers were found ‘in their gown and caps hanging to the hooks’ in the stalls of the cattle market.³⁰⁶ Identifiable by their dress, the butchers ‘pitying their youth and respecting their rank, had only hung them by the waistbands of their breeches’.

In 1830 discredited judge Jonah Barrington (1756–1834) recalled the unrestrained *esprit de corps* of Trinity students as privileged members of the establishment, warning that faced with any perceived slight ‘collegians made no scruple of bringing the offender into the court and pumping him well; and their unanimity and numbers were so great’.³⁰⁷ Noblemen’s sons, ironically disadvantaged by their extravagant costume, would turn their

³⁰¹ Murphy, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, from its foundation to 1702*, 200.

³⁰² Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 134. Anonymous, *A Further and more peticular account of the cruel, desperate, and bloody fight and uproar that happen'd in Ireland on Monday the 6th of May 1700* (London: Printed for W.J. near Temple-Bar, 1700), accessed August 25, 2025 https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12024/A40745/A40745.html?sequence=5&isAllowed=y#index.xml-body.1_div.1.

³⁰³ Kathleen Breathnach, “The last of the Dublin Silk Weavers,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1990/1991), 134-43.

³⁰⁴ Christopher Wordsworth, *Social life at the English universities in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge,: Deighton, Bell, and co.; etc., 1874), 184.

³⁰⁵ Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 134.

³⁰⁶ John Edward Walsh, *Sketches of Ireland sixty years ago* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1847), 4-5.

³⁰⁷ Jonah Barrington, *Personal sketches of his own times* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1827).

gowns inside out to hide the gold ornaments and avoid being identified during these fracasess.³⁰⁸

Violence and chaos again broke out on College Green on March 12, 1858. A procession to Dublin Castle, marking the return of a popular Lord Lieutenant, descended into riot when the commander in charge lost control and ordered mounted police to ride into the crowd, sabres drawn.³⁰⁹ The incident was widely reported, accompanied by illustrations capturing the mayhem, though eye-witness accounts of its seriousness varied.³¹⁰ An art print features students fending off police batons and swords raised in the railed enclosure before Front Gate, bystanders aghast, hanging from the cornices and lampposts (Fig. 4.1). The distorted space emphasises the enlarged façade of the College as the venue while the participants including students, police and onlookers are identifiable by their costumes. A second illustration, from the news press, viewed towards College Green, looks more or less like any urban riot, though the numbers participating undoubtedly exaggerated to shock the London reader (Fig. 4.2). In both, the students' gowns flying in different directions communicate the rage and confusion, though they somehow manage keep their caps on.

Student discipline was maintained via the Night Roll, a feature of College life until the mid-twentieth century, requiring Freshmen to present themselves in gowns on a fixed number of evenings per week at the Dining Hall foyer for a roll call presided by the Junior Dean, assisted by Porters.³¹¹ Attendance was mandatory, though an anonymous satirical tract published in 1791 showed the lengths students might go to game the system.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 134.

³⁰⁹ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 303-05.

³¹⁰ John Hatchell (1825-1902) Liberal MP for Co. Wexford suggested to the House of Commons that there had been some media exaggeration, while historian William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903), then a twenty-year-old student looking down from the safety of College rooms recalled being "so horrified at the faces streaming with blood and men half insensible that I was rather glad to turn away. There seems but one opinion here—that the provocation in no respect justified the charge." Hansard, *Riots At Trinity College (Dublin): debated on Wednesday 24 March 1858*, House of Commons (London, 1858), [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1858-03-24/debates/4d67d29a-e02c-4772-961e-f1531dd92d43/RiotsAtTrinityCollege\(Dublin\).669-702](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1858-03-24/debates/4d67d29a-e02c-4772-961e-f1531dd92d43/RiotsAtTrinityCollege(Dublin).669-702). Elisabeth van Dedem Lecky, *A Memoir of the Right Hon. William Edward Hartpole Lecky* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1909), 11-12.

³¹¹ And even discourage students from attending evening dining parties in town. Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 136. Sophisters and Scholars were excused.

³¹² *Advice to the University of Dublin. To the senior fellows, ... To the servants of the college*, 24-27.

Obligation to attend was removed in 1959 and the practice petered out by the 1960s, though it persisted in the Calendar until as late as 1977.³¹³

A photograph taken by the *Irish Times* in 1942 shows the Junior Dean dressed in gown and square cap pen in hand presiding at the Night Roll, attended by two porters.³¹⁴ Men in undergraduate gowns and the sensible suits their fathers would have worn, wait in line to present themselves to authority (Fig. 4.3).³¹⁵ The Porters wear their traditional livery comprising a hard peaked hunting cap, tailcoat with brass buttons stamped with the College arms, waistcoat and a heavy double-breasted greatcoat. As well as identification the distinctive hard hat was no doubt a form of personal protective equipment in case of assault. Somerville notes that from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s the TCD Porters were impressively dressed at considerable cost to the College.³¹⁶ Reminiscent of coachmen's outfits, the Porter's eye-catching uniforms became a leitmotif for Trinity, captured by Irish illustrator Harry Furniss (1854–1925) in his *Sketches of Irish Character* in 1881 (Fig. 4.4).

The Night Roll scene presents all the attributes of ritual as described by Muir 'a social activity that is repetitive, standardized, a model or a mirror, and its meaning is inherently ambiguous'.³¹⁷ Accoutrements essential to the rite are on display, including the Register and candle. The candle in its lantern was a remnant of a time when the College squares were unlit at night. Its practical use forgotten, it had become a ritual object accompanying the Junior Dean as he processed, escorted by Porters, from his rooms to the ceremony. On arrival proceedings were scripted, opening with the Porter announcing 'Gentleman, the

³¹³ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 99. John Gaskin (1936–), a former Junior Dean, observed that the Night Roll had been abandoned *de facto* by the late 1960s. R. A. Somerville, email to author May 27, 2026.

³¹⁴ Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 167-71.

³¹⁵ Quidnunc, "Irishman's Diary: Night Roll," *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 25 1942.

³¹⁶ Between 1757 and 1767 over £900 was spent on fabrics for uniforms for some twenty-four Porters. This lasted until well into the 1850s when annual expenditure on liveries was £300 at which time the combined salaries was £1511 annually. Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 100.

³¹⁷ Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, New Approaches to European History. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 6.

Dean is in the Hall'. Through this ceremony the power to discipline is conferred by the Dean on the Porters, the undergraduates required to defer to these authorities.

Politics

Dress symbolizes political and tribal loyalties. Tensions between competing Royalist and Puritan factions in TCD in the seventeenth century spilled over into disputes weaponised by clothing and dress.³¹⁸ Ideological divides between traditionalists and the puritanically inclined were made material by clothing laws. By the eighteenth-century academic dress could also denote political affiliation. Oxford don and religious pamphleteer Thomas Herne (d.1722) observed in his diary for February 1720 that 'It is the custom now in London for all the Tory clergy to wear their master's gowns (if they have proceeded in the degree of master of arts at either of the universities,) which much displeases the whiggs and the enemies of the universities, who all go in pudding-sleeve gowns'.³¹⁹

TCD in the eighteenth century was an avowedly Whiggish institution.³²⁰ This is arguably reflected in the costume worn by its academics, who seem by this time to have taken whole-heartedly to wearing Oxford patterns. Portraits of the Whig Provosts such as Baldwin, Andrews and Hely-Hutchinson show the sitters in Oxford-style doctoral robes with ample bell-shaped sleeves (Figs 1.1, 2.7, 4.5).

Provost Baldwin was a particularly devoted Whig and vehemently opposed the Tories and Jacobites of any complexion, in particular Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), a school contemporary.³²¹ In perhaps deliberate contrast with his portrait of Baldwin shown in Figure 2.7, Bindon's portraits of Swift show him defiantly wearing a sombre black master's gown, scarf and preaching bands.³²² His distinctly Toryish boot sleeves are clearly seen in Andrew Miller's 1743 mezzotint based on Bindon's 1739 portrait of Swift in St Patrick's Cathedral Deanery (Fig. 4.5). The Dean is depicted directing affairs in his working dress,

³¹⁸ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 37-38.

³¹⁹ Thomas Hearne, William Twopeny, and Philip Bliss, *Reliquiae Hearnianae: the remains of Thomas Hearne ... Being extracts from his ms. diaries*, ed. Philip Bliss (Oxford: Printed for the Editor, 1857), 436-37.

³²⁰ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 37-73.

³²¹ Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*, 53.

³²² Bindon, Francis (c.1690-1765), *The Revd. Jonathan Swift, D.D. (1667-1745), Dean of St. Patrick's Dublin*. 1739, oil on canvas, St Patrick's Cathedral Deanery, Dublin. Bindon, Francis (c.1690-1765). *Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)*, 1735, oil on canvas, 221 x 165 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. NGI 2021.158.

the undress costume of a Dublin DD, a simple black gown boot-sleeves cut at the elbow. In his left hand clasps an academic square cap with tassel.

A portrait by Anton von Maron (1733-1808) c.1766 in the saloon of the Provost's House shows Francis Andrews, a noted Whig, epicurean and bon vivant, three-quarter length, standing in a full, white wig, black coat with an elaborate white satin waistcoat embroidered with gold, and a large lace fall and ruffles (Fig. 4.6). His finery is complemented by luxurious black gown with bell-shaped sleeves, not of simple stuff but of fine material faced with black silk. This gown may have legal antecedents. Andrews, a member of Middle Temple called to the Irish bar in 1776, was the first lay Provost since 1626, holding an LLD rather than the usual DD.

It is alternatively a monochrome version of the scarlet and pink LLD robes worn by the next Whig Provost, John Hely-Hutchinson in Reynolds' portrait of 1778 (Fig.1.1). The props together with richness of the robes emphasise position and authority of this wily politician, in contrast with the luxurious living conveyed by the drapery in the portrait of his well-fed predecessor.

The close links between the College and lawmaking are hinted at in *The Irish Parliament House*, an aquatint in the NLI by an unknown artist and engraver dated c.1784 (Fig. 4.7). It shows the Ionic colonnade and east portico of Edward Lovett Pearce's (1699-1733), 1729 Irish Parliament building on College Green framed by the West Front of TCD to the right.³²³ Rendered with the precision of architectural plans, the graphic quality of the buildings accentuates the movement of the figures. Equally closely observed is the costume. Two students in square caps, their sleeveless gowns identifying them as undergraduates, converse while a third points the viewer towards the legislature.

The dress and gestures of the students in this print make explicit this vision linking the education of the elite youth with the future of enlightened government. They are perhaps

³²³ Note this print does not show the late eighteenth century east and west extensions of the building, which are shown by Havell, 1816 (Fig. 3.4) Two other aquatints in the National Library suggest that *The Irish Parliament House* was one of a series by an unknown artist 'Published for the proprietor at no. 14 Leicester Fields, December 6, 1784', National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ET C134 & ET C192.

on their way to the House of Commons where, as students at the University, they enjoyed automatic admission to the visitor's gallery. Referred to as "gownsmen" the garment acted to confirm their identity and the rights it conferred. A contemporary memoir recalls:

the student's passport was his gown. He rapped at the wicket, and the porter looked through the grating; the applicant held up his gown, and the door was opened, admitted him, and again closed...It was a proud thing for a "Gib" to present himself to a crowd round the door, hear many a cry, "make way for the gentleman of the college," pass the avenue made for him, find the door expand to the "open sesame" of his gown, and himself admitted alone to the great council of the nation, while the suppliant crowd were excluded.³²⁴

The privilege was used and abused, and gowns loaned out led to the gallery overflowing with townspeople posing as students.

Dress re-emerges as a proxy for ideological differences during the turbulence of 1798. Students were interested in politics and generally in favour of Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform, causes supported by the Whig reformist Henry Grattan (1746-1820).³²⁵ The College Corporation, including Fellows and Scholars had been convened to a meeting in Dublin Castle to assuage the fears of the Viceroy concerning latent revolutionary tendencies in the College. Two popular scholars refused to attend giving rather lame excuses, one saying he had no gown and was unable to borrow one.³²⁶ Both were expelled on suspicion of being sympathisers of the nationalist United Irishman.³²⁷

Unsurprisingly, John Foster (1740-1828), the technocratic last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, viewed the presence of students in the chamber as politically charged.

Alterations to the visitors' gallery in 1790 led to space reductions, which Grattan feared

³²⁴ Rt Hon John E Walsh, Auditor of the Hist. 1836 – 37, afterwards Master of the Rolls, from information supplied by his father, the Rev. Dr Robert Walsh, Scholar 1794. Walsh, *Sketches of Ireland sixty years ago*, 192-197. Jib (plural jibs) or Gib (Ireland, slang, archaic): a first-year student at Trinity College, Dublin. *OED*.

³²⁵ Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 136.

³²⁶ Walsh, *Sketches of Ireland sixty years ago*, 157.

³²⁷ Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 221.

might dissuade students attending proceedings.³²⁸ Following destruction of the House of Commons by fire in February 1792, students continued with the support of Grattan to enjoy their freedom from a gallery behind the chair in the Speaker's Chamber, while public access was restricted for lack of space.³²⁹ They lost the right however, in 1795 when Foster objected to their overly enthusiastic response to a speech by Grattan criticising the recall of the Lord Lieutenant. He considered their behaviour to be riot and sedition and had the gallery cleared. Despite representations the privilege was never restored.³³⁰ The gown thus lost, as the Act of Union approached, its practical and symbolic role as the key to the transmission and expectations of political power of the next generation of Irish elites.

Portraits of the President – academic dress and the fabrication of image

Art and objects, including costume, became a touchstone of identity politics as Ireland regained its independence 120 years later.³³¹ As Shortall points out that in addition to representing 'Irish people as they were, there was a need to establish an Irish-Ireland identity in the country and in its art'.³³² Celtic scholar Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), who became the first President of Ireland in 1938, not only viewed restoration of the Irish language as a means to this, but also recognized the power of the visual arts to promote the national idea and define the new office of the Presidency.

Hyde seems also to have been acutely conscious of his own image and had an instinct for the importance of dress in defining both self and occasion.³³³ His writings refer to cultural loss through arbitrary changes in fashion such as the replacement of knee-breeches by trousers.³³⁴ He was known for his trademark tweed cap, which he wore to the first meeting of the Irish Senate 'his only concession to city convention was to lay aside his

³²⁸ Henry Grattan, *The Speeches of the right honourable Henry Grattan in the Irish and the Imperial Parliament*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1822), 203.

³²⁹ Walsh, *Sketches of Ireland sixty years ago*, 196. Grattan, *The Speeches of the right honourable Henry Grattan in the Irish and the Imperial Parliament*, 2, 384.

³³⁰ Walsh, *Sketches of Ireland sixty years ago*, 197.

³³¹ e.g. James I. Dougherty, "'Ocular demonstration' or 'tremendous treasure'?", *History Ireland* 18, no. 3 (2010).

³³² William Shortall, "Art and the Irish Free State - visualizing nationhood (1922-1934)" (PhD Trinity College, Dublin, 2020), 58.

³³³ An early biographer described him a 'much photographed man'. Diarmid Coffey, *Douglas Hyde, president of Ireland* (Dublin, Cork: The Talbot Press, 1938), 22.

³³⁴ Patrick Maume, "Hyde, Douglas (de hÍde, Dubhghlas)," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009).

homespun plus fours for a navy suit, over which he wore a brown Irish tweed overcoat'.³³⁵ This led to speculation, egged on by Hyde, that he might eschew formal wear for his inauguration on June 25, 1938. In the event, he appeared properly attired in silk hat and tailcoat. His sartorial eccentricity is apparent in a portrait by Sarah Purser, showing a younger Hyde seated, holding an apple branch, clad in thick deep blue jacket and waistcoat. A daring red tie and brightly striped scarf projects a good-humoured bohemian image.³³⁶ Hyde graduated LLD in 1888 and awarded LittD *h.c.* by the RUI in 1906 and Dublin in 1933, for his contributions as a Celtic scholar and founder of the Gaelic League.³³⁷ Clearly proud of his academic achievements, he was photographed several times in his doctoral robes (Figs 4.8, 4.9).

This appreciation of dress is apparent in some five portraits of Hyde painted while president, each in a different costume. Prominent Irish artists, including George Collie RHA (1904-75), William Conor (1884-1968), Sean O'Sullivan RHA (1906-1964) and Leo Whelan RHA (1892-1956) competed for the honour of painting the first president, with a flurry of sittings faithfully recorded by his Secretary, Michael McDunphy (1890-1971) between 1938 and 1939.³³⁸ While the series deserves further exposure, two, both featuring Hyde in academic robes are relevant here.

The recommendation for the Belfast artist to paint Hyde came about following a chance meeting between McDunphy and Robert Smyllie (1893-1954), Editor of the *Irish Times*. Sean O'Sullivan had been chosen to paint the first portrait of the President and Conor, it appears, was also anxious to paint Hyde.³³⁹ Smyllie admitted two interests in the matter: he wished to see Conor to become better known in Ireland (indeed, the paper gave consistent generous coverage to Conor's work), and a recognition of Smyllie's self-avowed

³³⁵ From an article in the *New York Times Magazine*, May 29, 1938 quoted in Brian Murphy, *Forgotten Patriot: Douglas Hyde and the Foundation of the Irish Presidency* (Cork: Collins Press, 2016), 17-18.

³³⁶ Purser, Sarah (1848-1943). *Portrait of Dr Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), Poet, Scholar and First President of Ireland*, oil on canvas, 76 x 63 cm. National Gallery of Ireland Collection, Dublin. NGI.1181.

³³⁷ Robinson, *Douglas Hyde (1860-1949): The Trinity Connection*, 38.

³³⁸ National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. PRES/1/P399, PRES1/436, PRES/1/P568, PRES/1/P818, PRES/1/P823, PRES/1/P1410. In the event Collie and Sean Dixon were refused leave paint Hyde. Mr George Collie ARHA, Request for Portrait Sitting. PRES1/P823. Sean Dixon, Request to President for Portrait Sittings. PRES1/436.

³³⁹ Sittings for the O'Sullivan portrait took place in Áras an Uachtaráin between September 27 and October 6, 1938.

role in backing Hyde for President.³⁴⁰ However, there may have been an ulterior motive. An unconventional portrait by Conor of the Editor in pyjamas exhibited in the RA two years before had 'met with violent criticism'.³⁴¹ The Hyde portrait may have been an attempt on the part of Smyllie to rehabilitate Conor's reputation.

Sittings took place at the Áras an Uachtaráin between October 28 and 31, 1938. The location of the painting is now unknown but recorded in photographs (Figs 4.10, 4.11). The portrait projects a cheery, professorial figure in a country tweed jacket, and described by the 'Irishman's Diary':

The President appears in his robes as a Doctor of Laws of Dublin University, and the crimson and shell-pink of the gown and hood give great richness to the painting. The artist has caught the sitter in his happiest mood...Ireland's first President, the unanimous choice of both political parties, has done honour to his University by wearing the robes of ones of its most highly prized degrees.³⁴²

Attempts by Conor to sell the portrait to Hyde met with steadfast refusal. Conor knew little Irish and was known for his commissions executed for the British Government during World War I. The portrait was perhaps uncomfortably exhibited at the same time as the O'Sullivan portrait of Hyde at the 1939 RHA Exhibition.³⁴³ The *faux pas* of referring to the Conor portrait as the 'President of Eire' in the proofs for the exhibition catalogue was also not easily forgiven. A file note written by McDunphy in 1940 is telling: 'at no time was he [Hyde] ever particularly enamoured of the artist or of the picture'.³⁴⁴

Relations seem to have been better with O'Sullivan who had painted the first presidential portrait of Hyde in September 1938 and was selected to paint another at the request of the College Historical Society in March 1939. Hyde, as a sign of affection, had retained his

³⁴⁰ Brian Fallon notes that 'Conor was popular in Dublin and was a crony of R.M. Smyllie'. Brian Fallon, "The People's Painter" *Irish Times* (Dublin), August 1 1981, 10.

³⁴¹ "The Royal Academy: Works of Irish Interest," *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 29 1939, 10.

³⁴² "Irishman's Diary: President Hyde's Portrait," *Irish Times* (Dublin), November 11 1938, 4.

³⁴³ "Early Opening for R.H.A. Exhibition." *Irish Press* (Dublin), March 14 1939, 6. Hyde visited the Exhibition held at the National College of Art, Dublin where he was received by the President of the Academy, Dermot O'Brien RHA "who wore his robes" "The President Attends Academy Exhibition." *Irish Press* (Dublin), March 21 1939, 2.

³⁴⁴ Michael McDunphy, Memorandum, May 1, 1940. National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. PRES/1/P568 Painting of portrait of President.

presidency of the Society despite a general policy to limit such associations as Head of State. For its part, the Society was keen to memorialize their connection with the President as they had done with other leading national figures such as Burke, Tone, Emmet, and Davis.³⁴⁵ The subscribers list published in the Hist. Annual Report 1939 included the Taoiseach Eamonn De Valera and records that the cost of the portrait as £69-3-0.³⁴⁶

Sittings took place in July and completed in September 1939. A preparatory sketch shows Hyde seated wearing a suit gazing upwards toward the viewer (Fig. 4.12). In the final version however, he is portrayed in the blue and scarlet robes of a Dublin LittD (Fig. 4.13). This addition was perhaps in recognition that the work was destined for an academic space and, in an elegant symmetry, memorialized the second of Hyde's Dublin doctorates. The pose, along with the bulky robes painted by Sullivan in broad blunt brush strokes, seem to overwhelm and diminish the sitter. Photographs taken during sittings reveal why. Hyde's LLD robes were finely cut, while the LittD robes were in life rather large and shapeless (compare Figs 4.8, 4.14).

The portrait was unveiled at the opening meeting of the 170th Session of the Hist. on November 1, 1939. Hyde was not present, euphemistically due to developments explained in file note written by McDunphy the following day.³⁴⁷ Hyde had not been informed that British representatives would attend the meeting and that decorations would be worn (British of course). The President could not in all decorum attend, for fear the event would become a pro-Union demonstration. A public apology was issued by the Hist. and Hyde continued his association with the Society, no doubt putting down the diplomatic hiccup to enthusiastic student naivety.

Public reception of both portraits was broadly positive. Critics praised Conor's rich colour and ability to capture character, though Hyde himself was lukewarm. Both works were popular at exhibitions, helping along with the support of the *Irish Times*, to rehabilitate

³⁴⁵ Letter of request from the Auditor of the Hist, Peter Allt [G D P Allt Sch.] to the President to have his portrait painted, March 28, 1939. PRES/1/P818, College Historical Society – National Archives of Ireland, Dublin. Portrait of President. "T.C.D.," *Irish Press* (Dublin), March 21 1939, 2.

³⁴⁶ College Historical Society, *Annual Report 1939*, College Historical Society (Dublin: Falconer Printer, 1940). 26.

³⁴⁷ PRES/1/P1410 - Trinity College Historical Society, General file. National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

Conor's reputation, while O'Sullivan's portrait was respectfully received and institutionally celebrated.

Depictions of Hyde demonstrate the inherently political nature of dress public portraiture. In choosing to be portrayed in academic robes, Hyde was not only fashioning identity but may also have seen an opportunity to lend ceremonial dignity to the role as first President of a new State. Although Ireland had just exited from centuries of colonization, the citizens of Dublin nonetheless enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of public ceremony. The costume also conveys the message of the new Ireland as a land of learning and respect for the law. The robes are also non-sectarian. Indeed, the selection of O'Sullivan from the South and Conor from the 'black North' was praised at the time as a sign that could transcend partition which was neither seen as 'real' nor likely to last long.³⁴⁸

Significant shifts in 'sumptuary' regulation appear to map closely onto key events in Irish political history: 1590s, 1630s, 1660s, 1790s, 1840s and 1920s. Such a correlation between increasing dress-regulation at times of heightened social-political upheaval is examined in detail by Alan Hunt in his 1996 book *Governance of the Consuming Passions; a History of Sumptuary Law*.³⁴⁹

Community and identity

Since foundation the principal activities of the College have been academic. Attendance at lectures and tutorials, research, study and examinations, centred on the Dining Hall, Chapel, student societies and rooms.³⁵⁰ In the eighteenth-century students ate communally at Commons daily and residents attended chapel twice a day. For most of this time academic dress was strictly required for students and academics.³⁵¹ Although regulated, it was not unquestioned. Students, then as now, struggled with reconciling the

³⁴⁸ "Irishman's Diary: President Hyde's Portrait."

³⁴⁹ Hilary O'Kelly, National College of Art and Design, communication to author, January 20, 2026. Hunt, *Governance of the consuming passions : a history of sumptuary law*.

³⁵⁰ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 61.

³⁵¹ Eda Sagarra, "From the pistol to the petticoat? The changing student body 1592-1992," in *Trinity College Dublin & the Idea of a University*, ed. Charles Hepworth Holland (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin Press, 1991), 114.

paradox of dress: resenting it as an element of uniform and control while simultaneously craving the appurtenances of status, belonging and community.

Memoires and parodies of College life offer lively insights, into students' attitudes to their costume and the rules associated. An anonymous satirical pamphlet (1791) *Advice to the University of Dublin* captures student tribalism, common cause and pecking order with the plausibility of lived experience. It advised Freshmen to drink and fight, never wear their gown unless obliged and then to 'let it sweep on the ground after you like a lady's train; cut most of the tassels off; and twisting it frequently like a rope pelt it against every corner you meet'.³⁵² The novelty of a new gown could rapidly become an embarrassment, but by reducing the garment to strips the Freshman could pass for a senior and gave freedom of movement. It also allowed street clothing to be displayed to advantage, a young man's preoccupation.

The same author suggests a myriad of possible uses for a student's gown. A Scholar could take advantage of his more copious gown to cover sloppy clothing, hide boots (still forbidden with academic dress), or indeed conceal a weapon. For the undergraduate finding himself short, a gown or surplice could be conveniently pawned in the nearby Temple Bar or used as collateral with a local innkeeper. The insolence of failing to wear a gown going about town, before the examiner or saluting Fellows, was a badge of honour for these young bloods.

In an entertaining letter in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* published in 1793 the correspondent "Tim Tickle", possibly a recent student, draws attention to academic dress as discriminating status, declaring that:

The academic dress is pretty enough; it consists of a square cap resembling what you may see painted over grocer's shops on the head of a Chinese emperor, their

³⁵² *Advice to the University of Dublin. To the senior fellows, ... To the servants of the college*, 49.

long black gowns differing according to the rank or standing of the wearer, some as full of tassels as a livery servant's, and some as plain as a parish sexton's.³⁵³

In *The Idler in [Trinity] College, or the Student's Guide* published by William Pryce Maunsell some sixty years later provides amusing glimpses into student attitudes to dress and sartorial customs of the mid-nineteenth century TCD.³⁵⁴ Vignettes of student life with the various College buildings as backdrops are leavened with descriptions of costume, launched with a parody of Shakespeare: 'First cometh the jib, in cap and gown arrayed'. The author goes on to caricature the dress of student archetypes, with all the self-consciousness of young identities in construction which we would recognize milling around campus today.³⁵⁵ Newly matriculated students proud of their new status are described escorting their friends about town or loitering by Front Gate in the caps and gowns, a scene echoed in engravings of the period (Fig. 3.4). But little had changed since the *Advice* 1791, and the ambivalent attitude to official dress remains apparent. The proud day when the student first purchases his gown is followed by disillusionment 'after a couple of years he shudders at the idea of wearing his cap and gown, even in the courts...'.³⁵⁶

College tried valiantly to enforce dress regulations in the face of youthful cheekiness, starting with the financial penalties set out in the Caroline Charters. In *TCD: A College Miscellany*, correspondent "Gurujee" recounted misdemeanours associated with incorrect dress for the mid-1850s.³⁵⁷ Infractions included smoking while in academic dress in the College's public spaces, smoking in a gown before Commons, a grave offence in 1897 still in existence in the 1940s.³⁵⁸ Other sartorial (indeed aesthetic) offences included wearing

³⁵³ Tim Tickle, "A Tour Through Trinity College," *Walker's Hibernian Magazine: or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, September, 1793, 527.

³⁵⁴ Maunsell, *The idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide*.

³⁵⁵ Maunsell, *The idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide*, 8-9.

³⁵⁶ Maunsell, *The idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide*, 15.

³⁵⁷ Gurujee, "Crime and Punishment," *TCD: A College Miscellany* (Dublin), May 17 1923, 153-154. "Gurujee" was the pseudonym of J. C. Forrester. David Allardice Webb, *T.C.D. : an anthology, 1895-1945. Extracts in prose and verse from 'T.C.D., a college miscellany'* (Tralee: The Kerryman, 1945), vii-viii, provides an index to the pseudonyms of Miscellany contributors.

³⁵⁸ Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 167.

flamboyant smoking cap with a gown to lectures, sporting a gown with football kit, or entering Commons with a gown around the neck.

Provost Mahaffy, known for his snobbery and concern for dress attributed the gradual erosion of sartorial standards to TCD's existence at the heart of a large and bustling metropolis.³⁵⁹ Once on the far edge of the Dublin, the College had been gradually enveloped by the expanding city, bringing temptation closer to hand. This led, he feared, to men 'careless of etiquette as to academic dress, for they are constantly going into town like other citizens. The dust too and noise of the city reach within and destroy the fancy seclusion and leisure so delightful at English Universities'.

Despite Mahaffy's concerns, student attitudes to academic dress changed little through the eighteenth into the early twentieth centuries, characterised by the usual student challenges to authority, tribalism and pride in institutional belonging. But by the 1920s the tone had changed, driven by political uncertainty and identity politics of the period. This evolution is reflected in the columns of the *TCD: A College Miscellany*. Webb observed a tone of 'heavy jocosity in 1900', and 'erudite quippery' in 1920 moving to 'delicate sentimentality' by 1927.³⁶⁰ World War I had cast a long shadow, and Irish Independence was downplayed with attempts to smooth differences or even conflate Unionism and Nationalism. Articles in 1922 pragmatically advocated strengthening support for the Irish language in College, by 1930 it supported toasts to Ireland, King and College at functions.³⁶¹ While editorial content was respectful of College, its people and its traditions, practical issues as now concerned students: the continuance of subsidies and access to educational grants under the new Government, employment and medical services.

³⁵⁹ John Pentland Mahaffy, "Life in Trinity College, Dublin," *The Dark Blue* 1, no. 4 (1871), 487-93. He is reported admonishing an undergraduate arriving ungowned to a College ceremony: "Don't you know that you are imperilling your mortal soul by being without a gown". And then after a slight pause: "And what is worse the fine is five shillings." Leslie papers quoted in Stanford, *Mahaffy*, 128.

³⁶⁰ Webb, *T.C.D.*, vi.

³⁶¹ "Editorial," *TCD: A College Miscellany* February 23, 1922, 103-104. "Editorial," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, November 13, 1930.

Grappling with issues of identity in uncertain times, sartorial standards, dress etiquette and emblems became frequent themes, covering TCD ties, blazers and sporting colours, or indeed the lack of them.³⁶² Accompanied by illustrations by Edwin Lemass, Denis Hanna, and others discussed in Chapter 3, the symbols of dress and purpose of academic costume preoccupied these budding columnists. Nostalgia for a vanishing *status quo* versus modernity extended to musings in a 1920 editorial on the value of academic dress:

‘Have you ever seen, through the green boughs of the New Square, glints of scarlet and purple and ermine gliding silently into the Engineering School - the robes of the Board and visitors of the College of Holy and Undivided Trinity, near Dublin, who go to deliberate on the things of to-day, tricked out in habits symbolic of a far yesterday? Have you ever asked yourself why those robes are worn? We know not. Doubtless if you were to ask one of the wearers, " why are these things so?" he would give answer, “because it is so ordained”’.³⁶³

The writer goes on to conclude that we would regret such scenes of nostalgia if they were not there. For later contributors to the *Miscellany*, the College’s mediaeval traditions of ritual and academic dress were a source of pride, upholding dignity and to be treasured as cultural ‘customs which have grown venerable with time’.³⁶⁴

However, these students go on to betray other motivations for traditionalism. As status conscious as any of their elders, they complain of undergraduates wearing degree gowns before they were entitled to do so, accusing them vanity and attention seeking. Whether or not a metaphor for the viability of an Ireland independent of empire, attitudes such as these mirrored the concerns of the next generation of a formerly ascendant class fumbling

³⁶² A tie initially designed for Pavilion Members of the Dublin University Central Athletics Committee (DUCAC), the nascent TCD Association, was approved by the Board in March 1925 and adopted when the Association came into existence in 1928. The TCD “pink”, the equivalent of the Cambridge “blue” for sporting achievement was instigated in 1927. In 1931, the College of Heralds delayed production of a tie for “pinks” pointing out that the St Patrick’s blue was a dark, not the pale, blue chosen by DUCAC. The crown it featured, was to be an ecclesiastical and not a royal crown, and important detail in post-Treaty Ireland. “Tail of a tie,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, March 1, 1923, 111-113. Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 153. “Editorial,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, March 12, 1925, 129. “College Notes,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, June 18, 1925, 192. Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 153. “College Notes,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, May 21, 1931, 159. “College Notes,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, February 26, 1931, 113-14.

³⁶³ “Editorial,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, November 4, 1920, 1.

³⁶⁴ “Are we medieval?,” *TCD: A College Miscellany*, February 25, 1926, 95.

for identity in an uncertain world between two World Wars. It is perhaps no accident that these articles appeared around the time Thrift's committee had set about codifying the University's academic dress scheme.

By the 1960s universities globally saw a period of adjustment with declining acceptance of unquestioned authority, student activism and an opening of independent thinking.³⁶⁵ John A. Murphy in his *History of University College Cork*, noted that egalitarianism was on the rise, and while students respected the academic staff it was no longer complete deference.³⁶⁶ A more progressive and inclusive culture saw the symbols and rituals underpinning control, such as the roll calls, student and faculty gowns gradually disappear. Regretted by some changes in dress habits fostered greater informality and weakened rigid expectations of year-round formal attire. Two decades earlier, even the poorest students were expected to wear ties, and "sports jackets" were discouraged in the staff common room.³⁶⁷ Where recollections of TCD student life in the 1960s refer to academic dress, it is being worn by older authorities keeping up standards.³⁶⁸ In the anthologies of the 1980s there is barely a mention at all.³⁶⁹

Student Societies

A photograph taken by Chancellor's of Dublin in 1893 show the members and officers of the TCD Biological Association on the steps of a College building (Fig. 4.15). The President, in the robes of an MD sits at the centre, the Secretary in his Master's gown to his right, a sentinel Treasurer in Bachelor's attire to the fore. Around them members pose showing their best sides in academic gowns and Sunday suits. As McDowell and Webb observed, the self-conscious nonchalance struck by students in group photographs of the period simulate a premature confidence and maturity.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the picture also

³⁶⁵ David Alexander Lockmiller, *Scholars on parade : colleges, universities, costumes and degrees* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), x.

³⁶⁶ John A. Murphy, *The college : a history of Queen's/University College Cork, 1845-1995* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), 285, 313, 433, 436.

³⁶⁷ Murphy, *The college : a history of Queen's/University College Cork, 1845-1995*, 313.

³⁶⁸ *Trinity Tales: Trinity College Dublin in the Sixties* ed. Sebastien Balfour, Laurie Howes, Michael de Larrabeiti, Anthony Weale (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2009).

³⁶⁹ *Trinity Tales: Trinity College in the Eighties*, ed. Katy McGuinness (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2013).

³⁷⁰ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 333.

communicates via dress, the sense of association and pride in collective endeavour as well as a visual key to the hierarchies observed in the daily life of College.

Formal student societies began to emerge in the late eighteenth – early nineteenth centuries, and accounts of their development and activities are given by Bailey (1947) and Sagarra (1991).³⁷¹ The College Historical Society accommodated in College since 1770, as the oldest student debating society, has attracted particular attention with histories by Dagg (1969, Budd and Hines (1997) and Geoghegan (2020).³⁷² References to academic costume is threaded through these accounts, often laden with parody.

Appropriate dress was a concern of the Historical Society (the Hist.) from foundation. The ‘General Laws’ of the Society set out in 1771 stipulated that all members were required to attend in their gowns.³⁷³ Political debate, the *raison d’être* of the Hist., led on occasion to conflict with the Board sensitive to the febrile political climate of the late 1700-early 1800s. The Society was briefly exiled from College in 1794 following a dispute with the Board concerned about external influences in a politically fractious time.³⁷⁴ Members campaigning to return offered the authorities their governance code as proof of future good behaviour, including the requirement for members to wear a gown to meetings, a constant demand of the Board preoccupied with discipline and control.³⁷⁵ The political symbolism of costume and insignia nevertheless remained sensitive. Following their return to the College in 1795, it was moved in 1797, at a period of United Irishmen activity, ‘that no member shall appear in this Society in full military dress’.

³⁷¹ Reading Society - 1839; University Philosophical Society - 1853, originally external accommodated in College 1844, reconstituted 1853 and merged with the Reading Society; College Theological Society - 1830; University Choral Society - 1837. Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial* presents a rich collection of group photographs of College Societies in the 1880s.

³⁷² Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*. Sagarra, "From the pistol to the petticoat? The changing student body 1592-1992." Thomas Sidney Charles Dagg, *College Historical Society : a history (1770-1920)* (Dublin: College Historical Society, 1969); Budd and Hinds, *The Hist and Edmund Burke's Club : an anthology of the College Historical Society, the student debating society of Trinity College, Dublin, from its origins in Edmund Burke's Club 1747-1997*. Patrick M. Geoghegan, *Trinity College Dublin : the College Historical Society oratory and debate 1770-2020* (Dublin: Hinds ; The Lilliput Press, 2020).

³⁷³ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 18. Geoghegan, *Trinity College Dublin : the College Historical Society oratory and debate 1770-2020*, 9.

³⁷⁴ Luce, *Trinity College Dublin : the first 400 years*, 69.

³⁷⁵ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 105-06, 113-18.

Traditions were upheld, and members could be fined for standing at the fire or appearing without academic dress, up to half an Irish guinea for some offences.³⁷⁶ Fines could be imposed by both the Junior Dean and the Chairman on members who failed to wear their academic costume, leading to protests that members could be penalized under the two jurisdictions. In the event the Provost opined that this was mistake and had never occurred.

It was not all serious, and dress featured in faux debates and student antics. In 1815 a motion on the dissolution of the Society for indiscipline, proposed using the Chairman's robe as a pall for the cinders of the Societies benches, desks and book, allowing it to rise Phoenix-like from the ashes.³⁷⁷ Fortunately that was not acted upon, as a robe was an expensive item, particularly for a student society. In 1803, for example outfitting the Chairman with a new robe cost the Society £14.12.6, or around £1263 in 2024 prices.³⁷⁸

Notions linking dress with acceptable behaviour persisted through the nineteenth century. In 1843, the Society having once again been ejected from College for subversive behaviour, was re-constituted under strict Board supervision. On restoration in May 1843 members were again reminded of regulations on correct dress.³⁷⁹ Debates and resolutions on dress continued to preoccupy members through the end of the century into the First World War.³⁸⁰ Temporary laws of the Society instituted in 1918 for wartime nonetheless maintained regulations on academic dress.³⁸¹

The students of the Society clearly felt the weight of history, this deference to precedent and protocol extending to dress. The cartoon *TCD Miscellany* by E S Lemass discussed above, shows a smartly dressed representative of the Hist, the ghosts of Burke and others arrayed behind, greeting peers from the ancient British universities assembled for the

³⁷⁶ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 87-88.

³⁷⁷ O'Sullivan, *College recollections*.

³⁷⁸ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 102.

³⁷⁹ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 178-80.

³⁸⁰ Members moved in 1877 that caps could be worn during debates, save by the speakers and in 1883 that while all students were required to wear caps and gowns that 'no sticks be admitted'. Budd and Hinds, *The Hist and Edmund Burke's Club : an anthology of the College Historical Society, the student debating society of Trinity College, Dublin, from its origins in Edmund Burke's Club 1747-1997*, 101-03.

³⁸¹ Dagg, *College Historical Society*, 361.

150th anniversary of the Society in 1920 (Fig. 3.28).³⁸² All guests, though not ghosts, are in academic gowns, adding meaning and historical gravitas to a meeting of equals.

Attracting students with a legal bent, the Hist. has traditionally taken a particular interest in its laws, forming sub-committees to opine on their interpretation and application.

Considerations extended to academic dress. Up to the 1960s failure to wear a gown to undergraduate lectures risked “being marked absent as “academically naked””.³⁸³ A *Subcommittee into Academic Nudity* investigated what this meant in a report dating from around 1932-33.³⁸⁴ The result is witty and amusing discourse on the meaning of nudity, academic nudity, what constitutes a gown, and how it differs from regular clothing. They concluded that the primary purpose of academic dress was to identify the wearer as a member of the University. Academic nudity, they opined, was to appear indecorous and unseemly, contravening the injunction of the Foundation Charter that all things should be done ‘decently and in order’. It followed that this would require that the gown is worn visibly above ordinary dress and of sufficient size to fulfil this purpose. Thus, as a bare minimum ‘every annual member being either a bachelor, or scholar of the house, should wear a full, seemly gown, and every annual member being a pensioner or sizar, should wear the customary, lesser gown, commonly called the jib’s gown’. In conclusion, they recommended the following principles:

- ‘1. That a gown is the very minimum of academic dress
2. That the gown must be worn visibly above all other clothing
3. That the gown must be of the usual pattern, proper, decent, and seemly, and must cover at least three-fourths of the area of the back and reach to at least within a hand’s breath of the knee.

³⁸² Edwin Stephen Lemass (1890-1970), cousin of Sean Lemass, was born in Monkstown, Co. Dublin, studied law at TCD and was called to bar at the age of 22. Cartoon from E S Lemass, "In 1920," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, May 27, 1920, facing 136.

³⁸³ Elizabeth Mayes, "The 1960 & '70s decades of Change," in Parkes, Susan M. *"The 1950's: Breaking the Mould." In A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), 204.

³⁸⁴ Budd and Hinds, *The Hist and Edmund Burke's Club : an anthology of the College Historical Society, the student debating society of Trinity College, Dublin, from its origins in Edmund Burke's Club 1747-1997*, 138-40.

4. That it is desirable that officers should bring with them to meetings their caps’.

For these authors a gown should be a gown. The subversive *Advice to the University of Dublin* to reduce the garment to strips and rags would not have passed muster with these nascent establishment lawyers.

TCD women and academic dress

In her study of the portraits in the collections of early British woman's colleges, Imogen Tedbury notes that academic dress worn by the sitters are worn like uniforms, signifying achievement and with it the power to inspire.³⁸⁵ The obvious pride these pioneering women educators had in the academic costume is seen in portraits of the time in which ‘academic robes, worn and painted, become agents of a new female authority’ as they took their leadership roles in society.³⁸⁶ Although their academics were regarded as a worthy uniform by the first women arrivals in TCD in 1904, there has been no systematic study of their relationship to academic dress and its purpose.³⁸⁷

The context for the admission of women to university degrees in Ireland the nineteenth century is synthesised by O’Flynn in his introduction to *A question of identity : the great Trinity & UCD merger plan of the 1960s*.³⁸⁸ The stimuli for the admission and arrival of the first women to TCD have been extensively documented, notably by Purser, Bailey, McDowell and Webb, and Parkes and it is not intended to re-cover this here.³⁸⁹

The Royal University of Ireland (RUI) created in 1879, was the first Irish institution to award degrees to both men and women. Replacing the short-lived Queen’s University of Ireland (QUI) (1850), the RUI was conceived as a non-denominational examining body along the model of the University of London. Candidates for degrees came from a wide

³⁸⁵ Tedbury, *Modern Portraits for Modern Women: Principals and Pioneers from the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Art Collection*, 20.

³⁸⁶ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women’s University Colleges," 27.

³⁸⁷ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 351.

³⁸⁸ Patrick O’Flynn, *A question of identity : the great Trinity & UCD merger plan of the 1960s* (Dublin: A.& A. Farmar, 2012), 5-20.

³⁸⁹ Olive Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1954). Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*. Susan M Parkes, *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004); Susan M Parkes, "Steamboat ladies (act. 1904–1907)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007-10-04 2007).

range of independent institutions including the Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork and Galway (1849) the Catholic University of Ireland (1851). This also attracted Catholic and Protestant institutions such as the Loreto schools and Alexandra College (1866) and to prepare women for RUI degrees.

In the same way as TCD took inspiration from Oxford and Cambridge for its robes, the QUI and its successor RUI looked to TCD. A letter dated 1885 from the Secretary of the RUI, James Creed Meredith (1842-1912) to James Charles, publisher of the *Irish Church Directory* confirmed that the new institution replicated the hoods and gowns of the University of Dublin (Fig. 4.16). This would have made practical sense as the RUI was essentially an administrative body, and as Groves points out, academic dress schemes had yet to diverge significantly from those used by the ancient universities.³⁹⁰

The first degrees to be conferred on women by an Irish University took place at Earlsfort Terrace on October 22, 1884, awareness of the significance of the occasion palpable in the Chancellor's speech on the day.³⁹¹ Nine women graduated, amongst whom were Isabella Mulvany (1854-1934), appointed headmistress of Alexandra School in 1880, and Alice Oldham (1850-1907) a leading campaigner for admission of women to TCD and lecturer at Alexandra College (Fig. 4.17).³⁹² The diary of a second-year student, Mary Teresa Hayden (1862-1942), recorded that at graduations the women 'looked exceedingly well in their black gowns...The girls walked up with great dignity and composure amidst loud applause'.³⁹³

A woman in academic dress was a novelty in the 1880's. In April 1885, *The Lady* reported that at a reception held at Alexandra College in honour of Alexandra, Princess of Wales (1844-1925) on a state visit to Ireland 'two ladies wore academical robes (and looked very well in them too) – one as a winner of the BA degree, the other as a Scholar of Modern

³⁹⁰ Groves, "Historical English Academic Robes: A Basis for a 'National' System."

³⁹¹ The Duke of Abercorn. "Royal University of Ireland," *Irish Times* (Dublin), October 23 1884, 5-6.

³⁹² Lucinda Thompson, "The Campaign for admission, 1870-1904" in *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004).

³⁹³ Deirdre Rafferty, "The Higher Education of Women in Ireland, 1906-1904" in *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), 14, 23. Oldham was the sister of Charles Oldham, author of Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*.

Literature'.³⁹⁴ For the correspondent this was a remarkable and positive innovation and important enough for magazine to include an illustration of a presumably Irish woman in academic dress in its article (Fig. 4.18).

In January 1894 *Irish Society* described the enthusiastic scenes at Earlsfort Terrace when the RUI conferred a MusD on Annie Wilson Patterson (1868-1934) in October 1889, thus becoming the first woman to be awarded an earned doctorate in music.³⁹⁵ She evidently took great pride and interest in her academic dress and frequently appeared in photographs and newspaper illustrations in robes of her degree (Fig. 4.19). In a letter quoted in a Cambridge robemaker's workbook, 1899 she describes her MusD gown and hood as being 'of white brocaded poplin lined and faced with rose coloured satin' (Fig. 4.20).³⁹⁶

Academic and Imperial splendour: Dublin doctoral robes of Alexandra, Princess of Wales (1844-1925)

Despite nationalist opposition and security concerns, the State visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to Ireland went ahead between April 8-27, 1885, as an overt initiative to project imperial power and win approval of the restive Irish public.³⁹⁷ Cultural and educational themes reinforced the projection of soft power and influence, of which conferring of honorary degrees on the Royal couple by the RUI was a very public centrepiece. The Prince of Wales was invested with a Doctor of Laws and the Princess of Wales a Doctor of Music, the first woman ever to receive the degree.³⁹⁸ Studio photographs of Alexandra by Lafayette's of Dublin in her sumptuous academic robe were highly successful selling in enormous numbers and widely reproduced as cabinet cards, engravings and even sculpture (Fig. 4.21).

³⁹⁴ "The Royal Visit," *The Lady*, April 16, 1885, 260. The two young women RUI graduates referred to were Isabella Mulvany BA (1854-1934) and Alice Oldham BA (1850-1907).

³⁹⁵ Mac, "Our Irish Portrait Gallery: Dr Annie Wilson Patterson," *Irish Society*, January 27, 1894, 87-88.

³⁹⁶ Northam's Robemakers Cambridge, workbook. 1859. Revd Kenneth Crawford. Private Collection.

³⁹⁷ Marie Belloc Lowndes, *His most gracious majesty, King Edward VII* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 167. George Arthur, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1934), 151-153.

³⁹⁸ Annie Patterson, "Queen Alexandra: A Royal Doctor of Music," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), February 2 1901, 10.

As a woman and a consort Alexandra was expected to take a backseat in public affairs.³⁹⁹ She nevertheless used her clothing and accomplishments throughout her career to reinforce her celebrity image as one of the most popular and glamorous Victorian royals.⁴⁰⁰ She displayed a remarkable aptitude for communication, harnessing the emergence of photography and illustrated magazines along with an intelligent sense of dress and style to burnish her public profile and royal reputation. Alexandra also recognized the significance of the RUI ceremony as marking establishment approval of degrees for women. Employing the iconography of the event throughout her career, she mandated and legitimized the place of women in higher learning.

The London and Dublin press devoted copious space to accounts of a ceremony laden with pomp and colour attended by the political, aristocratic and academic elite from across Ireland, though students were virtually excluded.⁴⁰¹ Costume took centre stage on this grand occasion of political and civic theatre: 'the richly-varied academic dresses contributed to the brilliancy of the scene. The red Doctor's gown predominated, and against it the blue hood of the Master of Arts made marked contrast'.⁴⁰² Two women, Isabella Mulvany and Charlotte Taylor, both in their gowns as recent graduates of the RUI, robed the Princess of Wales.

The splendour of her costume 'upon whom the rich silken robe showed becomingly in its voluminous folds...[which] became her admirably' captured the attention of the press on the day and long after.⁴⁰³ The *Irish Times* had trailed that the academic robes to be worn by the Wales's were being made in Dublin.⁴⁰⁴ *The Lady* described them being of 'soft

³⁹⁹ Strasdin, "Rediscovering Queen Alexandra's Wardrobe: The Challenges and Rewards of Object-Based Research," 181.

⁴⁰⁰ Kate Strasdin, "Fashioning Alexandra: A Royal Approach to Style 1863–1910," *Costume* 47, no. 2 (2013); Kate Strasdin, *Inside the Royal Wardrobe: A Dress History of Queen Alexandra* (2017); Strasdin, "Rediscovering Queen Alexandra's Wardrobe: The Challenges and Rewards of Object-Based Research."

⁴⁰¹ "The Royal Visit to Ireland," *Morning Post* (London), April 10 1885, 3. "The ceremonial of the Royal University," *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), April 10 1885, 6. "The Royal Visit to Ireland," *Times* (London), April 11 1885, 12. "The Royal University," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), April 18 1885, 2. The *Irish Times* correspondent rather sniffily remarked that despite the "glare of red carpets, and scarlet gowns" students, the essence of a University, were conspicuously absent from the ceremony. The RUI, which was an examining body only "the stucco of whose ancestral halls is hardly yet dry." "Visit to Trinity College," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), April 18 1885, 3. Patterson disputes this however, in her description of events 25 years later saying the undergraduates were 'admitted in full force,' Patterson, "Queen Alexandra: A Royal Doctor of Music."

⁴⁰² "The Royal University," 2.

⁴⁰³ "The Royal University."

⁴⁰⁴ "The Royal Visit," *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 7 1885, 5.

white silk, lined and faced with palest pink' and *Vanity Fair* remarked on the cap 'set off with most becoming blue satin'.⁴⁰⁵ In a letter to Queen Victoria, Prince Edward's Secretary Dighton Probyn (1833-1924) wrote that 'anything prettier than the Princess of Wales in her gown (white with red sleeves) has never been seen in Dublin or in any other city of the world'.⁴⁰⁶ That evening the Princess wrote enthusiastically to her son that 'I have just taken my degree as a Doctor of Music, I feel free proud indeed!!' in a 'most magnificent white and red satin doctors robes', though the cap made her feel 'such a fool'.⁴⁰⁷

Alexandra's robes were made by Alfred Manning (d.1927), an elite Grafton Street couturier and milliner (Fig. 4.22). Although not one of the traditional robemakers Manning's would have been an obvious choice for a celebrity client such as the Princess of Wales. Publicity in 1893 shows a stellar list of aristocratic clients including the vicereine, Lady Aberdeen (Fig. 4.23). The firm was established by his parents Harriet and Joseph Manning around 1847, and Harriet travelled frequently sourcing the latest styles and luxury fabrics from Paris and Lyons.⁴⁰⁸ On her death in 1883, the business was assumed by her sons Alfred and H F Manning.⁴⁰⁹ Alfred, trained in London and Paris, had considerable business acumen with a wide social circle in Dublin. The firm advertised heavily, building a reputation comparable with the great Parisian fashion houses of Worth and Doucet.

In an article for the *Weekly Irish Times* in 1901, Annie Patterson described the Princesses' robes which were made by Manning's in one day, as following the pattern of the MusD gown owned by TCD Professor of Music Robert Prescott Stewart (1825-94), who received his doctorate from Dublin in 1851 (Chapter 5).⁴¹⁰ A posthumous portrait of Stewart by an

⁴⁰⁵ "The Royal Visit," 255. "Vanities," *Vanity Fair* April 18, 1885, 222.

⁴⁰⁶ Letter from Sir Dighton Probyn (Comptroller and Treasurer to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales) to Queen Victoria, April 12, 1885, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor. RA/Z/455/9.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from Alexandra, Princess of Wales to her son Prince George of Wales, April 10, 1885, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor. RA/AA/30/11. *The Lady* pronounced that Prince was "not equally as fortunate [as the Princess] in the colour of his gown as Doctor of Law. "Social Notes," *The Lady*, April 16, 1885, 255.

⁴⁰⁸ Janice Helland, "Ishbel Aberdeen's 'Irish' Dresses: Embroidery, Display and Meaning, 1886-1909," *Journal of Design History* 26, no. 2 (2013). 154. Erin Frumet, "The House of Manning," *The Liberties Archive: Documenting Dublin's Fashionable past*, 12 March, 2022, <https://www.thelibertiesarchive.com/post/the-house-of-manning>.

⁴⁰⁹ Alfred Manning, & H.F. Manning, "Advertisement: Messrs. Alfred & H.F. Manning," *Belfast Newsletter* (Belfast), February 9 1883.

⁴¹⁰ Annie Patterson, "Queen Alexandra: A Royal Doctor of Music," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), February 2 1901, 10.

unknown artist c.1896 shows the gown and gives some idea of the actual colours employed in the Princess's robes (Fig. 4.24). The white satin was a rose-patterned damask weave, and the facings were variously reported in the press as being pale pink, pink, and rose. The Princess herself and Probyn described them as red, therefore probably closer to the Medici crimson of the robes in the Stewart portrait. The price of the gown is unknown, though an invoice in the NLI shows a wedding dress made by Manning's cost £4.13.0 in 1884 (Fig. 4.22).

Prominent Dublin photographers Lafayette and Chancellor were commissioned to photograph the Princess in the robes of her newly conferred degree. John Chancellor, O'Connell Street, had begun to offer services around 1867 becoming 'Chancellor & Son' in 1898. James Stack Lauder (1853-1923) founded his studios in Dublin in 1880 with the fashionable-sounding French name "Monsieur Lafayette". The history of Lafayette Studios is well covered by Ghani and Rolley who underline the importance of the photographer for costume historians.⁴¹¹ Lauder had trained in Paris and Berlin, then the centres of *avant garde* photography. His shop on 30 Westmoreland Street projected glamour and wealth, displaying images of his fashionable and aristocratic clientele in the windows. The speed of his success is notable, the Alexandra commission coming only five years after setting up. Lafayette also understood the importance of lending the new technology credibility by association with traditional portraiture. In 1907, ten portraits of notable Irishmen by J Sydney R Rowley (*fl.*1907), including TCD Provost Anthony Traill went on show at the Westmoreland Street premises (see Fig.5.23).⁴¹²

Royalty did not attend photographic studios, and sessions usually took place in royal palaces using natural light.⁴¹³ Triangulating advertising, the visit programme and the clothing worn it is probable that both sessions took place at the Viceregal Lodge, Phoenix

⁴¹¹ A.A. Ghani, Lucien De Guise, and Amin Jaffer, *Neither East Nor West: The Lafayette Collection : Asia in the Age of Monochrome* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia Publications 2007). Katrina Rolley, "The Lafayette Collection at the National Portrait Gallery Archive: A New Resource for Historians of Twentieth-Century Dress," *Costume* 29, no. 1 (1995).

⁴¹² "Oil paintings at Lafayette's," *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 28 1907.

⁴¹³ Peadar Slattery, "Lauder, James Stack ('Jacques Lafayette')," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009).

Park, on the morning of April 23, 1885 shortly before the Royal party left Dublin for Belfast.⁴¹⁴ Alexandra wears the same costume and jewellery in portraits taken by both photographers.

Chancellor's portraits show Alexandra leaning against a grand piano with music books at her elbow. Although heavy retouching excludes the detail, the robes are presented full-length, the crushed and ruched dark satin facings contrasting with the white damask of the coat (Fig. 4.25a,b). Despite their careful composition, the mass of fabric and voluminous folds of the robes in Chancellor's portraits overwhelm and encase the Princess, losing her delicacy, retouched eyes glazed distancing the viewer from the subject.

A Lafayette portrait photograph probably taken the same day uniquely shows the Princess in the costume she wore under the robes (Fig. 4.26a). Dignified, yet modern, Alexandra stands holding a flower, surrounded by a mass of blooms. Adorned with simple and stylish jewellery, she wears a fashionable tightly buttoned narrow-waisted day-dress, possibly retouched, accentuating the very slender figure for which she was known.⁴¹⁵ Pinned to her trademark high dog-collar is a carefully chosen lyre-shaped brooch symbolizing her passion for music.⁴¹⁶ The props, exotic fabric and vase *à la turque* on a chinoiserie table, are redolent of avant-garde orientalism no doubt drawn from Lafayette's Paris training.

The three-quarter length robed version of this photograph is the most reproduced of Lafayette's studies.⁴¹⁷ Alexandra stands half-turned to the viewer, her parchment hanging baton-like from her right hand. The flowers and table gone, but the same plant appears as a prop to the left (Fig. 4.26b). Her square cap with gold band and bullion tassel leave the impression of an academic crown. The robe is however central to the success of the

⁴¹⁴ "The Royal Visit to Belfast," *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 22 1885, 6. Lafayette Photographer, "Advertisement: Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales," *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 25 1885, 4. Chancellor Photographer, "Advertisement: The Royal Visit to Ireland," *Irish Times* (Dublin), April 28 1885, 4.

⁴¹⁵ Georgina Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra* (London: Constable & Company, 1969), 21. Strasdin, "Fashioning Alexandra: A Royal Approach to Style 1863–1910," 188.

⁴¹⁶ This collar design was apparently conceived to conceal a scar on her neck possibly due to an attack of scrofula. Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, 25.

⁴¹⁷ "Front Cover," *The Queen: The Ladies Newspaper and Court Chronicle*, July 11, 1896, 1. "The seven ages of beauty: Her Majesty Queen Alexandra", *Gentlewoman: An Illustrated Weekly Journal for Gentlewoman*, June 28, 1902, 899. "Why Not?," *Graphic*, September 2, 1916, 276. "Queen Alexandra's eightieth birthday," *Belfast Newsletter* (Belfast), December 1 1924, 8.

picture. The expanse of white floral damask to the bottom right and deeper crushed satin emphasise splendour, but for all their volume, they draw the viewer's eye to the Princess's lyre-jewel and regal face. Her large eyes, in life deep blue, convey warmth and affection. Her arms and gown facings are carefully positioned to frame a heart-shape, giving further warmth to the composition.

While there is no evidence that Manning attended the sessions, these artists undoubtedly brought European sensibility and taste to the commission. Manning's talent as a couturier, beyond that of a robemaker, is evident from Lafayette's photographs. A half-length version of the portrait shows the robe is unusually fitted. It is worn closed and close to the body, emphasizing the curve of the bust, the hood precisely placed calling attention the subject's slender neck and jewel (Fig. 4.27). This garment is womanly, both ceremonial robe and dress, which Alexandra wears as hers, an extension of her persona. A portrait of Princess Louise, Duchess of Connaught (1860-1917), also photographed by Lafayette offers a useful comparison. She is portrayed in the robes of an MusD awarded *h.c.* by the RUI in 1903 (Fig. 4.28).⁴¹⁸ Though richly made by Thompson's of Westmoreland Street, they are more traditional robemaker's fare, open, voluminous and less flattering.

Lafayette's iconic portrait met with overwhelmingly positive social reception. Selling in vast numbers, estimated at around 60,000 copies with a turnover of at least £1,500 from one negative, it launched his career as one of the most sought-after photographic studios of the Edwardian era, and became.⁴¹⁹ It was also apparently Alexandra's favourite.⁴²⁰ Cabinet cards bear her autograph, and it was constantly reproduced through her career to

⁴¹⁸ "Royal University of Ireland: Degrees for the Duke and Duchess of Connaught," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), October 31 1903. Erin, "Honorary Degrees for the Duke & Duchess of Connaught," *The Gentlewoman*, October 31, 1903, 30.

⁴¹⁹ Slattery, "Lauder, James Stack ('Jacques Lafayette')."

⁴²⁰ "The Late Queen Alexandra - Her Majesty's favorite photograph," *The Gentlewoman: An Illustrated Weekly Journal for Gentlewomen*, November 28, 1925, 10.

illustrate magazine articles, in engravings and even on the cover of a book of Irish music (Fig 4.29).⁴²¹

Foreshadowing modern practices, the photograph was also the model for the monument to Princess Alexandra by Victor von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Count von Gleichen (1833-1891) in the Royal College of Music, London (Fig. 4.30).⁴²² A distant relative of Queen Victoria, he took up sculpture following a career as a British naval officer, establishing his studio in St James's Palace. The Princess is represented greater than life size (280 cm) in white marble, faithfully reproducing the robes, headwear, collar and lyre brooch seen in the Lafayette photograph taken in 1885. The sculptor has avoided sharp edges, adding softness to the costume by folding back the cuffs. Von Gleichen seems to have worked from actual robes as the rear of the statue shows the distinctive Dublin full shape hood, with square-cut cape and bindings (Fig. 4.30). The rose patterned brocade, delicately sculpted to display the fabric in low relief, together with the lustrous finish to the marble recalls the sumptuousness of the original satin material (Fig. 4.30).

Despite its courtly protocol, the ceremony at the RUI was striking in its modernity compared with the clubbish visit to TCD the following day.⁴²³ The young university had flung its gates open to the world, harnessing the press to build its reputation and promote its belief in women's education. The RUI was the only institution in British Isles permitted to grant honorary degrees to women, according its women graduates prominent roles in proceedings on the day. Patterson pointed out that the Princess of Wales, as the first woman recipient of an honorary doctorate of music 'lent a prestige to cap and gown which the women of these islands would not be slow to appreciate'.⁴²⁴ The *St. James's Gazette*, trailing the conferring of earned degrees by the University of London on women the same year, noted that they appear as a matter of course in academic dress and that 'the

⁴²¹ Lafayette (fl.1880-1962). *Queen Alexandra when Princess of Wales (1844-1925), wearing academic robes, Royal University of Ireland, 1885*, April 24, 1885, albumen print, 31.7 x 18.5 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London. RCIN 2106262. Arthur, *Queen Alexandra*, facing 152.

⁴²² It is one of a pair, the other being of her husband Edward, Prince of Wales.

⁴²³ "Visit to Trinity College."

⁴²⁴ Patterson, "Queen Alexandra: A Royal Doctor of Music."

Princess of Wales, by receiving a degree in Dublin, and by wearing the proper costume on the occasion, may be said to have once for all sanctioned the usage'.⁴²⁵

At time when women had only just been admitted to higher degrees Alexandra, while personally delighted, was quick to capitalize on the honour to press home the wider cause for women's education by enlisting the power of photography, the emerging mass media of the day. The Princess brilliantly used the symbolic power of her image in academic costume not only to reinforce her public persona, but also as a political statement, winning public attention and articulating the cause of women's education and support for the monarchy and the Union at a moment of uncertainty. Through the involvement of photographers and couturier trained on the continent, Dublin asserted its place in the European *avant garde* of the late nineteenth century. Generating many spinoffs, Lafayette's photographs of Alexandra had all the hallmarks of an image building campaign of which a modern advertising agency would be proud.

Symbols of arrival

Competition from the RUI was probably a factor in precipitating TCD's move to award degrees to women in 1904, well ahead of Oxford and Cambridge in 1920 and 1948 respectively.⁴²⁶ The campaign for admission gathered pace through 1892-1904, and in June 1903 the Senate passed a resolution to request a King's Letter empowering the University to admit women to degrees. Despite reluctance in some quarters, the Royal Letter Patent which finally arrived in January 1904 was implemented at pace.⁴²⁷ The first women student was admitted in the Hilary Term 1904, with numbers rising to around forty by year end.

The rules, initially strict, were accepted as normal for the Edwardian period.⁴²⁸ One of the initial arrivals, Olive Purser (1886-1973) noted that women were committed to the success

⁴²⁵ "Notes," *St James's Gazette* (London), May 9 1885, 5.

⁴²⁶ John Henry Bernard, Registrar of Examiners for Women, Warden of Alexandra College and later Provost of TCD was a strong proponent of higher education for women. It was recognised that women preferred to apply to the RUI for their degrees (since 1879) or to Cambridge, where they could easily attend lectures and exams, even though they could not be awarded degrees. Parkes, *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, 25.

⁴²⁷ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 3-5.

⁴²⁸ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 351.

of the scheme and keen not to provoke criticism by either behaviour or comportment.⁴²⁹ Purser nevertheless communicates the pride and value women ascribed to their caps and gowns as symbols of equal status and legitimacy as scholars and members of the College community. Although twenty years on since the RUI graduations, Purser remarks that women in cap and gown was still a curious sight in Dublin of 1905.⁴³⁰ While relations with academics and fellow students were free and easy, it was 'one's non-collegiate friends who made jokes about subfusc apparel'.

Women were quick to employ the emerging technology of photography to mark their arrival and consolidate their position in College. The costumes worn in these early group portraits convey the hierarchy and career ambitions of these women pioneers. In a photograph of the first committee of The Elizabethan Society, a women's debating society formed in 1905, the sitters are carefully arrayed in their sleeveless undergraduate gowns (Fig. 4.31).⁴³¹ They are posed each showing their best sides lending a vitality and dynamic to the composition.

Pride in their hard won right to wear academic costume is evident in a photograph of the first women graduates taken in 1906, all in the gowns and fur lined hoods of Bachelors of Arts (Fig. 4.32). The portrait is appropriately more formal than the Elizabethan Society group. Here, the eight women look directly at the viewer, some smiling, some defiant, but all evidently conscious of the historical significance of the photograph. The iconography of painted studio backdrop, plants with renaissance and classical columns remind the viewer that women were now admitted of their own right to the groves of academe.

The academic dress in a group portrait taken on the steps of the women's residences at Trinity Hall, narrates the educational context for women in higher education in the 1910s. Margaret Cunningham (1872-1940) the first Lady Warden sits at the centre of a photograph (Fig. 4.33). Cunningham, who came from Donegal, had obtained a first class in Languages in 1894 at Cambridge (Girton), but unable to graduate there took her MA

⁴²⁹ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 6.

⁴³⁰ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 5.

⁴³¹ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 350.

from Dublin *ad eundem gradum* as one of the Steamboat ladies in 1906 (see below). In the photograph she wears a master's gown with a Cambridge-style boot sleeve together with a Dublin MA hood, thus materializing her academic journey. At her side is the Lady Registrar Lucy Gwynn (1865-1947), nicknamed the 'lecturess', without a gown. She was not a graduate though she was awarded an MA *h.c.* on her retirement in 1918. Purser considered this 'a pity, for she would have enjoyed her robes; but certainly her dignity and her authority required no trappings or title'.⁴³² They are flanked by women graduate staff in Bachelor's gowns. The undergraduates ranged behind are neatly dressed and dignified in their gowns and blouses, some with ties, though the square cap sits uncomfortably with Edwardian hair styles (see also Fig. 4.34). Their smart turnout communicates Cunningham's ambition to nurture young Irish women of independent thinking, decorum and social skills equal to any of their English peers.⁴³³

By 1918 restrictions on women began to be criticised and more relaxed in the interpretation as women students became more familiar on campus.⁴³⁴ Indeed this had already begun to happen. A photograph taken of attendees at the Bicentenary of the TCD Medical School in July 1912, shows an international group of men and women graduates and undergraduates together, though the women still in the front row (Fig. 4.34).

Charmingly, a woman BA holds a gnomonic mascot on her lap.

To mark of the formal admission of women the University of Dublin conferred LLDs *h.c.* in June 1904 on Isabella Mulvany and on Henrietta White (1856–1936), Principal of Alexandra College (1890-1932) the following year. Both had been highly instrumental in the campaign for woman's admission.

Photographs of Mulvany as a young graduate and a cameo of her in the robes of her honorary LLD taken some twenty years later, show a woman of formidable character and determination, her academic costume lending status and authority.⁴³⁵ In contrast, an

⁴³² Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 9.

⁴³³ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 14.

⁴³⁴ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 351.

⁴³⁵ *Dr Isabella Mulvany in the robes of an LLD*, n.d., photographic portrait from Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, facing 12.

intimate bust of Mulvany painted by Sarah Cecilia Harrison (1863–1941) two years after she retired in 1927 shows a more inquiring and compassionate sitter, conveying the maturity of nearly forty-seven years as an educator (Fig. 4.35). Though the inscription cites her doctorate, she is portrayed in a black gown, instantly recognizable to her charges as everyday wear as a schoolteacher and headmistress, adding familiarity to the painting.⁴³⁶

Henrietta White was frequently seen in the robes of her honorary LLD awarded in 1905, at public functions and in group portraits of Alexandra College staff and pupils.⁴³⁷ Two portraits hanging in Alexandra bracket her forty-two-year career as Principal. One, by Philip Alexius de László (1869–1937), shows a younger White three-quarter length sitting half-turned, right arm on a table, her warm rounded face with large eyes turned with a meaningful gaze towards the viewer (Fig. 4.36).⁴³⁸ The sitter is perhaps less grand, less assertive than other women academics painted by de László, discussed below. She wears a simple high collared black jacket with a long white lace scarf. Although she studied history at Newnham College, Cambridge she could not graduate and so does not wear academic dress.

A second portrait of White, by William Orpen RHA, RA (1878–1931), shows the sitter frail in the robes of her honorary LLD awarded in 1905 some twenty-five years earlier (Fig. 4.37).⁴³⁹ Painted in London over one week in 1930 and exhibited at the RA that year, a critic described it as painted ‘in quite the grand manner...a stately picture of a lady in academic robes of scarlet and pink, sitting in a dignified attitude. The head is admirably modelled, and the face with its charming expression is beautifully done’.⁴⁴⁰ Although

⁴³⁶ The inscription on the painting indicates her BA was from the NUI founded as the successor institution to the RUI, the institution which awarded her the degree in 1884. The date of the award of her LLD *h.c.* on the plate should read 1904 rather than 1884, the year she received her BA (RUI). The painting was donated to Alexandra College by Rachel Mahaffy, daughter of the Provost.

⁴³⁷ A.V. O'Connor and S.M. Parkes, *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach: Alexandra College and School, 1866–1966* (Tallaght (Co. Dublin): Blackwater Press, 1984).

⁴³⁸ The portrait, cited on the plate and in the Dictionary of Irish Biography as by ‘unknown’, is reproduced in a *Lady of the House* account of the RHA exhibition of 1902, firmly giving authorship to de László. Deirdre Bryan, “White, Henrietta Margaret,” in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009), “Vanity Fair: The Ladies of the Dufferin Family”, *The Lady of the House*, March 15, 1902, 5.

⁴³⁹ O'Connor and Parkes, *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach: Alexandra College and School, 1866–1966*, 171–74.

⁴⁴⁰ “The Royal Academy: Ireland well represented,” *Irish Times* (Dublin), May 3 1930, 9.

Orpen specifically requested White sit in her robes, they are crudely rendered, with broad brush strokes exaggerating the seams and grain of the fabric. The rigid, sickly pink silk wraps the sitter like paper around a floral bouquet.

Unlike Mahaffy whose images tend towards self-promotion, Mulvany and White understood throughout their careers the imperative to build the public profile and recognition to consolidate the role of women in the new educational landscape. Their images in academic costumes were a key tool in achieving these aims.

Steamboat Ladies in portraiture

Women graduates of TCD led opening of university education to all. Between 1904 and 1907 over 700 women travelled to Dublin by steam packet to be conferred with degrees of the University of Dublin *ad eundem gradum*, at a time when their own universities of Oxford and Cambridge did not allow women to graduate. At conception, the scheme was devised to facilitate the small number of Irish women studying at those universities, but to the surprise of the Board was taken up wholeheartedly by British woman, even with the encouragement of their own colleges.⁴⁴¹

The significance of these “Steamboat Ladies” as trailblazers for higher education for women, is widely documented by educational historians, notably Susan M. Parkes.⁴⁴²

They began to be memorialized through portraiture in the first thirty years of the 1900s, as they advanced in their careers. In many the sitters appear in the distinctive blue Dublin MA hood. These portraits, both paintings and photographs, now scattered across universities and colleges in UK have escaped attention by art historians in Ireland and the significance of their degrees often glossed over by their home institutions (Appendix 3).⁴⁴³ Undoubtedly meriting deeper study, a brief assessment of the series is given here.

⁴⁴¹ Memo from the Principal of Newnham Eleanor Sidgwick, informing students of their eligibility for Dublin degrees. January 1905. Newnham College Archive, University of Cambridge. EC/2/4/7.

⁴⁴² Susan M Parkes, "The Steamboat Ladies, the first World War and after," in *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004). Parkes, "Steamboat ladies (act. 1904–1907)."

⁴⁴³ e.g. "Knowles; Lilian Charlotte Anne (1870-1926); nee Tomn, economic historian, 1900-1924," Archives Catalogue, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2025, accessed June 17, 2025, <https://archives.lse.ac.uk/records/KNOWLES>.

The single woman higher doctorate at the centre of photograph of Steamboat Ladies taken at TCD Commencements of July 1906 is most probably Lilian Charlotte Anne Knowles (1870-1926) in the robes of a LittD earned at Cambridge but awarded by Dublin (Fig. 4.38). Though black and white, the mid-grey (blue on scarlet) distinguishes her robe from the lighter (pink on scarlet) colour of the male LLDs including Provost Traill in the front row.⁴⁴⁴ Later the first woman professor of economic history at the London School of Economics (LSE), the same imposing figure can be identified in a group photograph of the School in 1924.⁴⁴⁵ A small portrait photograph with pencil drawing of Knowles by Vandyk (fl.1881-1947) c.1921 shows her in academic robes and cap (Fig. 4.39). Though black and white, the hood, worn with festal robes, is typically Dublin-style.

Margaret Janson Tuke (1862-1947), Principal of Bedford College (1907-1929), painted in 1914/15 by Reginald Grenville Eves (1876-1941), shows the sitter in a deep green jacket, shirt and tie worn under a black gown with a Dublin MA hood draped across the shoulder (Fig. 4.40). In her consciously masculine outfit, Tuke passes for high-minded seriousness on par with any male academic at a moment when women were asserting their rightful place in British universities.

In contrast, a portrait of Bertha Phillpotts (1877-1932) by Philip De László (1869-1937), 1921 shows the sitter enigmatically half-turned to the viewer in gauzy black blouse and undress gown, her Dublin LittD hood, scarlet, bound dark blue, loosely wrapped falling shawl-like from below her luminous bare shoulder (Fig 4.41). Phillpotts was a scholar of Scandinavian literature and history who received her MA in 1905 and subsequently a LittD *h.c.* from Dublin in 1919. De László uses a Van Dyckian vocabulary, its contrapposto making the portrait unusually animated in the realm of academic

⁴⁴⁴ Demonstrating the utility of academic dress as a tool of identification in art historical analysis.

⁴⁴⁵ Jennie Stayner LSE, email to author March 4, 2004. Panora Ltd. (fl.1916-c.1982), *School Photograph June 1924*, 1924, black & white, panoramic photograph mounted on cream card, inscribed with title below print. London School of Economics, London. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lselibrary/29817246954/in/album-72157622618340936/>.

portraiture. The ornate treatment the drapery has flair and sumptuousness taking the representation of academic costume beyond the usual common room fare.

Emily Penrose (1858-1942) Principal of Bedford College, subsequently Royal Holloway (1893-1907) was painted by De László in 1907 turning to the viewer graceful, animated, and visionary (Fig. 4.42).⁴⁴⁶ She wears an elegant black dress, her Dublin MA hood draped artfully around her waist, a cap in her right hand. Tedbury draws a parallel in Penrose's stance, turned, hand on hip, and prominent sleeves with the assertiveness of Reynolds' self-portraits in doctoral robes.⁴⁴⁷ In his portrait of *Frances Ralph Gray MA* (1861–1935), 1922, De László takes the same approach, portraying the High Mistress of St Paul's Girls' School voluptuously dressed in a black gown and lavish Dublin hood (Fig. 4.43). She gazes penetratingly outwards, the vibrant blue of the hood bindings and lining drawing the viewer towards the sitter's warm face and deep-set blue-grey eyes.⁴⁴⁸ Gray is shown wearing her Dublin hood in a similar, though less extravagantly draped, pose in a photographic portrait taken the same year by S.W. Hodgkinson, Carshalton.⁴⁴⁹

Departing from these conventional portraits De László paints his women academics in a 'new' 'distinctly feminine manner...their university hoods askew across the upper body like a sash or the drapery of neoclassical dress, but if anything, they are more feminine in appearance than the statuesque'.⁴⁵⁰ They display a confidence and arrival that Henrietta White had yet to win in his portrait of her in Alexandra College (Fig. 4.36).

Other paintings of Steamboat ladies take a middle road. A portrait of Edith Major MA (1867-1951), copied from Orpen, shows the Mistress of Girton College (1925-1931),

⁴⁴⁶ Tedbury, *Modern Portraits for Modern Women: Principals and Pioneers from the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Art Collection*, 56-60.

⁴⁴⁷ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," 23.

⁴⁴⁸ The likeness was praised in the school magazine announcement informing subscribers of the completion of the portrait in 1922. Mary Mackenzie and Hilda Wenham, "Miss Gray's Portrait" *Paulina*, July, 1922, 3.

⁴⁴⁹ *Saint Paul's Girls' School 1904-1925*, ed. P. Hardy (London: Saint Paul's Girls' School, 1925).

⁴⁵⁰ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," 24-25.

heroic in black gown and Dublin hood tempered by a frilled blouse and jade neck jewel (Fig. 4.44). Thomas Cantrell Dugdale, (1880-1952) portrays Grace Fanner, Headmistress at Mayfield (1907–1934) with monumental solidity, her blue-lined hood slipping naturally from her shoulder, a chunky necklace a sole nod to frippery (Fig. 4.45).

A Steamboat Ladies BA gown made by A. & F. Thompson of Dublin around 1904-1906 is conserved in the Newnham College Archive, Cambridge (Fig. 4.46). Although its owner is unknown, its provenance and careful curation underline the material and cultural significance of the Steamboat episode in the history of women's education.⁴⁵¹ In portraits, the academic dress worn by Steamboat Ladies similarly takes the form of a prop or symbol conveying scholarship and natural authority of the wearers. Though Tedbury saw their Dublin dress as merely a substitute for that denied to them by their own institutions, these sitters' conscious choice of academic dress in this series of portraits create a visual link to Dublin and memorialize Trinity's standing as a pioneer and champion of the place of women in higher education.

Symbols of acceptance

The assimilation of women into TCD was nonetheless a gradual process of over fifty years.⁴⁵² Women students remained for some an uncomfortable and long running topic, condescendingly referred to as 'undergraduettess' in the columns of the *TCD Miscellany* through the 1920s and 30s. The 1926 *People we see in TCD* cartoons by Denis Hanna are telling. Only one woman is featured, in a mere Bachelor's gown, wide-eyed and stereotypically prone to female error (Fig. 3.30). However, World War II brought profound changes to College and social mores. Regulations for women were replaced with an explicit set of disciplinary rules and 'gone were the days of sub-fusc apparel and separate social activities'.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ The gown was given to Prof. Barbara Wright by her *alma mater* Newnham College, Cambridge in 1968 in recognition of her election as one of the first women to a Fellowship at TCD. Wright returned the gown, incorrectly identified as an MA to Newnham in 1996. Newnham College Archive, Cambridge, accessed, July 17, 2025, <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PH-NEWNHAM-GOWN/1>

⁴⁵² Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 18.

⁴⁵³ Purser, *Women in Dublin University 1904-1954*, 17.

Although the College had appointed its first woman lecturer in 1909, women academics remained marginalized well into the 1950s.⁴⁵⁴ It was only in 1968 that Prof. Frances “Fanny” Moran (1893-1977) was elected first woman honorary Fellow, after an eminent career culminating as Regius Professor of Laws from 1944. She is described by contemporaries as small, precise and sociable well-dressed woman, always appearing in a smart hat during Trinity Week.⁴⁵⁵ Her retirement portrait by Lesley Anne Fennell née Walsh (1943-) painted in 1963 was the first College portrait to depict a TCD woman academic. It shows Moran half-length seated, gazing directly at the viewer with a wry smile, as surprised as the artist was to be sitting for a painting (Fig. 4.47).⁴⁵⁶ Moran chose deliberately to be painted in the pink and scarlet robes and hood of the LLD she took in 1919, unusually with a square cap fixed firmly to her head.

A portrait by Derek Hill (1916-2000), 1976 shows Moran casually seated in the same robes, without a hood, her hands folded on her lap, with Prof. Annette Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven (1909-1989) seated at arm’s length beside her (Fig. 4.48). Otway-Ruthven, a renowned medieval historian with a reputation for exacting standards which extended to academic dress, would come down firmly on women flouting her sartorial norms.⁴⁵⁷ Persons unsuitably dressed were liable to have their names omitted from roll calls and credits refused.⁴⁵⁸ A former Academic Secretary, Salters Sterling recalls that Ruthven ‘embodied the place in her own person: her wearing of gown, cap and hood, as enjoined by the Statutes...Wherever she could go as a woman, she went. Whatever she could do as a woman, she did, always in the best interests of the College’.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁴ Student Maureen Mahon quoted in Susan M Parkes, "The 1950's: Breaking the Mould," in *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), 196.

⁴⁵⁵ Parkes, "The Steamboat Ladies, the first World War and after," 108.

⁴⁵⁶ The painting was commissioned at the beginning of the artist’s professional career. Fennell recalls ‘my father worked at Trinity [TCD Agent Lieutenant-Colonel John Mainwaring Walsh] and engineered the sittings to give me a leg up in getting work! I remember enjoying painting her [Moran] and she wasn’t nearly as austere as she was reputed to be. I also painted Canon Luce who was lovely, and the Junior Dean, McDowell, who left his portrait to the Kildare St and university Club, where it is still hanging’. Lesley Anne Walsh email to author, June 4, 2025 and interview with author, April 3, 2026.

⁴⁵⁷ Author’s observation as a TCD student in the late 1970’s. See also Mayes, "The 1960 & ‘70s decades of Change," pl. 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Student Margaretta D’Arcy quoted in Parkes, "The 1950's: Breaking the Mould," 193.

⁴⁵⁹ Salters Sterling, "Memoirs – Prof. Otway Ruthven," in *A Danger to the Men?: A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004*, ed. Susan M Parkes (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), 266.

Tellingly, in the still male-dominated clubby world of the early 1970s the two women share in a portrait paid for by colleagues in the Senior Common Room (SCR), to which women had only been admitted as members since 1958. In a curious lapse in her own etiquette, Ruthven wears the robes her highest degree, a PhD earned in Cambridge (Girton) in 1936, the only portrait in the SCR where the robes of another university are displayed. Perhaps not wishing to be outshone by Moran, the picture is a witness to the potential pitfalls in commissioning a joint portrait of two forceful women.

Despite its monastic origins and inconveniences early women students adopted academic dress with enthusiasm. Arguably gender neutral, unfitted, regardless of body form, the gown and hood signified equality with the men and paradoxically liberation as higher education finally opened its doors to women. While the men seemed to treat their academics with the contempt of familiarity, or as symbols of status, women from Olive Purser onwards communicated their excitement and affection for the dress that symbolized their arrival and integration into the College with all its weight of history and tradition. Lorna Hogg recalls with warmth the experience of living in College in the early 70s, with its daily rituals and costume ‘...Commons twice a week (and I loved wearing my gown) with free Guinness.’⁴⁶⁰ Another women graduate Jennifer Flegg recalls:

The beauty of the College buildings was an abiding source of delight. Often in the evening just before 6 pm I would go up to one of the landings of No. 5 (you got a good view from there) and look out through a window overlooking Front Square. The bell would ring for Commons, and gowned figures would emerge from all the doorways around the Square and make their way across the cobbles towards the Dining Hall. I was invariably moved by the sight - something to do with academic tradition, I suppose, and the fact that, whatever was happening in the outside world, this had been going on night after night, century after century.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ No relation to the present author. Mayes, "The 1960 & '70s decades of Change," 218.

⁴⁶¹ Mayes, "The 1960 & '70s decades of Change," 219.

This sublime description of College at twilight, animated by figures in academic dress captures perfectly the atmosphere of continuity and tradition with the lyricism of a Myra Hughes etching.

Rag trade: the College robemakers

Historically, the College had close connections with Dublin fabric merchants and the tailoring profession. Bursar's vouchers from the late 1700s to the 1850s show that cloth and fabrics purchased from local suppliers were one of the College's largest operating expenses after coal. Robemakers serving the College traded from premises concentrated in the vicinity of nearby Anglesea Street, College Street from at least from the early nineteenth century and later Westmorland Street and Trinity Lane (Table 3). An account history of the trade has been developed, but due to space constraints only a summary is given here.

The earliest purchases of academic dress by the College were for 'six gowns for six masters, £17 0s 3d; three gowns for sophisters £3 6s 0d' bought in 1600 by Vice-Provost Luke Challoner (1550-1613) for the first recorded public Commencements.⁴⁶² In the mid-1720s John Byrne was providing tailoring services, making and repairing gowns, cassocks and caps for members of the College while in 1732, a Catherine Byrne supplied a Master's cap, gown and hood for TCD resident William Dunkin (c.1707-65), though it is not known if these suppliers were related (Fig. 4.49).⁴⁶³ Anne Keayes was paid for making a gown for a Dr Graves in 1734 (Table 4).⁴⁶⁴

From around 1820 to 1880 the robemaking trade seems to have been dominated by the Hawkins family. A trade card from around 1820, advertised the robemaking services of Wm. Hawkins working from 9 College Street (Fig. 4.50). He was succeeded at 7, 8 and 9 College Street by Thomas Hawkins in the 1840s and later Elizabeth Hawkins (d.1880) at

⁴⁶² Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 25.

⁴⁶³ John Byrne. Bills for Rev Dr King and Mr J W Thalls(?) for making of gowns, cassocks, and caps. April 5, 1725. TCD/MUN/P/1/677/35. John Byrne. Bill and receipt for making and repairing of nightgowns, gowns and cassocks. November 15, 1725. TCD/MUN/P/1/677/42. Catherine Byrne. Bursar's Voucher. Master's cap and gown for Wm Dunkin. September 8, 1732. MUN/P4/36/7. R. A. Somerville, "'The Best Poet': William Dunkin and Trinity College Dublin," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 39 (2024).

⁴⁶⁴ Anne Keayes. Bursar's Voucher, Making a gown for Dr Graves. June 26, 1734. MUN/P4/38/36.

6, 7 and 8 College Street.⁴⁶⁵ In 1840 Thomas Hawkins submitted a bill in 1840 to the College for the provision making of a Proctor's Hood (Fig. 4.51).⁴⁶⁶ He also seems to have been consulted as an authority on Dublin costume. In 1849 he provided a sample MA gown in single tabinet to the committee charged with establishing system of academic dress for the Queen's College Belfast, who had decided that the scheme for the new institution should be modelled on that of TCD (Table 4).⁴⁶⁷

Although Elizabeth Hawkins and others described themselves as robemakers to the University it is unclear whether they were officially appointed, or it simply emerged as such by dint of their custom with the College. The TCD coat of arms is displayed prominently on Elizabeth Hawkins' invoices from 1853 (Fig. 4.52). By 1859 she was describing herself as the "original" robemaker to the University and in an advertisement placed by Elizabeth in the *Irish Church Directory* in 1865 she defends her position as 'the University Robe Maker', reminding customers that she was 'The Original' with 'no connection with any House in the Trade', perhaps in opposition to another Hawkins, Stephen who has set up a tailoring shop next door at 4 College Street.⁴⁶⁸

Bursar's vouchers, which record institutional purchases, probably underrepresent the extent of Elizabeth Hawkin's services to the College community. Maunsell's *Idler* describes the pride with which the young Freshman arriving in College around 1850 took:

with unconcealed satisfaction, the cards which are thrust into his hands by Hawkins and the other porters who sell caps and gowns, and shows them to all his friends, or puts them over his chimney-piece; and has the innocence to believe it, when trying on his cap and gown, Mrs. Hawkins tells him he looks very handsome in them, little thinking that she has said the same to every

⁴⁶⁵ Number 6 College Street is the landmark Irish Yeast Company building, built c.1820 "Irish Yeast Company, 6 College Street, Dublin 2," National Built Heritage Service, Dept. Housing, Local Government & Heritage, 2015, accessed January 11, 2025, <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/50020273/irish-yeast-company-college-street-dublin-2-dublin>.

⁴⁶⁶ TCD/MUN/P4/224/25. Around £330 at 2023 prices seems good value. In 2025, the College commissioned a new Proctor's hood, opting for rabbit rather than artificial fur regarded as less sustainable. The fur was supplied by Barnardo at a cost of £415 per hood. Lorraine Norton, email to author, June 24, 2025.

⁴⁶⁷ Moody and Beckett, *Queen's, Belfast 1845-1949. The history of a university*, 131-132, refer to Hawkins of College Street, probably Thomas Hawkins as in 1849 Stephen Hawkins was still located in Anglesea Street.

⁴⁶⁸ Charles, *Irish Church Directory 1865*, back matter.

person who has ever bought one...that a heavy discount is charged for such compliments...

The College was remarkably open to women in business, often the widows of men who had worked for the College, notably in the building trades in the early 1700s.⁴⁶⁹ Early eighteenth century robemakers included women such as Catherine Byrne and Anne Keayes, though little is known about them. On taking over her father's trade, Elizabeth Hawkins' evident skill in sales, enterprising spirit and business innovations demonstrated strikingly modern female entrepreneurship. In 1853 she invoiced pensioner Walter Lamb for storage of his boxes for two years.⁴⁷⁰ A mention of Hawkins Academicals in Choral Society accounts probably relates to gowns that were hired to members of the society performing at an doctoral examination concert in 1851.⁴⁷¹ There are entries for Hawkins in concert expenditure on other dates, and in 1854 she hired surplices to the Choral Society for six months use in the College Chapel.⁴⁷² By extending beyond tailoring and outfitting to costume hire and storage she anticipated the services of present-day robemakers. Elizabeth Hawkins died in 1880, apparently without a successor. An auction of her personal and business effects at 7 College Street on July 8, 1880, included seven dozen College cap boxes and shop fixtures.⁴⁷³

The College Porters maintained strong links with the tailoring trade probably underwritten by the College's huge expenditure on their livery.⁴⁷⁴ They appear to have been intermediaries with the tailors in the supply of gowns for students and Fellows, as described above. In the mid-1850s elderly Porters attended Fellow-commoners at Commons and, as 'most of them sell caps and gowns, and as it is to their advantage to destroy them as quickly as possible, they never fail, if there is a particularly rich sauce or gravy, on pouring it down the body of one's gown'.⁴⁷⁵ Their agency is supported by

⁴⁶⁹ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 148.

⁴⁷⁰ Henry Lamb Papers, Offaly Co. Archives. IE OH OHS77/6/3/1/38.

⁴⁷¹ Dr Cillian Long, email to author, March 5, 2025. Dublin University Choral Society Accounts for the Performance of Acts for Doctor Stewart's Degree. TCD MUN/SOC/CHORAL/2/3.

⁴⁷² Henry Lamb Papers, Offaly Co. Archives. IE OH OHS77/6/3/1/38. TCD/MUN/P4/261/25.

⁴⁷³ Hill & Co. Lawlor, "Advertisement: Auction at 7 College Street," *Freemans Journal* (Dublin), July 6 1880, 8.

⁴⁷⁴ Somerville, *The early residential buildings of Trinity College Dublin*, 100-02.

⁴⁷⁵ Maunsell, *The idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide*, 28.

Bursar's vouchers which include claims by Porters for payment of expenses for purchase of gowns (Table 4).⁴⁷⁶ Their sideline in the supply of gowns to students continued at least into the first decade of the twentieth century, the College Resister noting in April 1909 that Porters were 'forbidden to charge more than 10/- in future for hire of gowns for Commencements'.⁴⁷⁷

The expansion of the University sector with the creation of the RUI in 1879 and the NUI in 1908 led to some competitive jostling between robemakers who sought to associate themselves with specific institutions. A. & F. Thompson of Westmoreland Street advertised themselves between 1892 and 1911 as 'Robe Manufacturers to the Irish Universities' and 'Official Robe Makers to the Irish Universities', by 1926 described themselves as 'Robe Makers to TCD, RCSI, RCPI'.⁴⁷⁸ This situation may have stimulated the move to formalize the position with the first reference an official 'Robemaker' to the University of Dublin appearing in the Calendar of 1922-23, with A. & F. Thompson listed among the Officers of the University and College, coinciding with the streamlining of regulations on academic dress, discussed in Chapter 2. The Calendar records only four robemakers to the University in the 100 years since, including A. & F. Thompson, J. & T. Dallas, Bryson's Ltd and currently Armstrong and Oxford (Table 3).⁴⁷⁹

The history of robemaking in Dublin mirrors that of other specialist crafts and trades in Ireland. Initially working as independent artisans, robemakers were gradually replaced by small family firms who set up their workshops around the institutions they served.

Mergers of these enterprises accelerated in late twentieth century, giving economies of scale. Business emerged capable of serving a vastly expanded third education sector at a national scale, but maintaining traditional brand names in a nod to university affiliation.

⁴⁷⁶ The traditional TCD Porter's uniform discussed in Chapter 3 saw use well into the 1970s, and with-it connections with the tailoring trade. As late as the 1970s at least two College security guards had been tailors, one a former employee of Louis Copland, still a prominent Dublin tailor and outfitter. Mary Muldowney, *Trinity and its neighbours : an oral history* (Dublin: School of Histories and Humanities, Trinity College Dublin, 2009), 46-47.

⁴⁷⁷ Registers of the Board of Trinity College Dublin. 29th April 1909. TCD/MUN/V/5/19/222.

⁴⁷⁸ H. A. Hinkson with illustrations by Walter C. Mills, *Student life in Trinity College* (Dublin: J. Charles & Son, 1892). Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*. "Nomina Candidatorum. Baccalaurei in Artibus," *Irish Times* (Dublin), July 7 1911, 5. A & F Thompson, "Advertising," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, December 2, 1926, lxii.

⁴⁷⁹ "Armstrong & Oxford: About us," Armstrong & Oxford, 2025, accessed July 17, 2025, <https://www.armstrongandoxford.com/about>.

The few remaining robemakers working on bespoke commissions such as officers' gowns of costly design and fabric are now in the UK. The evolution of the Dublin robemaking trade thus describe the journey from a world of artisans and craftsmanship in the service of elites (Schneider's 'courtly cultures') to post-modern capitalist systems of mass production opening access to all.

Chapter 5. Portraying scholarship: Dublin academic dress in portraiture

Introduction

University portrait collections speak to public service, reputation, scholastic recognition and collegiality, thus institutional values may be incarnated by individuals represented. These collections record temporal, spatial and social trends which not only commemorate individual sitters but also project an evolving institutional culture.⁴⁸⁰ Beyond presenting a succession of individuals, they represent the place and the community. Each work represents a span of time, which taken together can communicate both the cultural evolution of the establishment and intellectual continuity. Institutional space may also be subdivided depending on the locations and combinations in which the portraits are displayed.⁴⁸¹ As such, the portraits are not just evidence, they are also, or can be mechanisms of change, not just the illustration of these things but their (re)creation.

Costume dresses up these concepts, providing the visual clues which potentially inform the viewer's understanding and trigger perceptions, if the codes can be read. Attitudes to dress evolve with societal norms. Thus drapery, and how it is incorporated in portraits, conveys different messages about the sitters, both then and now. In scholarly spaces academic dress provides a visual key, just as the relevant dress does in ecclesiastical, military or judicial settings. The choice of sitter and hanging can be a matter of intense debate by decision makers and subsequent viewers, both formally and in the corridors. Unwritten rules and customs govern what is considered appropriate dress to be worn in portraits, depending on the space they are destined for and the commissioning entity.

The motivations for being portrayed in academic dress and the manner of its depiction are various, and the drapery can provide insights into the artist and their sitters. For the sitter, the portrait is the celebration of career achievement, and a sign of recognition. By being painted they are inscribed in the continuum of scholars and

⁴⁸⁰ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges." 3. Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 23.

⁴⁸¹ Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660-2000*, 139-40.

formalized in the collective memory of the institution and its visual history. The act of being portrayed becomes, in communion with the artist, a moment of introspection for the sitter. This may include reflections on their relationship to dress and its meaning, occasionally straying into the pretentious. Beyond echoing academic trends, these portraits reveal the relationship of the sitter to academic costume and its deployment in memorializing both individual and institutional values, though sometimes in tension.

For the artist there is continuity of the craft and challenge of representing drapery.

Academic costume provides the contemporary artist a rare opportunity to paint drapery with all the interest of texture, colour, composition.⁴⁸² Representing fabric, the heft of the cloth, dense or lustrous, worn taut or loose, the folds piled, bunched, or pleated recalling the trade of renowned portrait painters of the past.

This chapter considers the representation of Dublin academic dress in portraiture at TCD and other institutional collections as relevant. These will be used together with examples of existing robes, to enrich understanding of the sitters, the institution and evolving societal norms. The approach is supplemented by interviews with artists and sitters in recent College commissions. These provide valuable subjective evidence on the creative process and how academic dress is portrayed.

The TCD Portrait collection

The TCD Art Collection comprises over 2,500 principally ‘ceremonial, commemorative and decorative’ artworks collected since 1710 memorializing both individual achievement and institutional success.⁴⁸³ The first comprehensive catalogue of paintings and sculpture was published by Strickland in 1916. Crookshank and Web described the evolution of the collection up to 1990.⁴⁸⁴ They noted that acquisition and commissioning policies for College portraits has traditionally been unwritten, which remains true today. Provosts are

⁴⁸² e.g. Pery, *Andrew Festing*, 59. Andrew Festing, interview by the author, November 10, 2023. Mick O’Dea RHA, personal communication, April 28, 2025.

⁴⁸³ "Art Collections - Introduction," University Art Collections, Trinity College Dublin, updated June 14, 2023, accessed March 20, 2025, <https://www.tcd.ie/artcollections/about/>. Giltrap, "20:20 Hindsight. Retrofitting research relevance to the University Art Collections at Trinity College, Dublin," 73.

⁴⁸⁴ Strickland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures, Busts, and Statutes in Trinity College, Dublin, and in the Provost's House*. Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 9-10.

certain to be painted, but others are chosen organically, variously sanctioned and funded via 'intricate networks' across the College community.⁴⁸⁵ These can include the Board, SCR, academic departments, colleagues, friends and alumni organizations. There is no central budget, though some official portraits of significant figures are paid for centrally by the Board or Faculties. The few major University commissions, such as the portrait of Chancellor Mary Robinson (1944-) by Mark Shields (1963-), 2019, are steered by committee.⁴⁸⁶

Until the early 2000s commissions were conservative, the College and sitters seeking the safety of known and trusted artists such as Stephen Catterson-Smith (1806-72), Sarah Purser, Leo Whelan, Derek Hill (1916-2000) and Andrew Festing, though the panel of artists from which to select was admittedly small, at least in Dublin. Efforts have since been made to expand the artists represented, moving beyond the tried and trusted to better reflect the diversity of modern Irish portraiture. Under the provostship of Patrick Prendergast (1966-) the representation of women in the collection has been significantly reinforced.⁴⁸⁷ Treading carefully between tradition and innovation, curation of the collection now aims at preserving heritage and institutional history, all the while more representative of the diversity of the College and contemporary artists working in Ireland.⁴⁸⁸

The genesis of a College portrait is in practice an intimate affair between artist and sitter, mediated by the Curator. No formal panel of portraitists exists. Rather, the selection is made from short lists compiled according to assorted criteria including existing presence or merit for inclusion in the collection, with a focus on new Irish artists. The final choice

⁴⁸⁵ Tedbury, "New Collections for New Women: Collecting and Commissioning Portraits at the Early Women's University Colleges," 1.

⁴⁸⁶ Mark Shields (1963-), Portrait of Mary Robinson, Chancellor 1998–2019, 2019, oil on canvas, 270 x 180 cm, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁴⁸⁷ Patrick J Prendergast, *Record of the Main Speeches given by the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, Dr Patrick J Prendergast in the Academic Year 2017 – 2018. Linda Hogan Portrait Unveiling*, Trinity College (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, July 9 2018), 403. Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," 109. Four busts of historically important women intellectuals commissioned for the Long Room Library, hitherto populated by representations of men, unveiled in 2023 are the most recent addition to the College sculpture collection.

⁴⁸⁸ Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," 14. Catherine Giltrap, Head of University Art Collections and College Curator, TCD interview by the author, September 5, 2024.

is with the sitter, guided by the Curator with an emphasis on the personal rapport. From there the creative process is organic and evolutionary. The choice of costume and props is left to the sitter in collaboration with artist, influenced by scholarly extroversion (or not), the reasons for the commission (official or collegial) and where the work will eventually hang. There is no formal requirement for College portraiture to include academic dress, though unwritten customs emerge as discussed below.

Degrees and dress: educational and sartorial trends in TCD portraiture

At foundation Fellows, with a few exceptions were in Holy Orders, usually Doctors in Divinity. Early portraits unsurprising show the Provosts and Fellows dressed in sombre seventeenth-century puritan dress or the voluminous surplices, rochets, bands and black scarves of eighteenth-century Anglican divines, as dictated by the prevailing political climate.⁴⁸⁹ The first representations of academic costume in the collection show Vice-Chancellors in the cappa clausa of a seventeenth century DD (Fig. 2.10).⁴⁹⁰ By the mid-eighteenth century, practice changed in Dublin, the cope was abandoned in favour of academical dress of the Oxford style. Scarlet and black DD festal robes in Oxford pattern without hood, first appear in portraits from around 1745 (Figs 2.7, 2.11). Vivid portraits of Provosts Andrews painted c.1766 and Hely-Hutchinson, 1778 as lay doctors give some relief to the steady procession of august DDs (Figs 1.1, 4.5). Despite these flashes of colour, costume in seventeenth and eighteenth century TCD portraiture was conservative, reflecting Trinity's low-church or evangelical tendencies.

The inertia of the College between the late 1700s and 1830 recognized by McDowell and Webb is reflected in its art collection, undoubtedly an influence on these authors' perspectives.⁴⁹¹ Portraits from 1800 to 1900 continued the succession of sitters in the dull uniforms of low-church Anglican clergymen. Victorian public opinion was that education should be in the hands of clergy and TCD was the *de facto* training school for

⁴⁸⁹ Trinity College Dublin, "Former Provosts: 1592-present."

⁴⁹⁰ Howard, Hugh (1675–1737). *Michael Ward DD (1678–81)*, c.1710, oil on canvas, oval 76 x 63.5 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. Howard, Hugh (1675–1737). *Anthony Dopping DD (1682–97)*, c.1710, oil on canvas, oval 76 x 63.5 cm. Trinity College, Dublin.

⁴⁹¹ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 74.

the Anglican church in Ireland and nondescript College⁴⁹² Fellows were still mainly in Holy Orders, though this was gradually diluted and dispensed with by 1873. In parallel the number of qualifications in Divinity dropped precipitously between 1840 and 1875, and the number of Fellows with DDs began to decline from the 1890s.⁴⁹³

Concerning lay doctorates, the LLD originally fulfilled the role of a general doctorate, much as the PhD today. It was earned by examination up to 1930, from 1931 by thesis or published work, but since 1910 more commonly awarded as an honorary degree. The MD appears to have been awarded for scientific as well as medical studies. From the last third of the nineteenth century qualifications in medicine and engineering saw substantial growth, in particular medicine from 1860.⁴⁹⁴ New degrees were instituted progressively between 1890 and the 1920s in response to international trends in education, including higher doctorates for research in humanities and sciences. The LittD and ScD were created 1891, stimulated by the need for these honours for the Tercentenary celebrations the following year. Dublin introduced the PhD in 1920 to cater for demand from American students seeking professional qualifications and align with practice overseas.⁴⁹⁵ The PhD which emerged originally as a research degree in Germany in the nineteenth-century, had been adopted by American institutions from the 1860s and by the early 1900s translated back across the Atlantic. Oxford instituted its equivalent, the DPhil, in 1917 and Cambridge and London the PhD in 1919. In Dublin, the degree was initially awarded in the sciences, though uptake was slow at first and by 1927 only five had been conferred.

While MDs are a constant presence in the TCD collection, portraits of doctors in letters and sciences gradually took the place of DDs. The LittD and ScD were initially regarded as modish and were not immediately favoured by dons, but with increasing acceptance the robes of these degrees began to feature in College portraits from around 1910.

Requirements for Dublin higher doctorates were strengthened into the 1950s, driven by

⁴⁹² McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 217.

⁴⁹³ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 546.

⁴⁹⁴ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 502.

⁴⁹⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 462.

the increasing standards required of the PhD.⁴⁹⁶ As earned higher doctorates have since become less sought after by time-pressed academics, the scarlet and yellow robes of the PhD only begin to appear in College portraits from the late 2010s onwards, almost a century after the degree was instituted at Dublin.

Curatorial space and academic costume

Spatial differentiation is integral to curatorial practice at TCD. Artworks are displayed both in public areas with high visibility and in private spaces devoted to study and research.⁴⁹⁷

The Public Theatre and Dining Hall are pantheons in which monumental portraits of nobility, bishops and Chancellors in splendid robes of office lean down on the College community (Figs 5.1, 5.2). Carrying the weight of history, the portraits in these ceremonial spaces remind the viewer that the success of the institution and realpolitik are intertwined, and that the reputation of the College and its degrees are dependent on their political influence, imprimatur, and indeed financial support.⁴⁹⁸ Bailey noted that the College portraits and statues stand as a reminder to the aspiring student of 'his debts to the past and duties to the future'.⁴⁹⁹ Respect for the hegemony was not always guaranteed however: in 1850 portraits in the Public Theatre were parodied in graffiti showing 'a large pig or donkey in academics, with the name of some favourite academic written underneath'.⁵⁰⁰

The apartments of the Provost's House retain the ambassadorial functions of apartments of State, connecting the public function with the institutional. The portrait of Provost Andrews, who commissioned the House in 1759, presides over the Saloon in ornate waistcoat and black gown. Elsewhere, hushed reception areas hung with portraits of past

⁴⁹⁶ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952: an academic history*, 462-63.

⁴⁹⁷ Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," 15. "Art Collections - Introduction."

⁴⁹⁸ Provost Baldwin, a significant donor, merits two portraits both in the robes of a DD and an impressive monument in the Public Theatre. Bindon, Francis (c.1690-1765). *Richard Baldwin DD (c.1668-1758)*, 1745, oil on canvas, 221 x 165 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. Home, Robert (1752-1835). *Richard Baldwin DD (c.1668-1758)*, 1788, oil on canvas, 277 x 175 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. Hewetson, Christopher (c.1737-98). *Monument to Dr Baldwin (c.1668-1758)*, 1772-81 installed 1784, marble and stone. Trinity College, Dublin.

⁴⁹⁹ Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 186.

⁵⁰⁰ Maunsell, *The idler in [Trinity] college, or the student's guide*, 23.

Provosts and College Administrators, many in the black gowns of academic business, remind the visitor they are at the heart of executive power (Fig. 5.3). Paintings of living Provosts and senior administrators commissioned by the Board lining the entrance corridor to the Provost's House, remind visitors and doctoral candidates awaiting Commencements, of past authority and commitment to the institution (Fig. 5.4). In these paintings most subjects declare their scholastic antecedents by wearing or incorporating Dublin academic dress.

In an analogous space, the Principal's corridor in Royal Holloway, University of London the art conveys a different institutional culture (Fig. 5.5). Here, the Principals are attired in business suits or casual dress except for one, Emily Penrose in the blue hood of a Dublin MA (Fig. 4.42). Here, the hanging sets the administration apart from the scholarly community, more often memorialized in academic dress elsewhere in the public areas of Royal Holloway.

At TCD portraits in the SCR are commissioned or donated by friends, colleagues and past students, independently of College. Paintings of Fellows in colourful academic garb line the stairwell leading to this community space add gaiety and welcome to faculty members. The hanging is eclectic, the mix of styles and periods contributing to the drawing room atmosphere and conviviality (Fig. 5.6). Here fellowship (both social and formal), and institutional loyalty count, and only one portrait depicts an academic sitter in the robes of another institution, a Cambridge PhD (Fig. 4.48).

Space and temporality meet in unwritten, though frequently recounted College folklore concerning the hanging of portraits. On the death of the sitter their portrait is moved from Provost's House corridor to elsewhere in the College. Though the origin of this practice is unknown, the separation of living from the dead is retold in the SCR. As the College family mourns, the portrait of the deceased is transferred from the modernity of the New Common Room to the traditionally decorated Common Room, as occurred with

the portrait of Prof. Brian McMurry in the course of this research.⁵⁰¹ In this way, the sitters continue their journey from living to collective institutional memory.

Faculty and departmental collections honour scholarly achievement and contribution to the international research profile of the College. Compared with institutional spaces, where Dublin dress predominates, academic costume worn by sitters in departmental portraits is more eclectic. Here, earned and honorary doctorates from other universities convey international recognition and lustre for the College and faculty. In the Physics Department Nobel Prize laureate Ernest Walton is portrayed by Thomas Ryan in the robes of his Cambridge PhD, preserved in the National Museum of Ireland (Fig. 5.7).⁵⁰² By including his TCD Association tie the work nevertheless commemorates his affiliation to the College. Prof. Brendan Scaife (1928-) is represented in his robes of his London honorary DSc in an amateur work inconspicuously hung in a Computer Department meeting room.⁵⁰³ Andrew Festing's portrait of Charles Hepworth Holland (1923-2019), 1994 hanging in the Department of Geology shows the sitter in a simple black gown he often wore, together with a characteristic coral pink shirt (Fig. 5.8). Holland's earned degrees were from Manchester and London, so he wears a Masters costume. His direct gaze and understated academic work-dress typify the quiet authority and incisive mind of this globally respected geologist.

In contrast, Prof. Colm O'Morain (1946-) in his portrait by Mick O'Dea RHA (1958-) in the Faculty of Health Sciences board room, is somewhat overdressed (Figs 5.9, 5.10). He wears the regalia of his two honorary doctorates of science, a London robe together with a blue silk and white fur epitoge from the University of Athens, added as an

⁵⁰¹ Basti, Zsolt (-). *Thomas Brian Hamilton McMurry PhD (1931-2023)*, 2023, oil on linen, 80 x 90 cm. Trinity, College, Dublin. TCD.ART.2238.

⁵⁰² Gown of black fabric finely pleated at back yoke and around shoulders; press stud fasteners down front edges, also one each on either side of neck; hanging sleeves with arm slits edged in black braid; label reading 'Bryson Ltd - 3 Church Lane - Dublin - College Green'; 'E.T.S. Walton' written in ink on the label. Two long narrow pieces of red felted fabric with press fasteners at each end and along the inside of both sides. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. DT:1993.32.1, DT:1993.32.3-3.1.

⁵⁰³ Vij, Neel K (1944-). *B.K.P. Scaife MIRA, Fellow 1964. DSc (London) (1928-)*, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, Trinity College, Dublin. TCD.ART.

afterthought, but unfortunately shown worn back to front.⁵⁰⁴ Alongside is a portrait of Prof. Derry Shanley (1942-) by Conor Walton (1970-), his unassuming grey jacket and bright yellow tie are in character but provide few clues as to why he is there (Fig. 5.9).

Dublin medical doctors had (and still have) a penchant for regalia.⁵⁰⁵ In her survey of Irish medical portraits, Crookshank says that these generally conservative 'social documents' reached a zenith of ostentation in the mid-nineteenth century rivalling aristocracy.⁵⁰⁶ Academic dress was wholeheartedly appropriated for this purpose, and numerous portraits of MDs are to be found in Dublin collections. Sculptures and paintings in the RCPI in particular, and a few in the RCSI offer a panorama of the evolution of the academic robes worn by Dublin medics from the late seventeenth century to the 1930s.

The portraits of MDs in the Sir John Stearne Medical Library, St James's Hospital, are the College's equivalent of these professional corpora (Fig. 5.10). Here, ranged portraits celebrate Professors of Physic and Doctors in Medicine from the seventeenth century onwards. In one of the few places in College where portraits are hung where students work, these images convey weight of profession and institutional continuity, inspiring and endorsing the qualifications of the next generation of medics.

As might be expected the regalia of lower degrees are more often found in portraits lining the halls and corridors of secondary schools. In Dublin many are by the same artists as in university collections such as James Hanley, William Orpen, Thomas Ryan and Leo Whelan. Alexandra College portraits present a unique collection of pioneering Irish woman educators, many in academic costume (Fig. 5.12). Though mentioned in passing in various school histories, these works have not been the subject

⁵⁰⁴ Mick O'Dea, personal communication, April 28, 2025. See Smith Hugh H and Sheard, *Academic dress and insignia of the world : gowns, hats, chains of office, hoods, rings, medals and other degree insignia of universities & other institutions of learning*, 1007 for the correct use of an epitoge.

⁵⁰⁵ This preoccupation is demonstrated by articles in the British Medical Journal, "Academic Costumes," 202-05. and in the Dublin-published *Medical Press & Circular*. "On Medical Hoods ", *Medical Press and Circular*, May 6, 1868, 401-402.

⁵⁰⁶ Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 1-52.

of systematic art historical research.⁵⁰⁷ These paintings memorialize professional achievement as institutional leaders and educators, rather than academic scholarship. Though now worn less often, the Master's gown and hood, ratified by another institution, come to symbolize authority and power in the narrower corridors of schools and staff rooms.

Shades of learning: Dublin academic dress in portraiture

Clothing and costume have long been a sign of social distinction, the richness of the fabrics and furs, complexity of design and ornamentation providing visual clues to the status of the wearer and by the fifteenth century fabric and colour had already come to denote academic rank.⁵⁰⁸ Whether doctors resplendent in scarlet or the multicoloured spectacle of scholars on parade colour is emotive and integral to material culture of institutes of learning symbolizing prestige, affiliation and community. As noted in Chapter 1 colour is a fraught affair, but nevertheless a convenient lens through which to examine the representation of academic dress in portraiture, despite its subjectivity.

At Dublin a basic system of faculty colours can be discerned, though haphazardly applied.⁵⁰⁹ The rationale for the choice of colours for the new Dublin degrees instituted since 1891 is undocumented, though by 1934 Baty observed that that the Irish Universities more generally had a penchant for colour.⁵¹⁰ The NUI and Belfast provided for a riot of colour with three and even four-colour hoods. Dublin was the first to award a non-doctoral hood with three colours, the MCh created in 1858. Recent TCD inventions such as the B.Dent.Tech (2006) resemble an explosion in a paint factory.

⁵⁰⁷ Ernest Armitage, *Wesley College Dublin, 1845-1995 : an Illustrated History* (Dublin: Wesley College, 1995). Richard Lee Cole, *Wesley College, Dublin : an historical summary 1845-1962* (Dublin: APCK, 1963). O'Connor and Parkes, *Gladly Learn and Gladly Teach: Alexandra College and School, 1866-1966*.

⁵⁰⁸ Mary G. Houston, *Medieval costume in England & France : the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1939), 154.

⁵⁰⁹ Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 145.

⁵¹⁰ Baty, *Academic colours*, 9. The Irish love of colour seems deep rooted. In the early fourteenth-century the splendour of Irish dress was apparently so attractive to English settlers that laws had to be passed (the Statutes of Kilkenny promulgated under the Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III) forbidding them to take on local costume, on pain for being treated like Irish men – i.e. badly. Planché, *A cyclopaedia of costume or dictionary of dress, including notices of contemporaneous fashions on the continent*, 2, A general history of costume in Europe, 94.

Doctors wear scarlet

The association of scarlet with higher degrees along with conventions such as “doctors wear scarlet” is well documented and enduring tradition in European universities.⁵¹¹

Fine cloth dyed scarlet was among the most expensive fabrics, reserved for ecclesiastical and civic authorities, and permitted by sumptuary laws of 1533 for doctors being clergy in universities. Late sixteenth century rejection of ostentation saw black or dark coloured gowns for regular wear, replacing scarlet robes which began to be reserved for festal or “scarlet days”, at least in Cambridge. This practice transferred to Dublin at foundation, where doctors have traditionally worn scarlet on ceremonial occasions. The scarlet of Dublin doctoral robes varies little closely matching British Colour Council post office or signal red.⁵¹²

Black velvet: Doctors in Divinity

The earliest representations of academic dress in the College portraits are unsurprisingly the robes of Doctors in Divinity. In a portrait probably painted from life around 1749, Vice-Chancellor Arthur Price is shown in a full-length scarlet, fur-lined cappa clausa or cope, his hands emerging from a slit at the front clasp a square cap with a gold tassel (Fig. 2.10). In two posthumous portraits by Hugh Howard (1675–1737) c.1710, show Vice-Chancellors Michael Ward (1678–81) and Anthony Dopping (1682–97) in similar amply furred copes.⁵¹³

The clothing in these portraits was already anachronistic as the subjects are probably wearing the robes of a Vice-Chancellor of the time, a tradition inherited from, and still in use in Cambridge.⁵¹⁴ Kerr however asserts that it is equally likely that the sitters are in the

⁵¹¹ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*. Noel Cox, “Tudor sumptuary laws and academical dress: An Act against wearing of costly Apparel 1509 and An Act for Reformation of Excess in Apparel 1533,” *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 6 (2006). John Hamilton Baker, “Doctors Wear Scarlet” *The Festal Gowns of the University of Cambridge*, *Costume* 20, no. 1 (1986), 33.

⁵¹² BCC 209 and 208. Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 52.

⁵¹³ Howard, Hugh (1675–1737). *Anthony Dopping DD (1682–97)*, c.1710, oil on canvas, oval 76 x 63.5 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. Howard, Hugh (1675–1737). *Michael Ward DD (1678–81)*, c.1710, oil on canvas, oval 76 x 63.5 cm. Trinity College, Dublin.

⁵¹⁴ Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*. 112. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*. 108, 146. Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 47, 138. George W Shaw, *Cambridge University Academical Dress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), front cover, i.

'business dress' of their degrees, the DD robes of a typical of the period.⁵¹⁵ A portrait c.1716 attributed to Charles Jervas (c.1675–1739) in the Deanery, St Patrick's Cathedral of Archbishop William King (1650-1729) in the same costume as a Doctor in Divinity support this contention.⁵¹⁶ Modern scarlet and black DD robes in the Oxford pattern worn without the hood, first appear in portraits from around 1750 of Provost Richard Baldwin and John Stokes (Figs 2.7, 2.11).

A fine portrait of the Revd Charles Wall DD (1780-1862) by Stephen Catterson-Smith, 1849 from the glum parade of Victorian divines (Fig. 5.13). Painted in the mode of Thomas Phillips (1770-1845), this immaculately dressed cleric appears in a black stock or possibly cassock, a white soft wing collar with bands, over which an open black gown with bell sleeves, the everyday dress of working academics and clergy while preaching.

The three-quarter-length life size portrait by Sarah Purser (1848-1943) 1877, commissioned by friends of Provost George Salmon (1819-1904) shows a calm and genial character (Fig. 5.14). Critically acclaimed at the time, the deep velour of black velvet adds warmth and subtly to the picture, while the vibrant scarlet of Salmon's DD robes helps convey the vitality for which he was known.⁵¹⁷

A small bust in the SCR shows John Gwynn (1829-1917), 1904 in a DD robe holding an academic cap in his left-hand (Fig. 2.12). According to Crookshank and Webb, it is attributed by John O'Grady to Purser who, unhappy with the result left the portrait unsigned.⁵¹⁸ The handling of the drapery is certainly less able than in Salmon portrait. Gwynn is seen in similar robes in a group photograph taken between 1904-1914 in the grounds of TCD (Fig. 2.3). Although in black and white, three DDs can be identified by the black velvet sleeves of their robes worn with various clerical accessories, scarves and stocks, frock coats and gaiters (see also Fig. 2.4).

⁵¹⁵ Kerr, "Hargreaves-Mawdsley's History of Academical Dress and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections," 144–45.

⁵¹⁶ Jervas, Charles (c.1675–1739) attrib. *William King DD (1650-1729)*, c.1716, oil on canvas, 277 x 175 cm. Deanery, St Patrick's Cathedral.

⁵¹⁷ John O'Grady, *The life and work of Sarah Purser* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 57, 143.

⁵¹⁸ O'Grady, *The life and work of Sarah Purser*, 248.

John Henry Bernard, elected in Provost 1919, strived to re-instate discipline and restore church authority to College after what he viewed as the lax Mahaffey regime.⁵¹⁹ He maintained an appropriately dark Anglican austerity to his attire and Trinity Monday announcements of Scholars and Fellows were made in sombre business dress.⁵²⁰ A College portrait by Leo Whelan, 1924 shows him seated, his outfit *de rigueur* for Church of Ireland bishops for most of the twentieth century: rochet and black chimere and a DD hood.⁵²¹ The drapery is poorly done, the over-elaborate sleeve folds, flounced cuffs and acres of white material over the lap leave the sitter with a rather prim, matronly appearance. A sensitive posthumous portrait of Bernard by Sarah Cecilia Harrison hangs, regrettably hidden backstairs in Alexandra College (Fig. 5.15). It shows the Archbishop standing in a clerical suit, robed holding a document in his right hand. He is lit from the left from a hidden window towards which he gazes facing eternity with saint-like serenity. Harrison's excellence with drapery in oil point is displayed in the tactile black velvet and scarlet cloth his DD, and old gold and brown curtaining patterned with renaissance-style foliage. The picture is redolent of the sixteenth century masters, Holbein, Botticelli and others who influenced her technique.⁵²²

A full-length portrait of William Cecil de Pauley DD (1893-1968) Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, by Koert Del Monte, (1913-82). c.1955, unusually depicts a working cleric in DD robes, the sitter's gaiters resembling wellington boots (Fig. 5.16). Del Monte was a Dutch-Jewish immigrant to Ireland, converted and baptised by de Pauley. Painted on board, the work has a naïve informality, reflecting the close relationship between artist and sitter.

⁵¹⁹ Bernard was the last Provost of TCD to be in Holy Orders.

⁵²⁰ As seen in *Dr Bernard, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin announcing the result of Fellowship elections to a gathering of students*. Illustrated news photograph c.1920 (unknown publication). Author's collection.

⁵²¹ Whelan, Leo (1892-1956), *John Henry Bernard DD (1860-1927)*, exhib. RHA 1924, oil on canvas, 127 x 96 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. TCD.ART.1348. See also *Hall Neale, George (1863-1940). Archbishop John Henry Bernard DD (1860-1927)*, n.d., Cashel & Ossory Diocesan Portrait Collection, Bishop's House, Kilkenny. A survey of portraits of Archbishops of Armagh in Church House, Armagh suggest the wearing of hoods with episcopal dress was current for Church of Ireland bishops from about 1890 until around 2000. Thompson, "An Odd Habit: A study of the use of the Academic Hood in the portraits of the Archbishops of Armagh."

⁵²² *Sarah Cecilia Harrison : artist, social campaigner and city councillor*, ed. Margarita Cappock (Dublin: Dublin City Council, 2022), 42-43, 195.

A bust of Arthur Aston Luce DD by Derek Hill, c.1973 was considered by critic Bruce Arnold as ‘possibly the best of several Trinity College portraits painted by Derek’ (Fig. 5.17).⁵²³ The last portrait of a DD commissioned by the College, his robes are only hinted at, as the once unassailable grandeur of the long line of Dublin Doctors in Divinity fades in collective memory.

In the Pink: Doctors in Medicine and Laws

Pink first appeared as a colour adjective in English in 1733 and became popular, widely worn by men and boys, in the Rococo period around 1720-1750 in Britain.⁵²⁴ The association of shades of pink for academic dress has been traced to fourteenth and fifteenth century Paris, where it was traditionally worn by Doctors of Canon and Civil Law.⁵²⁵ The colour was likely to have been translated to Dublin via Laud's Oxford statutes of 1636 which stipulated silk of an "intermediate" colour to scarlet for the facings and hoods of Doctors of Civil Law and Doctors of Medicine.⁵²⁶ Ackermann's prints, 1814-1815 show doctors of laws and medicine at Oxford and Cambridge still in robes of scarlet with pink sleeves and facings. Taylor illustrates a Dublin LLD in scarlet and pink in 1845, while catalogues from 1858 and 1865 describe the Dublin LLD and MD as pink and rose respectively.⁵²⁷ However portraits in Dublin collections show that by 1875 colours had diverged, the MD becoming crimson and while pink was retained for doctors of law, a tendency Groves also noted for lay doctors' dress at Cambridge.⁵²⁸ By 1966 Bryson's robemakers gave the LLD pink as begonia, and the MD Medici crimson.⁵²⁹

⁵²³ Bruce Arnold, *Derek Hill* (London: Quartet, 2010), pl. 88.

⁵²⁴ Reynolds, *Style & society*, 28.

⁵²⁵ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 38, 40.

⁵²⁶ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 74.

⁵²⁷ Taylor, *History of the University of Dublin, (founded by Queen Elizabeth)*. Gutch, "Colour of university Hoods," 402. Charles, *Irish Church Directory*.

⁵²⁸ Wood, *Ecclesiastical and Academical Colours. (Of the various colours used in the Service of the Church-University Dresses, etc.)*, 48. Groves, "Toward a standard terminology for describing academic robes," 60.

⁵²⁹ BCC 183 and 240. Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 52.

Doctors in Laws

Joshua Reynolds' portrait, 1778 of John Hely-Hutchinson in the costume of his lay doctorate conferred *h.c.* in 1765 is the earliest representation of an LLD in the College collection (Fig 1.1). Reynolds completed a number of paintings of sitters in the robes of Oxford law doctors, at least four of himself and one of philosopher James Beattie in Aberdeen University (Fig 1.3).⁵³⁰ Despite the passage of time, and Reynolds' reputation for using experimental paints with fading reds, these paintings show LLDs in the same bright scarlet and pinks as in the Dublin Hely-Hutchinson.⁵³¹ The portrait of Edmund Burke (1729-97) by John Hoppner (1758-1810), 1795 in the Public Theatre shows the subject standing full length in the robes of an LLD, scarlet with facings and sleeves in begonia pink, worn with the lace fall of an honorary graduate (Fig 5.18).

By the second half of the eighteenth century LLD pinks seem to have reverted to more restrained pastel tones. A portrait by an unknown artist in Huntington Castle, Co. Carlow of Alexander William Durdin (1821-92), shows the facings of the robe and hood linings in a dull pink (Fig. 5.19). It unusually shows the sitter in the costume of an earned doctorate of laws, placing the picture after 1865. A swatch of Dublin LLD silk attached to a letter sent by James Charles to Maltby's robemakers around 1890, is a similar dullish pale pink (though possibly faded) (Fig. 5.20).

Awarded primarily as an honorary degree from around 1910, LLDs are more common in civic and private collections such as Hickey's portrait of Lorcan Sherlock, 1912 in Dublin City Hall and William Edward Ellis (1853-1926) by Leo Whelan painted in 1913 (Figs 1.2, 5.21). These portraits revive more vibrant shades of pink, comparable with robes made for the Duke of Connaught awarded LLD *h.c.* by the RUI (Fig 5.22). Made

⁵³⁰ Reynolds, Joshua (1723-92). *Self-portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds, PRA, DCL (Oxon.)*, 1773, oil on panel, 127 x 102 cm. Royal Academy of Arts. 03.1394. Reynolds, Joshua (1723-92). *Dr James Beattie LLD (Oxon.)* (1735-1803), c.1780, oil on canvas, 122 x 155 cm. University of Aberdeen. ABDUA 30003.

⁵³¹ This begs the question why the pink in the robes in Reynolds' *Portrait of Charles Coote, 1st Earl of Bellamont (1738-1800)*, in *Robes of the Order of the Bath*, 1773-1774 in the NGI, reputed to be faded fugitive red, was not actually the original pink associated with the Order? A similar pink, unfaded, appears in Reynolds' other portraits of DCL/LLDs including Hely-Hutchinson hanging a few metres away.

by A. & F. Thompson the Duke's sumptuous scarlet cloth and pink silk outfit, now preserved in Windsor Castle, drew the acclamation of the contemporary press.⁵³²

College sitters seem to prefer to be portrayed in the robes of their earned doctorates, and the LLD is less common in the collection. Provost Anthony Traill (1939-1914) was however frequently memorialized in paintings and photographs wearing the robes of the degree conferred on him in 1865 (Figs 2.3, 6.8, 6.9). In a portrait by the little-known J Sydney R Rowley (*fl.*1907) the Provost wears the robes of a Dublin LLD his right hand resting on a table draped with his hood as Master of Surgery (1869), a qualification of which he was particularly proud (Fig. 5.23.). Known for his inflated ego *Irish Times* wryly posited that the Provost had "given a Cromwellian injunction to the artist, and in that spirit the portrait has been executed".⁵³³ The painting was commissioned by Lafayette's for an exhibition of portraits of ten notable Irishmen at their Westmoreland Street studios in 1907. Conceived as a vanity piece and criticized by Crookshank as 'merely large and colourful', the vibrant colours reflect the larger-than-life character of the sitter and would no doubt have added to popular interest in the painting. It was later donated to the College by Lafayette's in 1952.⁵³⁴ Traill was also painted in LLD robes in a portrait by Henry Harris Brown (1864-1948) given by former pupils and unveiled in the Provost's House in December 1905.⁵³⁵ Now lost, it was considered workmanlike and not particularly impressive when exhibited at the RHA in 1907.⁵³⁶

Dublin LLD robes are last seen in a portrait worn by Frances Moran, painted by Derek Hill in 1976 (Fig. 4.48).

⁵³² "Royal University of Ireland: Degrees for the Duke and Duchess of Connaught." See also Fig 4.28.

⁵³³ "Oil Paintings at Lafayette's." *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 28 1907, 6. Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 49.

⁵³⁴ Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*, 135

⁵³⁵ "The Provost of Trinity College: Presentation by former pupils," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), December 23 1905, 22.

⁵³⁶ "Royal Hibernian Academy: Varnishing Day," *Irish Times* (Dublin), February 4 1907, 8.

Doctors in Medicine

Portraits in the RCPI show John Stearne the elder (1624-69) and Sir Patrick Dun (1642-1713) by Thomas Pooley (c.1644-1723) in the generic robes of a Doctor in Medicine (Physic) (Figs 5.24, 5.25). Dun graduated MD from Dublin and later incorporated at Oxford University in 1677. Stearne is recorded as having received a Dublin MD in 1658, later becoming first president of the RCPI in 1667.⁵³⁷ The same robe is seen in his posthumous portrait in TCD attributed to Hugh Howard.⁵³⁸ According to Crookshank these are his robes of President of the RCPI, but they are more likely to be those of a seventeenth century Doctor of Medicine.⁵³⁹ In these portraits the sitters wear robes with sleeves turned up to display pink silk linings, while the folded back cape of a large pink-lined hood can be discerned in the portrait of Dun. In Oxford at this date the turned-out lining had also started to creep up the outside of the sleeve, eventually reaching almost to the shoulder.⁵⁴⁰ This form of sleeve probably originated as an exaggerated version of the turn-ups still seen in Cambridge robes (e.g. Fig 1.11).⁵⁴¹

A portrait of Edward Worth (1678-1733) by an unknown artist in Dr Steevens' Hospital shows the doctor sitting uneasily in scarlet lined pink MD robes from either Dublin or Oxford (Fig. 5.26).⁵⁴² Worth qualified for medicine at Utrecht but conferred MD *ad eundem gradum* by Dublin in 1702, and *h.c.* Oxford 1706. Although the portrait is undated, the costume places it after 1702 by which time the facings had moved up the sleeves taking on the now familiar Dublin pattern.

This design seems to have been well established by second half of the eighteenth as seen in portraits in the RCPI of Henry Quin (1718-1791) in Dublin MD robes awarded in 1750, and an undated portrait of a lifelike Edward Hill (1741-1830) peering intently

⁵³⁷ John David Henry Widdess, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 1654-1963* (Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone, 1963), 13.

⁵³⁸ Howard, Hugh (1675-1737) attrib. *John Stearne the elder, M.D. (1624-69), c.1710*, oil on canvas, 124.5 x 99 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*. 123.

⁵³⁹ Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 2.

⁵⁴⁰ Alex Kerr, email to author, July 3, 2025.

⁵⁴¹ Groves, "Toward a standard terminology for describing academic robes," 60.

⁵⁴² Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 4.

over his spectacles, an open volume in his hands (Figs 5.27, 5.28).⁵⁴³ Perhaps the earliest portrait to display a convincing Dublin doctoral hood, the robes help narrow the date of this work to sometime after 1773 when Hill was conferred MD. A large portrait in TCD of William Clement MD (1707–82) possibly by Joseph Wilson (*fl.*1770–1800) shows the elderly sitter in similar robes c.1780 (Fig. 5.29). Clement was conferred MD in 1748 and became regius professor of physic in 1761. Though in a simpler setting, the lustre and composition of the folds on the pink silk facings and sleeves of Clement’s robes resemble the drapery in Reynolds’ portrait of a stern John Ash (1723–1798), 1788 also in the vivid red and pink of an Oxford MD (Fig. 5.30).

A monochrome ink-drawing c.1830 in the RCPI of James Macartney (1770–1843), Professor of Anatomy & Surgery in the University of Dublin shows the robed sitter in a pose resembling Ackerman’s Oxford Doctor in Physic, 1814 (Fig. 1.5).⁵⁴⁴ Macartney was awarded his MD *h.c.* soon after his appointment to the chair in 1813. The TCD portrait of James Apjohn MD (1799–1886), Professor of Chemistry by Thomas A. Jones (c.1821–93), 1876 shows the sitter in the robes of the same degree conferred in 1837. His scarlet robe has bell-shaped sleeves faced with deep pink silk (Fig. 5.31). Surrounded rather incongruously by laboratory apparatus, the drapery and accoutrements remind the viewer that he is both an academic and a scientist.⁵⁴⁵ A late-nineteenth century robe in the Burgon Society Archive, tentatively identified as a Dublin MD, preserves a deeper claret similar to the Apjohn portrait in the original lining (Fig. 5.32).

By the 1870s the Dublin MD facings had drifted towards hues of deeper red. Portraits in the RCPI of Joseph Banks (1816–1908) c.1871 by Sarah Purser, and Thomas Gilman Moorhead (1878–1960) by Leo Whelan c.1933 shows the sitters in flowing scarlet and

⁵⁴³ Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 6.

⁵⁴⁴ Ross, Dr (*fl.*1830), *James Macartney MD (1770–1843)*, c.1830, photograph of ink drawing on paper, Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, Dublin, VM/1/2/M/1, reproduced in Caoimhghin S. Breathnach and John B. Moynihan, "James Macartney and his Successor Arthur Jacob, Pioneers in Development of Medical Education, Hospitals, Anatomy and Surgery," *The Ulster Medical Journal* 85 (2016), 103–06.

⁵⁴⁵ Jordanova examines the provocative meaning of dress in unexpected settings in her consideration of a photographic portrait Dr Lesley J. Yellowlees by Tricia Malley, 1997, portrayed in an evening dress in a laboratory setting. Jordanova, *Defining Features : Scientific and Medical Portraits, 1660–2000*, 130–133.

deep crimson robes (Fig. 5.33).⁵⁴⁶ The drapery captures the same vivid cherry silk of an elegant MD robe of the period made by A. & F. Thompson (Fig. 5.34). The crimson robes in Edward McGuire's portrait of a Dean of Medicine, William Jessop (1902-80), 1973, painted on one of the artist's better days have a similar luxurious sheen and are interpreted with a self-supporting, sculptural quality that add to the power and authority of the sitter (Fig 5.35). However, McGuire's graphic realism may not have been best suited to commemorate Jessop, who was generally known for his warmth and charisma.⁵⁴⁷

The reintroduction of crimson for Dublin medics from the late 1800s may have been an artefact of the fashion for medieval revivalism. Planché in his 1879 *Cyclopaedia of Costume or Dictionary of Dress* drew on Chaucer's physician described as being clad in a scarlet gown 'furred well as such a one ought to be'. According to Planché this was still the academic gown of a Doctor of Medicine in 1879, and although he was wrong, artists have been attracted to vibrant blood red of medicine ever since.⁵⁴⁸

Trinity Blues: Arts and Letters

MacNeile Dixon says the College colour is royal blue, traditionally the national colour seen on the Coat of Arms of Ireland and the presidential standard.⁵⁴⁹ The arms of the city of Dublin feature flaming castles on a blue field. Blue, or more correctly azure, is the dominant colour of the arms of TCD and the University of Dublin. Although there is no record of a grant, the earliest representation of the TCD arms dates from 1612 and are prominent in the visual furniture of the College (e.g. Fig. 5.1).⁵⁵⁰ The blue of the College arms and variations of it, are used for the publications, pamphlets, signage and apparel. The arms of the University were assigned in 1862, following confirmation of the Senate by Letters Patent in 1857 and have been used on degree certificates since

⁵⁴⁶ Purser, Sarah (1848-1943). Sir John Thomas Banks (1816-1908), post-1871, oil on canvas, 127 x 102 cm. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin. HI/1881-1.

⁵⁴⁷ Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 52.

⁵⁴⁸ Planché, *A cyclopaedia of costume or dictionary of dress, including notices of contemporaneous fashions on the continent*, 2, A general history of costume in Europe, 91.

⁵⁴⁹ MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, appendix D, 286.

⁵⁵⁰ Andrew Cusack, "Arms of the Irish Universities," *Andrew Cusack*, April 14, 2011, <https://www.andrewcusack.com/2011/irish-academic-heraldry/>.

1963.⁵⁵¹ The University traditionally refers to the lists of graduands presenting at Commencements as the “blue list” and blue is prominent at the ceremony in the MA hood worn by the Senior Master non-Regent, as a member of the Caput.

Masters in Arts

Although the MA dates from foundation in 1592, the attribution of blue for the Dublin MA from the mid-nineteenth century has been the subject of much speculation. The hood may originally have been lined with pink, following practice at Oxford, as discussed in Chapter 3.⁵⁵² Regardless, by 1858 the lining of the Dublin MA was given as dark blue, marking a first departure for Dublin from the Oxford scheme of academic dress.⁵⁵³ Baty suggested that TCD chose blue as the third colour of the Union flag.⁵⁵⁴ Cambridge MAs wear white lined hoods and Oxford crimson, so for Dublin blue may have been a logical choice for as the third of the sister universities (Fig. 1.11). Indeed, by the mid-nineteenth century blue was being used by colonial universities such as McGill, Sydney, Calcutta, Tasmania for their MAs.⁵⁵⁵ Blue (usually dark) was the traditional colour for Philosophy in medieval continental Europe.⁵⁵⁶ Its revival, like crimson for medics, is congruent with the renewed interest in the gothic in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the heraldic blue of the University arms seems the simplest and most obvious inspiration. The confirmation of the University Senate in 1857 and subsequent award of arms may have stimulated institution of the MA blue, but evidence for this has yet to be found. Bryson’s robemakers ascribed empire blue for the Dublin MA and this, sapphire or royal blue, has been used relatively consistently for the Dublin MA, MLitt, and LittD ever since (Fig. 1.14).⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵¹ Cusack Arms of the Irish Universities.

⁵⁵² Christianson, “In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin,” 53-54.

⁵⁵³ Gutch, “Colour of university Hoods.”

⁵⁵⁴ Baty, *Academic colours*. Bruce Christianson, “Oxford Blues: The Search for the Origins of the Lay Bachelors’ Hood,” *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 3, no. 1 (2003): 18.

⁵⁵⁵ Christianson, “In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin,” 54.

⁵⁵⁶ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A history of academical dress in Europe until the end of the eighteenth century*, 12.

⁵⁵⁷ BCC colour codes empire blue (87) sapphire (88) or royal blue (197). Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 52.

As a lesser degree, the MA is illustrated in the College portraiture but is more often found in schools and colleges beyond TCD, including the portraits of the Steamboat ladies discussed in Chapter 4. A portrait of Katherine M. Preston (1868-1951) by Leo Whelan c.1940 shows the sitter in a deep blue gaberdine suit, formal gown and deep blue Dublin MA hood (Fig. 5.36). Her reputation for calm and tact as Lady Principal of Alexandra College (1932-1940) is underpinned by a white blouse, and a delicate bouquet of red and pink roses, which add charm and relieve the darkness of the drapery and background.

James Hanley's convincing painting of Kenneth Blackmore, one of his first portrait commissions, shows the Principal of Wesley College, in a black master's gown, against luminous yellow panelling (Fig. 5.37). The costume and props emphasize affiliation and educational antecedents. The background is decorated with images of the school and the Principal's residence, Ludford House. His well-worn blue Dublin MA hood and brightly striped Trinity Association tie proudly connect him, the school and the University, the next destination of many of its pupils.

Doctors in Letters

The choice of blue for the LittD on its creation in 1891 seems logical enough, having been the colour of the Dublin Master of Arts since at least 1858.⁵⁵⁸ An early recipient of the new degree was Robert Yelverton Tyrrell (1844-1914) painted in 1907 by Alfred Aaran Wolmark (1877-1961) (Fig. 5.38). A preeminent classicist of his time, changing academic fashions mean his portrait is now consigned to storage. An unusual robe in the Provost's House with the maker's label W. Ilnry, Examination Hall, Trinity College Dublin bears some resemblance to the portrait (Fig. 5.39). The rich sapphire-blue ribbed silk facings narrow progressively towards the shoulder, hinted at in the portrait. The robe maker has not been traced, but the fine workmanship and quality of the fabric tentatively place the robe in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century.

⁵⁵⁸ Christianson, "Oxford Blues: The Search for the Origins of the Lay Bachelors' Hood," 26. Christianson, "In the pink: the strange case of Trinity College Dublin."

Pride in wearing academic dress as a tangible symbol of otherwise discreet scholarly achievement is evident from accounts around a naive posthumous portrait of John David Henry Widdess (1906-82) in the RCSI.⁵⁵⁹ The painting by Noble Beharry (1940-) a medical student and amateur painter, shows the sitter half-length, heavily draped in LittD robes with the plastic, glossy sheen of blue satin art-silk. Widdess, a medical historian and biologist, received his LittD in 1964 'a real one he would point out, not the ordinary hons. that were handed out. He was more chuffed with this honour than any other and wore the gown which he purchased (£80 in 1970) to all formal College functions. An unusual vanity for an otherwise quiet academic'.⁵⁶⁰

Trends in fabric are illustrated in three paintings by Andrew Festing of senior members of College LittD robes: Profs John Victor Luce (1920-2011), 1999, Eda Sagarra (1933-), 2000 and Barbara Wright (1935-2019), 2005 (Figs 5.40 - 5.43). The portraits of Luce and Wright show the folds of artsilk blue facings of their doctoral robes picked out in an electric blue, Luce's almost garish. Wright's portrait captures the sheen and lustre of her gown preserved in the Provost's House, which is faced in shiny empire blue/sapphire artsilk (Figs 5.43, 5.44). In contrast, in Festing's portrait of Eda Sagarra, the facings of her doctoral robes made by Armstrong and Oxford in 1995 of ribbed silk, are more subtly rendered in a duller, matt finish, faithful to the original fabric (Figs 5.41, 5.42).

Festing's methods and approach to portraiture are related by Pery in 2015 and in an interview conducted for this work in November 2023.⁵⁶¹ His pleasure in painting 'flash' is evident in his portrait of Luce painted three-quarter length sitting facing the viewer, the hands clasped at his lap brilliantly executed with the quality of Lucian Freud (Fig. 5.39).⁵⁶² He wears a light grey suit with a gold medal pinned ostentatiously to the lapel, striped shirt and a TCD Association tie. His LittD gown and hood are vividly painted in

⁵⁵⁹ Beharry, Noble (1940-), *John David Henry Widdess LittD (1906-82)*, 1986, oil on canvas, 99 x 64 cm. Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin.

⁵⁶⁰ John Widdess (1948-), sitter's son, e-mail message to RCSI historian Ronan Kelly, via Prof. Clive Lee RCSI, January 18, 2024.

⁵⁶¹ Festing, an admirer of the handling of drapery by Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), confesses 'if I paint somebody who wants to be depicted wearing colourful clothes, all the medals, all the bedazzlements, all that stuff in the background, i.e., quite flashy, I rather like that because it's much easier to make a successful picture like that'. Andrew Festing, interview by the author, November 10, 2023. Pery, *Andrew Festing*, 59.

⁵⁶² Zsolt Basti, artist, interview with the author, Dublin, November 13, 2023.

flamboyant red and electric blues. As Public Orator Luce wears his regalia with ease, the folds draped naturally across his knees and hang slipping from his left shoulder, the neckband of the hood well-used. The drapery is painted deceptively simply, the luminescent attained by juxtaposing a limited palette of dark and light colours in broad brush strokes. Luce's costume conveys his old-fashioned, conservatism and forceful character, while his kindly, penetrating gaze captures the open and constructive relationships for which he was known as an Officer of the College.⁵⁶³

Sagarra's portrait was commissioned by colleagues on her retirement from the College aged sixty-seven (Fig. 5.41). It was executed over five days in what seems to have been a rather fraught sitting at the artist's studio in London.⁵⁶⁴ Sagarra admits to having been self-conscious and fidgety during the sittings. Festing, who had done few women had not been her first choice and Festing's old school remarks on painting 'pretty' women are telling.⁵⁶⁵ Sagarra insisted on being painted sitting not only because 'women don't like to stand', but also because she did not wish to be commemorated, as men often do 'as monuments standing on their authority'.⁵⁶⁶

The three-quarter length painting shows Sagarra seated robed in the scarlet and blue gown and hood of a Dublin LittD earned in 1995.⁵⁶⁷ Studio drapery hangs in the background. Her hands, which took one day to paint, rest slightly awkwardly on each leg, the right hand placed naturally, the left consciously posed.⁵⁶⁸ She wears a soft roll-collared cream blouse chosen to flatter the face and offer contrast with the scarlet of the robes, while the cufflinks convey military efficiency. Sagarra had been the first woman Proctor (Junior and Senior) and Registrar and the selections of the robes, was consciously made as it was 'not all about me...I am wearing it as a representative of

⁵⁶³ Prof. Eda Sagarra, interview with the author, Dublin, January 24, 2024.

⁵⁶⁴ Eda Sagarra, *Living with my century : a memoir* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2022), 211-12.

⁵⁶⁵ Sagarra would have preferred Derek Hill. Pery, *Andrew Festing*, 60.

⁵⁶⁶ Prof. Eda Sagarra, interview with the author, January 24, 2024.

⁵⁶⁷ Sagarra was subsequently awarded the degree *h.c.* on April 17, 2026 at a special 'themed' ceremony to mark the 250th anniversary of the establishment of Modern Languages in Trinity College which led to the establishment in 1776, on the initiative of Provost Hely-Hutchinson, of the oldest continuous Chairs of Modern Languages anywhere in the world.

⁵⁶⁸ Festing was pleased with the work, 'I like that picture, I'm rather well on the way her hands were'.

Dublin University. She sports a hood as ‘it would have been infra dig not to, I needed to be in the full uniform’.⁵⁶⁹

Despite the brightness of the robes themselves, Festing colours are attenuated and muddy. This it seems was because the sitter requested that it not be too red, meaning her face, a directive the artist went on to apply to the whole painting. According to the artist it was probably just a quirk of lighting on the day.

Festing’s portrait of Barbara Wright, painted on her retirement in 2000, is more luminous (Fig. 5.43). It shows a warm, smiling figure three-quarter length half-sitting on a roughly rendered brown surface, hands clasped across her lap. She wears the robes of a LittD awarded in 1995. Wright, appointed to a personal chair in French Literature in 1978, was expert on nineteenth-century orientalist Eugène Fromentin (1820-1876), two of whose works hang in background.⁵⁷⁰ Conscious of her scholarly antecedents Wright also understood the power and symbolism of academic dress.⁵⁷¹ A self-possessed woman comfortable in her own authority, she would ‘have worn the gown as a right, a badge of office, in admiration and respect for Trinity’.⁵⁷²

College Green: Doctors in Science

Green was associated with Dublin bachelor’s and master’s degrees in engineering, created in 1860 and 1872 respectively. This may have influenced the decision to attribute green albeit with the curious qualifier “myrtle” for the ScD instituted in 1891 and adopted for the MSc created in 1918. Interpretations of ‘myrtle green’ have been particularly subjective. The facings of the robes worn by Provost Thrift in a portrait painted by Leo Whelan in 1939 are in a deep rich matt green (Fig 5.45). As Thrift, possibly with advice from Thompson, first codified the Dublin academic dress scheme, this is probably closest to the myrtle green intended. It approaches the colour used by Thompson’s c.1924 for ScD robes belonging to Prof. Louis Bouvier Smyth (1883–1952),

⁵⁶⁹ Prof. Eda Sagarra, interview with the author, Dublin, January 24, 2024.

⁵⁷⁰ On the left is Fromentin, Eugène (1820-1876), *Fauconnier arabe*, 1863, oil on canvas, 108 x 73 cm. Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA. On the right Fromentin, Eugène (1820-1876), *Dessin pour “La Curée”*, 1877, lead pencil drawing, 60 x 37.5 cm, Private Collection.

⁵⁷¹ See fn 450 and Fig. 4.46. Barbara Wright, “A view of one’s own,” *Trinity Today*, 1995-96, 18.

⁵⁷² Prof. Eda Sagarra, interview with the author, Dublin, January 24, 2024.

faced with deep rich green ribbed silk, approaching BCC Green Beetle (Fig. 5.46).⁵⁷³ More recent ScD robes are faced with a brighter green, approaching malachite (Fig. 5.47).⁵⁷⁴

The ScD was slow to be memorialized in portraiture. The robes seen in a portrait in UCC of Bertram Windle (1858–1929), 1919 by ‘Harry’ Scully RHA (c.1860-1935) and then in TCD in Whelan’s 1939 portrait of Thrift.⁵⁷⁵ McDowell and Webb considered the latter ‘though not a great work of art, shows aptly enough a sad, tired little figure enveloped in a doctor’s gown too big for him’.⁵⁷⁶ O’Sullivan encountered the same problem in his 1939 portrait of Douglas Hyde in academic dress; painted seated, bulky drapery can diminish the subject (Fig. 4.13). Thrift’s costume nevertheless introduces a welcome splash of colour compared with Whelan’s Provosts Edward Gwynn (1868-1941) and Ernest Alton (1873-1952) both in sober black undress gowns.⁵⁷⁷

The trend to the election of Provosts from the sciences was firmly in place from the appointment of Albert. J. McConnell (1903-93), in 1952. Edward McGuire portrays McConnell in 1975 in muddy colours, the facings of his ScD robes in inferior shiny olive-green art silk (Fig. 5.48). His portrait of Prof. Robert Allen Quain O’Meara ScD (1903-74), completed after the sitter’s death in 1974 the robes are dull and heavy seeming to blanket the sitter.⁵⁷⁸ The drapery in these two portraits is lumpy, lacking the vitality of the MD robes in the Jessop portrait, or indeed other portraits by McGuire.

⁵⁷³ BCC 24. These robes were confided by Smyth’s widow to Prof. Frank Mitchell, then in Geology, who passed it to Prof. George Sevastopulo. Neither proceeded to the degree but kept the gown in safe keeping. Sevastopulo gave it to Prof. Patrick Wyse-Jackson when he was conferred ScD (2017). Prof. Patrick Wyse-Jackson, email to author July 18, 2025.

⁵⁷⁴ BCC 23.

⁵⁷⁵ Scully, Joshua Henry ‘Harry’ RHA (c.1860-1935). Sir Bertram C. A. Windle ScD (1858–1929), 1919, oil on canvas, University College Cork, accessed August 26, 2025, <https://www.ucc.ie/en/heritage/collections/portrait-j-h-scully-rha-c1860-1935-sir-bertram-c-a-windle.html>.

⁵⁷⁶ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 443. This was somewhat unfair as Thrift, an accomplished athlete in his youth, was in failing health when he sat for this portrait. Poole, H. H. "Dr. W. E. Thrift."

⁵⁷⁷ Whelan, Leo (1892-1956). *Ernest Henry Alton (1873-1952)*, exhib. RHA 1943, oil on canvas, 102 x 86 cm, Trinity College, Dublin. Whelan, Leo (1892-1956). *Edward John Gwynn (1868-1941)*, exhib. RHA 1935, oil on canvas, 98 x 82 cm, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁵⁷⁸ McGuire, Edward (1932-86). *Robert Allen Quain O’Meara ScD (1903-74)*, 1975, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 39 cm. Trinity College, Dublin.

In contrast, the robes in portrait of Provost William Watts ScD (1930-2010), painted in 1988 by Derek Hill at the artist's studio in Donegal accentuate the strength and presence of the sitter (Fig. 5.49).⁵⁷⁹ Hill who had ambitions to be a set designer, uses costume to dress the set, drawing the eye to the sitter's face at the apex of a mass of scarlet and green, mimicking the peak of the mountains seen through the window behind.⁵⁸⁰ Though half-length, and unusually in landscape format, the mass of material with its vivid scarlet colours and subtle olive-green underscore the quiet authority of this physically imposing ecologist.

Board minutes of June, 2011 noted the commissioning of a portrait of Provost John Hegarty ScD (1948-) who was to end his term of office later that year (Fig. 5.50).⁵⁸¹ Irish artist, Conor Walton was selected for his style which was imagined would represent the University, whilst conveying the warmth of the sitter and innovation of Hegarty's Provostship.⁵⁸² The head was executed from life, while costumes and props were painted from photographs taken in numerous poses.

The portrait shows Hegarty three-quarter length standing against a stripped-down background. He is suited, holding scarlet and green ScD robes draped over his right arm.⁵⁸³ This departure from the succession of College portraits of 'glum' men in academic dress, was a conscious choice by Hegarty. His charcoal grey business suit, white shirt and yellow tie were chosen to emphasise the Provost's role as a chief executive, leading change '...moving from a traditional University and opening up to research, reaching out to the community and a new type of person'.

The arrangement of the robes, a suggestion of the Curator, avoided the drapery overwhelming the sitter as in Whelan's portrait of Thrift or in Carol Graham's portrait of Hegarty's predecessor Thomas Mitchell (1939-) hanging nearby.⁵⁸⁴ The composition

⁵⁷⁹ William Watts, *William Watts, Provost Trinity College Dublin : a memoir* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008), 49.

⁵⁸⁰ Alexander Gowrie and Derek Hill, *Derek Hill : an appreciation* (London: Quartet, 1987), 5.

⁵⁸¹ Board Minutes, 29 June 2011. BD/10-11/311.

⁵⁸² Prof. John Hegarty, interview by the author, March 14, 2024.

⁵⁸³ Purchased from Armstrong & Oxford, for the conferring of his ScD, Summer Commencements 2001.

⁵⁸⁴ Graham, Carol (1951-). *Thomas Noel Mitchell LittD (1939-)*, 1999, oil on canvas, 126 x 100.5 cm. Trinity College, Dublin.

also implies that academic dress was ‘part of the narrative, enabling the journey toward provostship at a time when scholarship was perhaps less important criterion for role than in past’.⁵⁸⁵ For Hegarty they symbolize both his office and academic achievement while looking firmly forward.

A posthumous portrait of Prof. William Wright (1918-1985) by Andrew Festing painted in 1988 shows the subject standing in the robes of a Dublin ScD and Trinity Association tie.⁵⁸⁶ The painting appears in the background of the portrait of his daughter Prof. Jane Grimson (1949-) by Maeve McCarthy (1964-), 2019 (Fig. 5.51). Grimson, like her father had been a Dean of Engineering and was the first woman Vice-Provost of TCD. In her portrait, the sitter eschews formality and dispenses with an academic robe.⁵⁸⁷ Grimson was not a Dublin doctor, and her choice of costume perhaps unconsciously observes an unwritten etiquette of not appearing in robes of other institutions in official College portraits, though the scarlet colour of her favoured jacket recalls her doctoral status. The early renaissance style was consciously chosen by McCarthy for the work destined to hang in the gothic revival Museum Building. The device of including the portrait of her father was suggested by the artist inspired by props in portraiture of the period. It also alludes to the culture of academic dress in the College life. More importantly, the quotation links the shared professional, academic and institutional heritage with the treasured relationship between a father as teacher, mentor and influencer and his loving daughter.⁵⁸⁸

Despite a current student population that is majority female, and women assuming senior positions in the University and College, a portrait of a woman academic in the robes of an ScD has surprisingly yet to be admitted to the TCD Art collection.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁵ Catherine Giltrap, TCD interview by the author, September 5, 2024.

⁵⁸⁶ The painting was based on a photographic portrait of Wright as President of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland (1977). Festing, Andrew (1941-). *William Wright ScD (1918-85)*, 1988, oil on canvas, 102 x 84 cm, Trinity College, Dublin. TCD.ART.319.

⁵⁸⁷ Prof. Jane Grimson, interview by the author, November 17, 2023.

⁵⁸⁸ Maeve McCarthy RHA, interview by the author, December 15, 2023.

⁵⁸⁹ Trinity College Dublin, *Annual Report* (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 2022-23).

Crimson and Cream: Doctors in Music

The sumptuous cream damask and crimson robes of doctors in music have long attracted artists, sitters and their publics. Their extravagance allows the artist to replicate the bravura of old master portraits and extravagance of eighteenth-century high fashion, as in Reynolds' portrait of Charles Burney (1724-94), 1781 in the robes of a Doctor of Music at Oxford.⁵⁹⁰ Brightly painted crimson and cream damask robes add Reynoldsian glamour to portrait of an elderly Ebenezer Prout (1835-1909) by Edward Bent Walker (1860-1917), 1904 (Fig. 5.52). Prout was appointed Professor of Music at Dublin in 1894 and conferred MusD *h.c.* in 1895. The robes would no doubt have attracted the sitter reputed for his Bohemian dress, though the son of a Congregationalist minister.⁵⁹¹

The doctorate in music was first awarded in Cambridge in 1464, in Oxford around 1499 but not in Dublin until 1764, when it was conferred on Garret Wesley (1735-81), the College's first Professor of Music.⁵⁹² Considered a lesser degree, scarlet was not permitted for doctors of music though the splendid cream silk brocade, traditionally apple blossom pattern, offered some compensation (Fig 1.11). As the third secular faculty, after medicine and laws, pink came to be associated with music in the older British and Irish universities, and in the US system today. 'Intermediate red' (pink) was used from the late sixteenth century in Cambridge and at least 1636 in Oxford, though by the late eighteenth century deeper crimson shades came to be used.

Dublin MusD robes are not mentioned before the 1850s.⁵⁹³ They were however enthusiastically received by the *Illustrated London News* in April 1851 when TCD Professor of Music John Smith, was presented with the robes on the same occasion Sir

⁵⁹⁰ Reynolds, Joshua (1723-92). *Charles Burney DMus (Oxon.) (1724-94)*, 1781, oil on canvas, 75 x 61 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 3884.

⁵⁹¹ "Ebenezer Prout," *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 40, no. 674 (April 1 1899). "Ebenezer Prout", *Musical Times* 51, no. 803 (January 1 1910).

⁵⁹² David O'Shea, "Bachelors and Doctors of Music: Music Degrees at the University of Dublin, 1612-1987" (Annual Plenary Conference of the Society for Musicology in Ireland, Department of Music, School of Creative Arts, Trinity College Dublin, Society for Musicology in Ireland, 2021).

⁵⁹³ Ackermann, *A History of the University of Oxford, Its Colleges, Halls and Public Buildings: In Two Volumes*, pl. VI.

Robert Prescott Stewart conducted his doctoral examination concert (Fig. 5.53).⁵⁹⁴

They were described as magnificent comprising a 'rich white figured damask silk gown lined and faced with crimson satin, the sleeves wide and open turned up with crimson satin; a double hood of white damask silk lined with crimson satin and a black velvet round cap.

Stewart, noted for using artworks to illustrate his lectures, might have been disappointed by his three-quarter length portrait painted by an unknown artist posthumously for the Choral Society possibly c.1896 (Fig. 4.24).⁵⁹⁵ While the rich cream damask and peony red silk are coherent with the pomp of his court dress, the drapery is poorly executed, the robes an inflated mass of dully rendered fabric. He wears the same outfit in a posthumous monument by Thomas Farrell (1827-1900) unveiled on Leinster Lawn in 1898, discussed below.

A superb set of MusD robes by an unknown maker, tentatively dated as late nineteenth century and preserved in the Provosts' House provide an impression of the splendour of Stewart's costume (Fig 5.54). Made of flowered ecru damask, the coat unusually fully lined and faced with peony red silk.⁵⁹⁶ The luxury of the garment is evident from fine workmanship, the high quality and volume of fabric. These may be robes seen in a picture of Provost Mahaffy, accompanying the Lord Mayor of London across the Front Square of TCD in 1912 (Fig. 2.5).⁵⁹⁷ The robe blown open by wind also display a coat fully lined, in keeping with the wearer's extravagant taste.

Cream brocade and pink silk sit however less well with contemporary male costume. In a Choral Society portrait of George Henry Phillips Hewson (1881-1972) by George Collie (1904-75), the sitter looks uncomfortable, his modest business suit and tie jarring with the

⁵⁹⁴ "University of Dublin: Performance of Acts for Degrees in Music," *Illustrated London News*, April 19, 1851, 314.

⁵⁹⁵ This picture is probably the TCD portrait of Stewart. A Committee meeting, November 28, 1895 of the DU Choral Society resolved that 'the memorial to Sir Robert Stewart, do take the form of a picture. This was carried unanimously'. DUCS Minute Books, 1891-1944, TCD/MUN/SOC/CHORAL/1/10, cited in Lisa Parker, "Robert Prescott Stewart (1825-1894): A Victorian Musician in Dublin" (PhD National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2009), 294, 310 (fn).

⁵⁹⁶ BCC 63 and 37 respectively.

⁵⁹⁷ The Lord Mayor was Sir Thomas Boor Crosby MD (1830 – 7 April 1916) a surgeon and visitor to the College for the Bicentenary Celebrations of the TCD Medical School, July 4 – 6, 1912 (see Fig. 6.9).

ornate doctoral robe and hood (Fig. 5.55). The robes appear thin and flimsy, the folds hanging limply across his legs.

Andrew Festing assuages modern male sensibility concerning floral silk in his portrait of Brian Patrick Boydell (1917-2000), 1982 (Fig. 5.56).⁵⁹⁸ Boydell, an eminent though modest composer and musicologist, eschewing ostentatious display opted to have the robes incorporated in the painting draped over the back of the chair on which he sits, a device the artist has used since.⁵⁹⁹ The portrait was one of the first commissions Festing completed having turned to professional portrait around 1981. The somewhat experimental pallet of browns, beige and ochres is less vivid than in his later works. As Festing's style developed his interpretation of costumes became more colourful and confident, as in J. V. Luce painted in 1999, some eighteen years later (Fig. 5.40).

Gold Standard: Doctors in Philosophy

Some institutions regard the PhD as a lower doctorate, reflected in their academic dress schemes.⁶⁰⁰ Cambridge PhDs wear a black masters' gown decorated with red facings as in the College portrait of Ernest Walton by Thomas Ryan (Fig. 5.7).⁶⁰¹ Dublin and Oxford, however accorded their PhDs more dignity, prescribing full festal scarlet with coloured silk facings. Following an older European tradition, US institutions at the time prescribed blue for philosophy degrees and Oxford followed suit adopting navy blue facings for its DPhil robes.⁶⁰² A small bust in the TCD collection by Herbert Washington Addison (1871–1939) shows Prof. James Brontë Gatenby (1892-1960) in scarlet and blue doctoral robes. Gatenby was the first recipient of an Oxford DPhil,

⁵⁹⁸ A close friend of the Boydell family, Festing had become acquainted with the sitter's wife Mary Boydell, a noted Irish glass expert, while he worked for Sotheby's.

⁵⁹⁹ Andrew Festing, interview by the author, November 10, 2023. A similar device is seen in an earlier portrait by Gillard, William (c.1812-1897). *Robert Perceval MD (1756-1839)*, 1844, oil on canvas, 127 x 102 cm. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin. HI/1844-1.

⁶⁰⁰ Groves, *Shaw's academical dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 11.

⁶⁰¹ See also the robes worn by Prof. Annette Joslyn Ruthven in Figure 4.48.

⁶⁰² North, Andrew James Peter. "The Development of the Academic Dress of the University of Oxford 1920–2012." *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 13 (2014), 125. Shaw gives the blue as Union Jack blue, BCC 218. Shaw, *Academical dress of British universities*, 43. Though a deeper shade than the blue used for the Dublin LittD, this is a potential source of confusion as the robes are of the same form.

conferred in March 1920.⁶⁰³ This portrait, painted in the same year is significant as it is undoubtedly one of the first, if not the first, to depict the robes of an Oxford doctor of philosophy. He was appointed Professor of Zoology in Dublin in 1921, bequeathing the work to the TCD in 1960.⁶⁰⁴

Marking a further departure from the Oxford dress tradition, Dublin opted for a deep golden yellow for its new doctors, the blue for philosophy having already been allocated for the LittD. Although instituted in 1920, PhD robes are not seen in a portrait until 2018 when they appear in a painting of Prof. Linda Hogan (1964-) by Miseon Lee (1959-) (Fig. 5.58). This was one of several commissioned to reinforce the representation of women in the College collection dress.⁶⁰⁵ Hogan, was awarded her PhD in 1993, later becoming Professor of Ecumenics in the School of Religion.

The portrait was done from photographs taken in the West Theatre Conference Room. In the background is an abstract by Tony O'Malley (1913-2003) a family friend, which hung in Hogan's office as Vice-Provost from 2011 to 2016.⁶⁰⁶ The sitter is portrayed gazing at the viewer with enquiring eyes, firm yet approachable, serene yet perched on the edge of her chair she conveys a controlled energy, ready to move to action. Reputed for her fine sense of dress, Hogan chose to be presented formally in black and white 'elegant, minimalist with a hint of interest'.⁶⁰⁷ She wears a loose-fitting white pleated blouse with deeply cut collar softened by a large bow and full cuffed sleeves. Her short black skirt is delicately finished at the knee with a fringe of fine black lace. Discreetly tucked over the back of her chair is a PhD robe, its attenuated colours almost

⁶⁰³ University of Oxford, *A celebration of the DPhil Centenary 1919 – 2019*, 2019, accessed August 26, 2025, www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/TheFirst50DPhilScholars.pdf.

⁶⁰⁴ A pen portrait of described Gatenby 'Well over six feet in height, he is one of the few men who can wear the gaudy academic robes without appearing self-conscious or ridiculous.' In a testy letter to the *Miscellany*, he deplored two students 'had interfered with my gowns' during a prank break-in at the Zoology Department, sniffily remarking of the affair that that 'this is not my university'. "Irishman's Diary: Trinity Professor," *Irish Times* (Dublin), January 15 1929, 4. James Brontë Gatenby, "Correspondence: Zoology School," *TCD: A College Miscellany*, February 7, 1929, 115. He seems not to have been popular with departmental colleagues, and his portrait was consigned to a cupboard and unfortunately since sustained neglectful damage.

⁶⁰⁵ Prendergast, *Record of the Main Speeches given by the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, Dr Patrick J Prendergast in the Academic Year 2017 – 2018. Linda Hogan Portrait Unveiling*, 403. Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," 109.

⁶⁰⁶ O'Malley, Tony (1913-2003), *Fishtones & Fish – Autumn Fish Coast*, 1984, oil on board, 168 x 21 cm. Trinity College, Dublin. TCD.ART.735. O'Malley was a family friend, like Hogan from Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

⁶⁰⁷ Prof. Linda Hogan, interview by the author, June 12, 2024.

indistinguishable from the velvet upholstery. The robe, by Armstrong & Oxford, was acquired by Hogan on appointment to her professorial chair in 2006.

Hogan asserts the importance of academic dress in formal settings of Commencement and Board meetings as an 'interruption to the routine, a reminder of the importance of what we are doing and deserving of our attention'. The diffident representation of the dress nevertheless reflects a debate on the interest and visual prominence accorded to the formal costume in the portrait. In considering how academic costume would be incorporated in the painting, the artist and sitter believed it needed to symbolize the academic context and, in that way, the office. A simple black gown was rejected as outmoded, and full festal dress was judged to be too stiff and official. Taking a cue from Walton's portrait of Hegarty the robe appears as a prop, though in this case barely perceptible. The vivid colours of robes would also have perhaps sat uncomfortably with the artist's muted pallet. Conceived as an official portrait, the work, according to Hogan evolved in the making, becoming 'a journey from conveying the position to conveying the individual', focussing on the who, not what. In the end, the portrait has an elegant charm, saying more about the individual than the institution.

In contrast there is no sartorial hesitation in the portrait of Prof. Shane Allwright PhD (1951-) by James Hanley, painted in 2020 as part of the same initiative to honour prominent College women and funded by philanthropy (Fig. 5.59).⁶⁰⁸ Allwright earned her PhD in 1996 and served as professor in the School of Medicine, Registrar from 2011 to 2016 and Pro-Chancellor from 2020.

The portrait was made from photographs and sketches over two or three sittings, with the trademark graphic, sculptural quality which attracted the sitter to this artist.⁶⁰⁹ Allwright is portrayed three quarter-length sitting, turned facing the viewer her hands crossed clasping her spectacles across her lap. She is dressed in deep scarlet and rich

⁶⁰⁸ Giltrap, "Art of the new - keeping it contemporary," 109.

⁶⁰⁹ Prof. Shane Allwright, interview by the author, January 16, 2024.

cream yellow academic robes, over a short simple pleated black dress, her crossed knees peeping out to the left.⁶¹⁰ Her gaze is warm, sympathetic and thoughtful.

According to Hanley, the sitter in official portraits occupies their robes of office, while the face conveys their persona.⁶¹¹ At Dublin, the Registrar is a College and University appointment responsible for the ceremonial life of the institution including overseeing commencements. In this unashamedly official portrait, Allwright chose to be memorialized in the uniform worn while carrying out her duties. For her, the costume is ambassadorial, integral to the role representing both her official position and personal scholarly achievement. Her glasses gesture to the skills required of a Registrar, who must be both visionary and meticulous with detail.

For Hanley, who admits to being greatly influenced by the precision and graphism of the work of Edward McGuire, all figurative painting is abstract, especially the drapery. Decided early on, the robes are vital to the composition, the hang and fall of the folds painted with straight edges 'mitigate against the live'. For Allwright, Hanley sought a pose not seen in other of the College portraits. Here, he draws inspiration from an Italianate portrait painted in 1922 by Giuseppe Bravi (1863-1936) of Fr Elias Magennis (1868-1937) in the robes of the Carmelite Order in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Aungier Street, Dublin (Fig. 5.60).⁶¹² In it, the folds of the priest's cream capuche (hood) and mantle are deftly arranged, flowing from the body and cascading around the chair, the billowing light drapery emphasised by deep brown of the tunic and the dark background. The carefully lit yellows of the robe in the Allwright painting, set against a profoundly deep green background communicate a similar vibrant, monumental quality. Negative space is also integral to the planning. The Allwright portrait is the opposite of Hanley's portrait of Kenneth Blackmore, his dark master's

⁶¹⁰ Made by Armstrong & Oxford (*fl.*1946-) and borrowed by the wearer when required from the Academic Registry, Trinity College, Dublin.

⁶¹¹ James Hanley, interview by the author, January 22, 2024.

⁶¹² James Hanley, social media message to author, February 29, 2024.

gown in stark contrast with the bright yellow backdrop lending the painting energy and vitality (Fig. 5.37).

The portrait of Prof. Brian McMurphy by Zsolt Basti takes a compromise approach to incorporating academic dress (Fig. 5.61). The robes are not worn but are displayed prominently as a prop draped beside the subject. Painted in landscape format it shows McMurphy seated on a brown leather sofa, his direct gaze projecting warmth and approachability, the finely worked hands conveying his advanced years. He wears the uniform of a mid-twentieth century academic - fawn trousers and a soft-cut, grey linen jacket and blue shirt. His deep-blue Trinity 400 tie recalls his pivotal role in realizing the TCD quatercentenary celebrations in 1992. He rests his left hand on the scarlet and yellow of the first Dublin PhD robe, draped over the sofa to his side.

McMurphy who serves as Registrar was a much-loved academic and administrator, known for fostering learning and young people, and appropriately Basti was commissioned for the work an emerging Irish-based artist (Fig. 5.62). Sittings, limited to one photographic session owing to McMurphy's advanced age, shows the interior of the College Alumni Room, with Basil Blackshaw's (1932-2016), *Interior (1959-60)*, hanging in the background.⁶¹³ McMurphy had been instrumental in creating the Alumni space as a facility for graduates and the setting selected by the sitter to echo the theme of the workplace. This composition was inspired by another College portrait, experimental physicist J Michael Coey (1945-) painted by Cary Clarke RHA (1936-) surrounded by the accoutrements of his laboratory.⁶¹⁴

Painted at the same level as the viewer with reduced negative space, the artist achieves intimacy and connection. Basti avoids stiffness by painting directly on linen canvas the outlines un-sketched, together with his trademark dribbling trails of paint. Although taking up almost a third of the surface, the robes are represented smaller than in reality

⁶¹³ Dr Sara McMurphy, interview by the author, December 8, 2023. Zsolt Básti interview by the author, November 14, 2023.

⁶¹⁴ Blackshaw, Basil (1932-2016), *Interior (1959-60)*, 1960, oil on canvas, 75 x 61 cm, Trinity College, Dublin. Clarke, Cary RHA (1936-), *Portrait of Professor J Michael D Coey FRS (1945-)*, 2017, oil on canvas, Trinity College, Dublin.

to avoid overwhelming the sitter. Unfinished towards the edges, the robe becomes more detailed toward the centre of the portrait, the brush marks drawing attention to the subject's face, which was painted last. The scarlet cloth is thinly painted in cadmium red with deeper shades picking out the gathers, while the soft gold of the silk facings is represented in shades of Naples yellow. The depth of the folds of the satin facings is achieved by the artist working wet on wet with brush strokes of yellows of varying intensity painted over a white background. The weight and heft of the robe is evident from the silhouette of yoke and shoulder of red cloth leaning stiffly, almost human in form, against the back of the sofa.

The robes depicted were those made for the first Dublin PhD was conferred at summer Commencements, June 27, 1924, on Francis William Rogers Brambell (1901–70) (Figs 5.63, 5.64).⁶¹⁵ Now in the Provost's House robe collection, they were made by Brambell's mother, Amelia Jane Mary Brambell née Rogers (1869-1951), who is said to have proposed the colours to the College.⁶¹⁶ The colour scheme was however well trailed. "Gurujee" in a whimsical piece for the Miscellany published a year earlier opined that, given his pick of Dublin doctoral robes, 'I am inclined to prefer the Scarlet and Yellow of Philosophy, and besides no one has yet become a Doctor of Philosophy in this University. This then shall be my choice. In order to be entitled to wear scarlet and yellow it is necessary to indulge in Research'.⁶¹⁷

The gown and hood are of heavy scarlet cloth with rich yellow-gold ribbed silk facings and hood linings (Figs 5.63, 5.64). The scarlet is post-office red and the yellow approaches straw or gold (Fig. 1.14).⁶¹⁸ In 1966 Bryson recommended a more vivid

⁶¹⁵ To Francis William Rogers Brambell (1901–70), BA (1922), MSc (1923), PhD (1924), ScD (1966 *h.c.*), CBE for his research into cellular biology, overseen by Prof. James Brontë Gatenby in the Department of Zoology. Trinity College Dublin, *Dublin University Calendar*, 1924-25. Oakley, C. L. "Francis William Rogers Brambell. 1901-1970." *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 19 (1973): 129-71.

⁶¹⁶ Oakley, "Francis William Rogers Brambell. 1901-1970", 131. The robes carry reliable provenance. They were inherited by Francis Brambell's daughter, Anne Elizabeth Rogers Denard (1928-2008), Dean of Women Students (1959-1972), who passed to the care of Prof. Brian McMurry on the understanding that the gown would belong equally to his and the Denard families. McMurry wore the robes for his PhD conferring in 1956 and regularly as Dean of Graduate Studies (1967-73), as Registrar (1989). On completion of the portrait in 2023 the robes were donated by McMurry to the College, with the agreement of Anne Denard's husband, Prof. Vincent Denard (1923-2025). Dr Sara McMurry, interviews by the author, December 8, 2023; January 15, 2024, and e-mail messages to author, April 11 and 12, 2024.

⁶¹⁷ "Gurujee" was the pen name of J. C. Forrester. Gurujee, "Crime and Punishment."

⁶¹⁸ BCC 209, 51 and 114 respectively.

lemon, but a more insipid yellow, closer to primrose is now used for the Dublin PhD and MPhil.⁶¹⁹

McMurry specifically wished to be shown not wearing the robe for his portrait.

Choosing to be portrayed with the historical gown of his first earned doctorate resting beside him, he conveys academic continuity and the sense of 'being part of something bigger'.⁶²⁰ The careful curation of these robes passing between generations of academic families exemplifies Schneider's observation that objects assume their significance via their history, provenance and the persons associated with them.⁶²¹ Thus, the robe in this portrait takes on its own persona, with its own story to tell.

Academic dress in Dublin monuments and portrait sculptures

Although elaborate drapery has largely disappeared from modern public sculpture, academic dress appears with unexpected frequency in memorials and monuments in Dublin public spaces, particularly in the nineteenth century. An inventory of Dublin portrait statues is presented by Dixon, while Crookshank and Webb catalogue memorials and statues in TCD.⁶²² Compared with paintings these portraits give the costume historian the advantage of the third dimension. Viewed from all sides, the volume of the costume with its folds, seams, gathers, ornamentation and even fabric can be accessed.

In these monuments, academic dress substitutes for the trappings of royalty to communicate prestige, power and learning. Robes are employed to convey the status and grandeur of the establishment, their dress emulating the togas and mantles of earlier authorities. Academic dress also provided nineteenth century Irish sculptors a convenient device to represent knowledge and learning as the foundations for emerging statehood. The bronze figures in eternal procession around the drum in base of the monument to Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) by John Henry Foley (1818-74) symbolize national aspirations built on a panoply of metiers, personified by the tools and costumes of their

⁶¹⁹ Andrew J.C. Hogg, "MPhil. Trinity College, Dublin." *Burton Society Hood of the Month*. January 3, 2024. <https://burton.org.uk/hood-of-month-archive>.

⁶²⁰ McMurry was awarded his PhD in 1956. He also earned a Dublin ScD, conferred in 1977.

⁶²¹ Schneider, "Cloth and Clothing," 204.

⁶²² Dixon, "Dublin Portrait Statues." Crookshank et al., *Paintings and sculptures in Trinity College Dublin*.

trades (Fig. 5.65).⁶²³ The drapery contributes to the movement of the figures in the frieze, conveying perpetual progress. An academic in doctoral robes and lawyer in wig and gown confer with a figure in the robes clasping a square cap, the distinctive large buttons and lace indicating that this is a President of the RCPI.⁶²⁴

A similar frieze memorializing nation building adorns the base of the monument to Cardinal Paul Cullen (1803-1878), by Thomas Farrell, 1881 in St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin. Students in gowns allude to Cullen's contribution to education, in particular the foundation of the Catholic University of Ireland in 1851 (Fig. 5.66).⁶²⁵

Foley was noted for the quality and detail of his drapery.⁶²⁶ His bronze memorial to brewer and philanthropist Benjamin Lee Guinness (1798–1868), 1875, in St Patrick's Cathedral shows a seated figure in court dress, and exquisitely executed academic robes, the front facings together with the inscription suggesting that it is his LLD (Fig. 5.67). The tightly gathered, high arched yoke on the back of the gown is typical of the period.

Guinness' pensive pose and dress communicate high-minded learning and benevolence.

Four commemorative sculptures by Foley and his pupil Albert Bruce-Joy RHA (1842-1924) in the Graves' Hall of RCPI show Past-Presidents in academic dress or robes of office. Unveiled in 1876 and 1877, two are portrayed standing, in the robes and hoods of Dublin MDs. Foley sculpted William Stokes (1804-87) a plaster maquette of which shows the artist's detailed preparation and attention to the tailoring of the robes and hood (Fig. 5.68).⁶²⁷ Bruce-Joy, who took over the commission for the statue of Robert James Graves

⁶²³ Foley, John Henry (1818-74). *Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847)*, 1865-1883, bronze on granite plinth and limestone base. O'Connell Street, Dublin.

⁶²⁴ One of fifty in the drum the RCPI figure is probably Sir Dominic Corrigan (1802-80) a prominent Trustee of the monument funding committee. Foley had sculpted Corrigan in 1868 for the Graves' Hall, RCPI. The figure in doctoral robes resembles Gerald Fitzgibbon (1837-1909) by Albert Bruce-Joy (1842-1924) in Figure 5.67. The drum was probably completed before Foley's death in 1874. The monument had a long gestation owing to Foley's demise documented in: Dublin O'Connell Monument Committee and John O'Hanlon, *Report of the O'Connell monument committee*, J. Duffy and Co. (Dublin, 1888).

⁶²⁵ Farrell, Thomas (1827-1900). *Cardinal Paul Cullen (1803-78)*, 1881, marble. St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin.

⁶²⁶ Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 33.

⁶²⁷ The maquette reveals the drapery at back, concealed from view by the wall against which the statue itself is placed in the Groves Hall, RCPI.

(1796-1853) on Foley's death in 1874, shows the subject in Dublin doctoral gown and hood sculpted in superb detail (Fig. 5.69).⁶²⁸

Also, by Bruce-Joy is Gerald Fitzgibbon (1837-1909) sculpted sometime after 1912 portraying the subject in doctoral robes, recorded on the plinth as an LLD (Fig. 5.70). Bruce-Joy's drapery is realistic, arguably more successful than his master's. On the Fitzgibbon monument, the sleeve facings are clearly defined, the skilful realism of crumpled taffeta texture of the front facings rendered in white marble recalling the contemporaneous LLD gown made for the Duke of Connaught in 1903 (Fig. 5.22). Bruce-Joy delicately captures the seams joining silk facings and coat, the binding on the hood and facings and harnesses the lustre of the marble to enhance the effect of silk.

Farrell's posthumous memorial to Robert Prescott Stewart in the robes of a Dublin MusD was unveiled on Leinster Lawn in March 1898 following a call for public subscriptions (Fig. 5.71).⁶²⁹ A patrician Prescott is carved wearing the full-length robe and distinctive hood with square cut and long liripipe of a Dublin doctor over court dress, echoing the Choral Society portrait, also executed posthumously (Fig. 4.24). Compared with Farrell's delicate execution of the drapery on Cullen monument, destined for the interior, the robes in this public memorial are blocky and angular. They project Victorian authority and solidity, nevertheless the robes hang naturally, the folds flowing toga-like from the body.

In contrast, statues within the confines of the College show academic sitters more simply clad, at work, avoiding the pomp of their civic counterparts. A marble high-relief funerary monument in the Old Library, TCD by John Hogan (1800-58), 1845, shows John Brinkley DD (1763-1835), Bishop and Professor of Astronomy seated, globe behind his chair, lectern and telescope in front.⁶³⁰ Hogan excelled in his realism of his drapery.⁶³¹ In this

⁶²⁸ Foley, John Henry (1818-74). *William Stokes MD (1804-87)*, 1876, marble. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin.

⁶²⁹ Dixon, "Dublin Portrait Statues," 66.

⁶³⁰ Hogan, John (1800-58). *Rev John Brinkley (1763-1835)*, 1845, marble high-relief monument. Trinity College, Dublin.

⁶³¹ John Turpin, *John Hogan: Irish neoclassical sculptor in Rome 1800-1858: a biography and catalogue raisonné* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), 76, 134-35.

representation Brinkley is portrayed at work, appropriately wearing a doctoral undress or master's gown.⁶³²

A sculpture of George Salmon by John Hughes (1865-1941), 1911, in Library Square shows the Provost also in a master's gown, the everyday workwear of a Victorian academic (Fig. 5.72). The monument was executed posthumously from photographs, and the head has a crude Magwitch-like quality at odds with the authority displayed in his portrait by Sarah Purser (Fig. 5.14). The drapery is maladroit, loosely interpreted and inaccurate, notably the boot of the gown.⁶³³

Also in Library Square is historian William Hartpole Lecky, (1838–1903) portrayed in bronze by William Gascombe John (1838-1903), 1906 (Fig. 5.73). The subject is seated crossed legged, similar to Foley's Guinness monument. Modest and indifferent to what he called the 'feathers of life', Lecky is represented with his academic gown discretely tucked over the arm of the chair and so a precedent for others such as Boydell and Hogan.

Freed of the straitjacket of written policy the TCD portrait collection has evolved organically, albeit at a conservative pace. In a collection celebrating Irish artists, often with international origins, the emphasis is on a diversity of artistic styles, colour and materials.⁶³⁴ Academic dress, sometimes imaginatively represented, narrates the complex interplay of educational trends, institutional politics, prevailing fashion and individual tastes. As a result, temporal and spatial patterns founded on dress can be discerned across the collection as a whole.

⁶³² Possibly the first representation of modern master's robe in the TCD collection.

⁶³³ Hughes was probably 'was a finer modeller than carver.' Crookshank, "A portrait of Irish medicine," 33.

⁶³⁴ Catherine Giltrap, Head of University Art Collections and College Curator, TCD interview by the author, September 5, 2024.

Chapter 6. Ceremony and Pageant: activating academic dress

Introduction

The showy spectacle or parade has an enduring significance in human society as a means of expressing group identity and common purpose, binding together national, community and religious affiliations. Dress and identity are inseparable to this, reflecting social position, allegiances and echoing dominant cultural forces of the day.⁶³⁵ The activation of formal robes, essentially our human reaction to the garment, is via the etiquettes observed and ritual functions they fulfil. This transformation from object to occasion comes about through a range of complex and subtle interactions ranging from costume design (even before scissors meets cloth), the quality of the craftsmanship, the *mise en scène* and dignity of ceremonial, to the personality and bearing of the wearer.

Edward Muir has examined ritual in early modern Europe, in the context of church and civil society.⁶³⁶ Though defying simple definition, Muir concludes that ritual is a formalized, repetitive, and collective performance that transforms ordinary actions into emotionally charged experiences through precise, enactment. Central to ritual is emotional evocation, not just repetition. Its power relies on sensory engagement, sight, sound, and touch to evoke feelings beyond language. Rituals create social cohesion, express shared beliefs, and function both as models (guiding behaviour) and mirrors (reflecting society), though their meaning remains inherently ambiguous to many of the participants. They structure conduct, communicate identity, and construct social reality. During rites of passage (as during university commencements), the ritual marks transitions through stages of separation, liminality, and finally incorporation, taking place at specific times and in identifiable spaces.

Academic rituals and ceremonial can also be viewed through the lens of anthropology. Kathleen Manning examined the rituals, rites of passage, secular ceremonies, cultural performances and traditions in higher education, based on anthropological theory and

⁶³⁵ Ghani, De Guise, and Jaffer, *Neither East Nor West: The Lafayette Collection : Asia in the Age of Monochrome*, 26.

⁶³⁶ Muir, *Ritual in early modern Europe*.

empirical fieldwork.⁶³⁷ She argues that these foundations of social anthropology can be identified in the daily experience of North American universities. Magolda observed that rituals in higher education are seldom scrutinized but reveal the social and cultural values of the institution and the participants.⁶³⁸ In the end they are ‘political acts that communicate expectations and norms for behaviour and performance (that is, transmit culture)’. For him, a ritual is a formalized symbolic performance, rather than linguistic, with a repeatable structure, involving symbols or visual metaphors, staged in a recognizable and expected form, integrating staging, site, physical layout, script, dress and costume.⁶³⁹

Academic dress codes, both informal and formal, help define institutional culture, membership and place within the organization, and mark scholarship. As acts of investiture, ‘being dressed in or presented with official robes, attire, or insignia’, the notion of costume is implicit in graduation ceremonies.⁶⁴⁰ *Decoding Dress*, an exhibition, examined the cultural symbolism of Royal attire and the role of dress in defining identity and creating occasion.⁶⁴¹ Court, ceremony, work, politics, rites of passage and festal events were identified as ritual-laden settings, each with explicit and implicit codes of dress and expectations - all conditions which can be found in the university setting.

Much of the literature on the role of academic dress in ceremonial emanates from North America. New world scholars were preoccupied with connecting their communities to an older, global heritage of academia reaffirming their commitment to the ideals and values of scholarship and education, although graduation ceremonies for kindergartens may stretch the point. Costume and associated rituals were seen to reinforce social connections via a shared symbolic heritage and allow younger institutions to customise their identity while connecting them to enduring traditions of the ancient European

⁶³⁷ Manning, *Rituals, ceremonies, and cultural meaning in higher education*.

⁶³⁸ Peter M Magolda, "Review: Rituals, ceremonies, and cultural meaning in higher education by Kathleen Manning," (2002), 544.

⁶³⁹ Peter Mark Magolda, "Saying good-bye: An anthropological examination of a commencement ritual," *Journal of College Student Development* 44, no. 6 (2003), 779.

⁶⁴⁰ OED.

⁶⁴¹ "Dress Codes: Decoding the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection", Kensington Palace, 13 March–November 30, 2025. Royal Historical Places, London.

universities. In the early twentieth century US institutions recognized the value of ritual and dress in building solidarity in a system where collegiate governance was less developed.⁶⁴² In this context, university commencements became occasions of spectacle, recruiting traditional ceremonial and academic dress to impress and excite.⁶⁴³ In an ethnographic approach to how academic dress is mobilized in UK university ceremonial, Sandra Wearden concluded that although superficially alike, the attire worn at such ceremonies nevertheless symbolizes a complex interplay of custom and practice, rooted in history and adapted to contemporary educational contexts.⁶⁴⁴

The devices of costume and ceremony federate the institution through uniformity and give occasion to exhibit the next generation of professionals. They also fulfil a psychological need to have achievement acknowledged. By linking the individual to the earliest traditions of academic pursuit, academic dress and ritual foster the sentiment of belonging to an elite and, having crossed a membership (liminal) threshold, enter the world as graduates. Now a global phenomenon, commencement ceremonies are colourful moments of celebration reinforcing the emotional connections between the institution, its graduates and their families. They strengthen community, promote the engagement of alumni, and provide occasions to showcase the institution, winning friends and donor support.⁶⁴⁵

Anne Hollander, in her book *Seeing Through Clothes* asserts that in theatrical performances players must be convincingly clad, and as with drapery in portraits discussed in Chapter 1, the interplay of clothing with the body underpins the empathy between the actor and audience.⁶⁴⁶ On the other hand, in ritual and emblematic productions such as pageants the ‘principals...must wear appropriately significant garments, since the medium is visual and the theme ideal. The costumes *are* the drama,

⁶⁴² Rudolph, *The American college and university : a history*, 408-09.

⁶⁴³ Wilson, "Commencement at the Large University."

⁶⁴⁴ Sandra Wearden, "How Academic Dress Is Mobilized in Degree Ceremonies and to What Effect," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 15 (2015), 14-29.

⁶⁴⁵ Mary C Martin et al., "The importance of university traditions and rituals in building alumni brand communities and loyalty," *International Academy of Marketing Studies Journal* 19, no. 3 (2015), 93.

⁶⁴⁶ Hollander, *Seeing through clothes*, 237-38.

the characters are known by what they wear, and any accompanying words support the clothes rather than the other way around'. Translated to university ceremonial, and indeed commemorative portraiture, academic dress represents the status of the office and role in proceedings, independent of the person wearing them. Stylized gowns and robes which conceal the body emphasize this separation, and it is the symbolic values they convey that takes centre stage in the performance imaging of commencements. The perception of dignified setting, with newer universities turning to local cathedrals and civic buildings for graduation ceremonies, reinforces this transformation.

University ritual has historically played a formative role in fashioning the self-image and cementing the public profile of TCD.⁶⁴⁷ This section considers Dublin ceremony and pageantry through the principal players and the role of costume in bringing the performance to life. It examines the deployment of costumes in these secular rituals, how they are being read, the factors influencing the spirit and success of their activation in the academic setting. A distinction is made between public pageantry and inward facing university rituals, such as Commencements, where the participants are more intimately connected with the institution, though the interfaces can be fluid. The analysis is supplemented by interviews with senior members of College who have presided at these events, though a survey of the perspective of graduates was beyond the scope of this work.

Public Ceremony and Pageant

From its inception, TCD utilized academic pageantry and ceremonial processions as strategic instruments to consolidate its social identity and institutional prestige, and as overt demonstrations of political loyalties.

Robinson-Hammerstein viewed ceremonial in the first 100 years of the College's existence as a form of image-making, deliberately constructed to reinforce the profile of a new institution in the public mind as a place of order, intellectual enquiry and Protestant devotion civility.⁶⁴⁸ Academics processing in expression of loyalty to prevailing authority

⁶⁴⁷ Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa."

⁶⁴⁸ Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa." 239-256. McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952: an academic history*. 5.

became a common feature of College and civic life. Dress was an essential element to the success of this endeavour. On the march which preceded the first recorded commencements held at St Patrick's Cathedral on August 18, 1614. The Lord Primate, Provost, Fellows and Scholars processed from College through the City of Dublin to the Cathedral:

‘in a verie statlie order, for the lord primate and other ancient doctors, and also those that weare to proceede doctors, weare everie one attired in scarlet robes with their doctors hoods. Also the bachellors of Divinity, the masters and bachellers of the Arts, weare attired in other scollar like attyres as appertained, which made a very beautifull shewe to the sight of all men...’⁶⁴⁹

In 1646, Doctors and Masters proceeded to Dublin Castle ranked by seniority dressed formally in hoods and caps with Doctors in scarlet, to attend the conferring of an honorary degree on Thomas Butler, 6th Earl of Ossory (1634-80).⁶⁵⁰ These secular displays of dignified celebration and sociability aimed to cement cohesion in uncertain times and an opportunity to mingle academic, ecclesiastical and civic powers, the different faces of the same ultimate authority.⁶⁵¹

Royal visits in particular were impressive occasions, politically charged, extensively reported and illustrated in the press. The Senior Proctor described the procession to the installation of John Russell, Duke of Bedford (1710-71) as Chancellor, deferred to September 1768, as moving ‘in great solemnity from Regent House, the chamber over the gateway to the Hall...according to juniority... Every gentleman in the procession was habited in the robes of his Order and Degree’.⁶⁵²

An engraving by Robert Havell (*fl.* 1808-37) of the entry of George IV into Dublin on 17 Aug 1821, 1823, captures the splendour and pomp of such occasions. Jostling crowds

⁶⁴⁹ Lodge, *Desiderata curiosa Hibernica: or a select collection of state papers and historical tracts, illustrating the political systems of the chief governors and government of Ireland, during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., & Charles I.* [anon.], 317-18.

⁶⁵⁰ MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, 89.

⁶⁵¹ Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa," 244.

⁶⁵² Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 217-18.

cheer the King and the red robes of the Mayor and Aldermen of Dublin as they make their stately progression (Fig. 6.1). The carefully choreographed ceremonial programme records that the procession was to proceed from Dublin Castle to the Phoenix Park in strict order. The nobility and authorities were followed by the Provost, Fellows & Scholars of Trinity College then the sons of peers, the Chief Justices & Masters of the rolls and so on. The gentlemen and citizens of Dublin wore the costumes appropriate to their standing 'as regulated by themselves'.⁶⁵³ Here the King is the principal player, the role of the rest of the cast to display unity and loyalty to the Crown.⁶⁵⁴ Costume serves not only to identify the players and display their chosen allegiances but is integral to the sense of occasion, symbolic of precedence, power and succession.

The late Victorian - Edwardian period was arguably the zenith of academic splendour although 'cries for political freedom were often accompanied by railing against the dress of colonial oppressors. Nevertheless, the citizens of Dublin and TCD were not immune to the pomp and circumstance of Imperial Britain'.⁶⁵⁵ The period was marked by the glitter and pageantry of Royal visits by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1885, discussed above, later as King and Queen in 1903, the Tercentenary celebration of 1892 and the Bicentenary of the Medical School in 1912.

The Tercentenary celebrations between Tuesday July 5 and Friday July 8, 1892, brought together academics and establishment from across Europe and beyond at a high point of TCD's reputation for scholarship and achievement.⁶⁵⁶ Delegates from seventy-five universities and learned bodies and distinguished guests converged on the College for a week of public ceremonial, garden-parties, sports, banquets and balls. Festivities opened on July 5 with a procession of some 1200 people arrayed in academic robes or official dress from the Public Theatre to St Patrick's Cathedral for a service of commemoration.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵³ *Ceremonial to be observed at the public entry of King George IV into his City of Dublin, on Friday 17th August 1821* (Dublin: 1821). TCD/MUN/P/1/1492.

⁶⁵⁴ Mary Louise O'Donnell, "Erin's King: the politics and pageantry of George IV's visit to Ireland in 1821," *Georgian Papers Programme*, 2020, <https://georgianpapers.com/2021/10/18/erins-king-the-politics-and-pageantry-of-george-ivs-visit-to-ireland-in-1821/>.

⁶⁵⁵ Ghani, De Guise, and Jaffer, *Neither East Nor West: The Lafayette Collection : Asia in the Age of Monochrome*, 26.

⁶⁵⁶ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 335-40.

⁶⁵⁷ "Editorial Article 2," *Irish Times* (Dublin), July 8 1892, 4.

A special Commencements held on July 6, saw honorary degrees conferred on seventy-one celebrities of nineteenth-century western scholarship. The laureates included twenty-four and thirty-three of the newly instituted doctorates in science and literature respectively. Then another procession took place on July 7 from the College to Leinster Hall.

Intended to be noticed, the programme for the week was extensively trailed and reported in the press and recorded in College histories and souvenir publications.⁶⁵⁸ Appropriately, communications capitalized on the emerging technology of photography, and Dublin studios such as Lawrence, Chancellor and Lafayette competed to cover events. Under the banner *Art Photography in Dublin* Chancellor & Son advertised special facilities for sittings for photographs of distinguished guests, including special dressing rooms and a movable boudoir (Fig. 6.2). Two group portrait photographs taken by William Lawrence even merited an insert in the *Irish Times* (Fig 6.3).⁶⁵⁹ In these, guests and honorary graduates are shown ranged on the steps of Dining Hall, best side forward in a stunning array of academic regalia from across Europe (Figs 6.4, 6.5).

In the photograph of honorary graduates, the famous actor Henry Irving (1838-1908) poses centre in front the Dining Hall doors wearing the robes of a LittD, though not unusual for Dublin, proudly sporting a doctoral bonnet (Fig. 6.5).⁶⁶⁰ Following the conferring Irving received a riotous reception from excited undergraduates. A heroic illustration in *The Graphic* by Sidney Prior Hall (1842–1922) shows them chairing the actor across front square to the Dining Hall steps, where he made an impromptu address to the cheering crowds (Fig. 6.6).⁶⁶¹ Irving was later portrayed in a Dublin gown in a monument by Thomas Brock (1847-1922), 1910, now standing in front of the National Portrait Gallery, London.⁶⁶² By associating celebrity with the visual appeal of its academic

⁶⁵⁸ "Tercentenary of Trinity College, Dublin," *Morning Post* (Dublin), March 17 1892, 5. Edward Dowden, "Tercentenary of Trinity College, Dublin," *Illustrated London News*, July 9, 1892, 45. Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*; Trinity College Dublin, *Records of the Tercentenary Festival of the University of Dublin held 5th to 8th July, 1892* (Dublin: Hodges & Co, 1894). MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, appendix B; Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 216, 250-53; McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 335-39.

⁶⁵⁹ "Photographic Groups," *Irish Times* (Dublin), July 7 1892, 6.

⁶⁶⁰ Dublin LittD (1892), Cambridge DLitt (1898) and Glasgow LLD (1899).

⁶⁶¹ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 338.

⁶⁶² Brock, Thomas (1847-1922), *Henry Irving, Actor (1838-1905)*, 1910, bronze on limestone plinth, Charing Cross Road, London. The hood in Brock's statue resembles none of Irvine's three honorary doctorates. The

costume, the College burnished its image and reputation with a popular audience, a master stroke of nineteenth century public relations.

In one of the photographs however, a token black man in turban, Masters gown and hood stands reticently apart (Fig 6.5). Unlisted in the roll of honorary graduates, he is possibly Mir Alaud Ali (1832-1898), an Indian Muslim and Professor of Arabic (1861-98), a frequent presence and guide at official College events.⁶⁶³ While the photograph celebrates a forward-looking TCD at the nexus of nineteenth century European scholarship and scientific advance, the man standing shyly in the sidelines in clothes of lower standing, recalls the black figures in group portraits of eighteenth century, and a reminder of the College's colonial roots and attachment to imperial power.

The sweep and pageantry of the rich costumes and colourful fabrics worn by exotic visitors were central to the success of the celebrations.⁶⁶⁴ A romanticised illustration by French artist Godefroy Durand (1832-96) published by *The Graphic* on July 16, 1892, captures the pageantry (Fig. 6.7). In this tableau, prettily dressed young girls offer flowers to the assembled foreign professors in their unfamiliar *toges* and *toques* evoking fashionable medieval revivalism. But it was the students from Heidelberg who dazzled in green velvet jackets, white breeches, plumed hats high boots and swords.⁶⁶⁵ The diet seems however to have been too rich for certain in the nationalist press who described a central European Professor as 'a cross between a Robert Emmet bandsman and Count Arnheim from Balfe's Bohemian Girl'.

Celebrations marking the bicentenary the Medical School followed a similar template. Medical and political luminaries from across the Americas, Africa, Europe, Russia, and the Empire arrived in Dublin between July 4 and 6, 1912 for a lavish programme including a

Irvine Society believed the robe to be from Cambridge, but the sleeves are clearly Dublin pattern. Brock was principal assistant to Thomas Foley and worked on the O'Connell monument following Foley's death and so would have been familiar with Dublin costume (Chapter 6). O'Connell Monument Committee and O'Hanlon, *Report of the O'Connell monument committee*.

⁶⁶³ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*. 234-45 Gina Bagnulo, "Mir Aulad Ali: A Forgotten Trinity Figure," *University Times*, June 25, 2022, <https://universitytimes.ie/2022/06/mir-aulad-ali-a-forgotten-trinity-figure/>.

⁶⁶⁴ MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, 283.

⁶⁶⁵ McDowell and Webb, *Trinity College, Dublin, 1592-1952 : an academic history*, 338-39.

procession, receptions and a Mansion House banquet.⁶⁶⁶ The College used photography together with the visual appeal of the costumes to advantage. A layout in the *Irish Times* of photographs taken at the Garden Party captured an impressive panorama of celebrity and courtly dress redolent of medieval pageantry and entry parades (Fig. 6.8).⁶⁶⁷

An album in the College Archives contains splendid portrait photographs of eminent delegates, many sitting in the robes of doctors of medicine and science.⁶⁶⁸ A group portrait taken by a photographer from the North Strand shows Cecil Guinness 1st Earl of Iveagh, in the robes of Chancellor and Provost Traill in LLD robes seated on the Caput's chairs moved from the Public Theatre to the steps of the Dining Hall (Fig. 6.9). They are flanked by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas Boor Crosbie MD and the diminutive Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lorcan Sherlock both in civic robes (see also Figs 1.2, 2.5). The symbolism of secular ritual, town meeting gown, projecting the University as a loyal and purposeful institution, serving the best interests of society and itself, would not have been lost on the College founders, though they would have been astonished at its global reach 300 years later.

Though academics processing in the public place is now an uncommon sight, newspaper reports, diarists and society columns still comment on university costume, and the robes at College events imbued with colour and meaning continues to attract public attention.⁶⁶⁹

Trinity Week

Unique to Dublin, Trinity Week celebrates academic life and community, scholarly excellence, and the traditions of the College. Usually held towards the end of April, festal dress is worn during a carnival programme rooted in institutional continuity. The Announcement of Fellows and Scholars on Trinity Monday, designated to be the day of

⁶⁶⁶ "The Bicentenary Celebrations of the Medical School Trinity College Dublin," *The Lancet* 179, no. 4635 (June 29 1912), 1775-77. "The Bicentenary Celebrations of the Medical School Trinity College Dublin," *The Lancet* 180, no. 4637 (July 13 1912), 108-11.

⁶⁶⁷ "Trinity College Medical School - Celebration of the Bi-Centenary - Reception in the College," *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), July 13 1912, 5.

⁶⁶⁸ Bicentenary festival of the Medical School Trinity College, University of Dublin, July 4, 5 and 6, 1912, Portfolio of photographs. MUN/MED/35/3,5,7,10,12.

⁶⁶⁹ Such as "Around the World & Home" by Bluebird in the 1930s and the *Irish Times*' "Irishman's Diary" (now "An Irish Diary").

elections to Fellowship and Scholarship since Laud's statutes were promulgated in 1637. Conferring of new entitlements is proclaimed to the College community by announcement codified in the Statutes. The Provost makes the announcement from the steps of the Public Theatre, the authority of the Body Corporate symbolized by the presence of the Mace. The members of the Board gathered round wear academic dress conveying both academic imprimatur and institutional approbation. Alexander N. Jeffares (1920-2005), a TCD Scholar and accomplished artist turned literary academic, captured the theatre of the occasion with expectant crowds of onlookers, in an illustration for the *Miscellany* around 1945 (Fig. 6.10).⁶⁷⁰ Board Members traditionally appeared in black gowns, the business dress of a Board meeting, emphasising solemn formality.⁶⁷¹ However since the provostship of Noel Mitchell (1991-2001) they have worn full festal attire.

A Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving in the College Chapel and the Memorial Discourse emphasise the achievements of those gone before, on whose shoulders the College community stands. The Fellows' Garden Party, a sparkling event with doctors in scarlet, held in the grounds of the Provost's House, re-enacts a long standing TCD tradition of celebration and conviviality that Provost Andrews would have approved. Their costume adds colour and splendour to a joyous ritual occasion celebrating community, shared values of fellowship and academic excellence referring to foundation of the College (Fig. 6.11).⁶⁷²

Commencements

The ceremonies and rites of academic life are built around their own script and characters both front of house and behind the scenes. Although academic garb has seen less regular use in the daily College life, the secular ritual of graduating in cap and gown increasingly fulfils a human and social imperative for shared occasion and celebration. Though the

⁶⁷⁰ Webb, *T.C.D.*, 3.

⁶⁷¹ Bailey shows Provost Trail in an undress gown in a photography taken during Trinity Monday announcements c.1910. Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, facing page 4. The Board is similarly attired in business gowns in an illustrated news photograph c.1920 (unknown publication) of *Dr Bernard, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin (marked with a cross) announcing the result of Fellowship elections to a gathering of students*. Author's collection.

⁶⁷² See Kenneth Claude Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954* (Dublin: University Press, Trinity College, 1947), 37, for a description of proceedings in the 1920s, and Trinity College Dublin, "Welcome to Trinity Week."

first TCD commencements, recorded from soon after foundation, have been described in numerous College histories, there has been comparatively little research on the format scenography of the ceremony and its evolution since.⁶⁷³

William Watts advocating the significance of College rituals in his time as Provost, concluded that 'the continuity of a dignified ceremonial that has lasted for several centuries is still something to uphold...[and] formality is required when appointments to major office are made'.⁶⁷⁴ Summoning the traditions of mediaeval European universities, commencements are performances conducted in Latin retaining vestiges of a quasi-religious ritual.⁶⁷⁵

The first Dublin commencements were consciously modelled on the Cambridge ceremonies familiar to the founding Fellows. An account of proceedings for the admission to degrees of doctor in divinity at St Patrick's Cathedral on August 18, 1614 is given by William Farmer (*fl.* 1587-1614), a probable eyewitness to events.⁶⁷⁶ The ceremony was an adaptation of investitures of new teachers at the medieval University of Bologna, the notion of Commencement, or beginning, signifying the initiation into the company of scholars.⁶⁷⁷ An elaborate programme of discourse and disputation, designed to demonstrate institutional purpose and validate scholastic achievement, set the context for the rite of admission at the centre of formalities. Presided by the Archbishop of Armagh and witnessed by the Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, Doctors and members of the College, the act took place in five phases, in common with practice in universities across Europe in the Middle Ages.⁶⁷⁸ Having earlier proved their competence, the Archbishop 'sett them in his

⁶⁷³ Denis Caulfield Heron, *The Constitutional history of the University of Dublin; with some account of its present condition and suggestions for improvement* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1847), 30-31. Stubbs, *History of the University of Dublin, from its foundation to the end of the eighteenth century*, 17, 25, 34, 45-46, 404. MacNeile Dixon, *Trinity College, Dublin*, 13-15, 89-91. Mahaffy, *An epoch in Irish history*, 113-15. Herbert Wood, "An account of Commencements of August, 1614," *Hermathena* 23, no. 48 (1933), 139-43. Maxwell, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892*, 9, 19-20, 52, 94-95. Boran, "Perceptions of the role of Trinity College, Dublin from 1592-1641," 257-66. Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa," 239-55.

⁶⁷⁴ Watts, *William Watts, Provost Trinity College Dublin : a memoir*, 116-18.

⁶⁷⁵ University of Dublin, *Commencements programme*, June 1982.

⁶⁷⁶ Lodge, *Desiderata curiosa Hibernica: or a select collection of state papers and historical tracts, illustrating the political systems of the chief governors and government of Ireland, during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., & Charles I. [anon.]*, 1. 316-320. Herbert Wood, "An account of Commencements of August, 1614,"

⁶⁷⁷ Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa," 242, 252.

⁶⁷⁸ Described by Farmer and decrypted by Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa," 252.

chayre', symbolising admission. Next, he 'gave them square capps', a sign of academic status. Thirdly, 'he delivered them the Bible', in Latin and Greek, their source of wisdom and scholarship. He then 'put rings upon their fingers' symbolizing everlasting devotion to learning and teaching. Finally, 'he gave to each of them a kysse' as a sign of welcome and peace. All the elements of formalized symbolic performance and liminality are present, with clear religious dimensions in line with seventeenth century cultural norms.

A woodcut by Hans Weiditz (1495-c.1537) *A student receiving his master's degree*, 1522, probably at a university in Germany, gives a possible sense of the occasion at St Patrick's some eighty years later (Fig. 6.12). In it, the presiding official standing by a lectern touches the head of the candidate with a cap while placing a ring on the ring finger of his left hand.⁶⁷⁹ Elderly doctors and masters look on from either side of the aisle. They wear soft, squarish caps and ankle-length, open-fronted gowns with open sleeves, several with a kind of chaperon (German *Sendelbinde*), hanging from both shoulders down the front like a sling. The graduate wears a gown with a hood, the shoulder cape reaching halfway down the upper arms to the waist at the back, and a small cowl lying round the back of the neck.⁶⁸⁰ He wears sash over his right shoulder and under his left arm. This may be the chaperon worn as a master rather than a doctor, as a deacon would wear a stole in some Christian traditions.⁶⁸¹

The Weiditz print communicates the same presence 'of an ordered body corporate in distinctive academic dress' as described by Robinson-Hammerstein for the first Dublin ceremonies.⁶⁸² Dress materializes organizational structure and symbolizes common assent for incorporation of new members to the scholarly community. Although doctors wore scarlet in the procession to St Patrick's in 1614, costumes were not further mentioned. Nevertheless, the importance assigned to dress is clear from the considerable

⁶⁷⁹ The placing of a ring on the graduand's finger was a regular feature of doctoral graduations in the past and still is in several countries, notably Finland, Sweden and Portugal.

⁶⁸⁰ Description kindly provided by Alex Kerr FBS email to author, April 18, 2025.

⁶⁸¹ Mayo, *A history of ecclesiastical dress*, 40, 56, 127

⁶⁸² Robinson-Hammerstein, "Università in Europa," 242.

sums disbursed by Luke Chaloner for Masters and Sophisters gowns to be worn at Commencements on Shrove Tuesday, 1600-1 (Chapter 5).

The elements of ritual performance: the actors, order of events, Latin script prescribed by ancient Statute, costume and props are all present in an account of Commencements in a letter written in July 1816 from William S. Guinness (1795-1864) to his brother Benjamin (shown sculpted by Foley in Fig. 5.67).⁶⁸³ The Vice-Chancellor presided:

dressed in his Judicial robes, on his left hand the Provost in his complete Academic dress. At each side of the Vice-Chancellor and the Provost forming a half circle about them were arranged the Senior and Junior Fellows, the Masters and Scholars decorated with their appropriate robes, and all the badges of their respective degrees.

The ancient Proctor's book containing the original protocol for Commencements and the signatures of Senior and Junior Proctors in unbroken succession since 1625, validated proceedings, as now (Fig. 6.13). The ritual included signing of the register, swearing of oaths of allegiance and kneeling before the Vice-Chancellor for the laying-on of hands, though these latter have since been dispensed with (Fig. 2.6).

The conferring ceremony has on occasion been adapted for special circumstances, such as the conferring of doctorates in music on TCD Professor of Music, John Smith and Robert Prescott Stewart in April 1851. At the ceremony, held in the Dining Hall:

Professor [Smith]...was invested with the magnificent robe...The Lord Chief Justice next read an address to Dr. Stewart conductor to the University Choral Society and presented him with the academical dress of a Doctor of Music. Doctor Stewart replied, and the robe was placed upon him: it is similar in every respect to that of the Professor.

⁶⁸³ Watts, *William Watts, Provost Trinity College Dublin : a memoir*, Appendix 3, 207-09.

Those who took part in these interesting proceedings then formed a procession and walked to the theatre in full academics with hoods. On the procession arriving at the theatre the performance commenced.⁶⁸⁴

Smith had held the MusD degree since 1827, while Stewart had already attained the status of a musical celebrity in Dublin and the degree was to be awarded on the strength of an examination performance held after he received the robes.

Consequently, standard commencement protocols were not applicable; instead, the ceremony assumed the characteristics of a royal investiture, with ceremonial robes occupying a central role in the proceedings. Stewart's robes were later used by Alfred Manning as the model for the MusD robes made for Princess Alexandra in 1885 (Chapter 4).⁶⁸⁵

The scenography of Commencements seems to have stabilized to something approaching the current format from around the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁸⁶ Oldham summarized the respective roles of College and University in the validation and promulgation of degrees the 1890s.⁶⁸⁷ In brief, Commencements are meetings of the Senate of the University of Dublin comprising the Chancellor, Doctors and Masters of the University, convened for the purposes of conferring degrees on candidates previously validated by the College. Degrees must be conferred in the presence of the *Caput Senatus Academici* (the Caput), a sub-committee of the Senate comprising the Chancellor (or Pro-Chancellor), the Provost and Senior Master non-Regent, any of whom may veto a Grace, or proposal for a degree.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁴ "University of Dublin: Performance of Acts for Degrees in Music," *Illustrated London News*, April 19, 1851, 314. Smith's investiture on the same day as Stewart's conferring was probably engineered to avoid diplomatic incident.

⁶⁸⁵ Patterson, "Queen Alexandra: A Royal Doctor of Music," 10.

⁶⁸⁶ Possibly around the time of the confirmation of the Senate in 1857, though this needs further investigation.

⁶⁸⁷ Oldham, *Trinity College pictorial*. 60.

⁶⁸⁸ For example, unusual events at Commencements presided by Vice-Chancellor Hohn Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare in July 1793. An Act permitting Catholics to graduate was passed by Parliament on 1st June that year. Clare, against admittance of Catholics, argued that they had been admitted illegally as students before the passage of the Act. He attempted to prevent them from graduating by insisting they take the old form of the oath declaring against transubstantiation. The Senior Master-non-Regent however, stymied this by invoking his power, as a member of Caput, to prevent the awarding of any degree at that meeting of the University. Lord Clare withdrew his objection and proceedings continued. Heron, *The Constitutional history of the University of Dublin; with some account of its present condition and suggestions for improvement*, 92-93.

A contemporary illustration taken from the *Daily Graphic* in 1890 shows the Caput comprising Vice-Chancellor John Thomas Ball (1815-98), seated in glasses, flanked by Provost Salmon to his right and George Lambert Cathcart (-1927), presumably the Senior-Master non-Regent to his left (Fig. 6.14).⁶⁸⁹ The eighteenth century Mace (1707), the symbol of the authority of the University and that an official session in progress, stands behind. Academics in doctoral gowns look on seated on the right. At the centre, the Senior Proctor (as higher degrees are being conferred) with his back to the viewer supplicates on behalf of expectant candidates standing in voluminous gowns and hoods to his left. Lady supporters look on from the far left. This scene would be recognizable to the onlooker now, though as Peter Henry points out, perhaps more intimate than today's mass events, and with both men and women graduating.⁶⁹⁰

Historically the University has attempted to strike an appropriate balance between formality and celebration with student cheering and jesting jostling for attention with dull ritual.⁶⁹¹ Chaos and catcalls, sanctioned by custom was not uncommon in the nineteenth century. In the 1890s Mahaffey complained that Commencements had been so disorderly that he had been unable to keep minutes, and the Senior Master non-Regent not properly elected. In 1907 a student was brought before the Board for unruly and disruptive behaviour and harshly fined (£5). Commencements have also been occasions of political protest. In 1926, the University conferred a degree *h.c.* on W T Cosgrave, President of the new Free State. The ceremony was disrupted by four women including Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (1877-1946) who launched into the *Soldiers Song* as the Public Orator began his oration, but cheering students drowned them out and Cosgrave took no notice.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁹ "Notes from Ireland : Conferring of Degrees in the Examination Hall of Dublin University, Trinity Term." *The Daily Graphic* (London), May 14 1890, 4.

⁶⁹⁰ Peter Henry, "Old Trinity: Good-humoured rioting on degree day," *Trinity News* (Dublin), November 23 2010, <https://issuu.com/trinitynews/docs/tnissue4>.

⁶⁹¹ Bailey, *A history of Trinity College, Dublin, 1892-1954*, 170-71.

⁶⁹² Boyle, *Trinity College Dublin: the Provosts, 1592-1927*, 480. A leading nationalist politician and suffragist Sheehy-Skeffington was photographed in academic dress as graduate of the RUI during campaigns for votes for women. Puirseil, Niamh. "One Hundred Years of Fortitude: The Centenary of the Suffragettes' ..." *Irish Times* (Dublin), Feb 10 2018, E25.

Commencements are now more decorous occasions, following procedures prescribed by Statute and outlined in a leaflet known traditionally as the 'Buff Flyer' (Appendix 4).⁶⁹³ The procession to Commencements is led by a Porter carrying the Proctor's book, succeeded by doctors and honorary graduates about to be admitted (Fig. 6.15). They are followed by the Senior Proctor wearing a Bachelor's gown as prescribed by Statute, their black silk hood lined ermine worn cope-like. The Mace Bearer precedes the Caput. The Senior Master non-Regent, as the most senior Junior Fellow elected annually to represent the interests of graduates, wears the blue and black hood and gown of a Master in Arts. They are followed by the Provost in the robes of their highest degree. The Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor as the most senior office of the University comes last in opulent gold and black robes modelled on those of higher authority, either the former Lord Chancellor of Ireland or Speaker of the Irish House of Commons.⁶⁹⁴ Inside, ranged in strict precedence, the graduands clothed in the dress appropriate to their degrees await to be commenced. Adhering to the specifications first published in the 1960-1961 Calendar, candidates must appear in evening dress (women and clergymen excepted) wearing the hood and gown of the degree they have been is qualified to receive. Next candidates are introduced by the Proctors supplicating on their behalf using Latin formulae prescribed in the Statutes. Following the *placets* (assent) of the assembled Senate, they are admitted to their degrees by the Chancellor, teachers in academic robes proudly looking on.

As in courtly cultures discussed in Chapter 2, the corporate body is incarnated by the participants, each in the costume symbolic of their roles and standing. The Caput, in terms of dress, represent the three states of the University "Chancellor, Doctors and Masters", though the signals can be subtle. While the Chancellor represents the University, and the Senior Master non-Regent the Masters, the Provost as an officer of the College and usually a Doctor, represents both institutions. The dress worn by the platform party thus represents the imbricate nature of the University of Dublin and Trinity College

⁶⁹³ Trinity College, "The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College, Dublin, and of the University of Dublin (including updates to 22 May 2024)."

⁶⁹⁴ Andrew Hogg, "Costume and Practice: Evolution in Design and Use of the Chancellor's and Pro-Chancellor's Robes at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1800-2020)."

discussed in Chapter 3. Doctors in scarlet robes are present to share in their accomplishment as teachers and the success of their students.

As meetings of the Senate convened to confer degrees, Commencements are also a place of work. Recognizable uniforms identify the responsibilities of participants for the orderly conduct of business, both symbolic and in practice. The Proctors in Bachelor's gown, and Senior Master non-Regent in MA hood identify them with the factions they represent. The judicial robe of the Chancellor signifies their role as ultimate arbitrator in the proceedings. The Mace Bearer stands guard in the bicorn hat of military authority. Beyond the symbolic, the uniforms also have practical purpose. As Shane Allwright observed in Chapter 6 the robes of her PhD were her business dress as Registrar. The black gowns worn by the stewards identify their role in ensuring the orderly conduct of students unfamiliar with proceedings.

Commencements integrate staging, site, physical layout, costumes, script, dress and performance in an expected and oft-repeated format. Aptly staged in the Georgian elegance of the Public Theatre, the historic setting, together with the display of relics are integral to the performance. Monumental portraits of august graduates in recognizable academic costume validate events and remind graduands they are part of the continuum of scholarship. The imposing Mace and ancient Proctor's Book are visual signifiers reminding the assembly that they are re-enacting an ancient ceremony prescribed by long tradition and history. The Latin script, with bidding amens and adjournment prayer *in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* and academic costumes with their designs originating in medieval monasticism recall the origins of the College and its ceremonial rooted in seventeenth century religiosity. Now incomprehensible to most, the intoned Latin adds mysticism to the proceedings. As Hollander observed in the context of theatre the words support the clothes in a visual and idealized performance.⁶⁹⁵

Honorary degree ceremonies, with participants dressed in eye-catching robes remain a powerful and seductive implement of political influence and public relations, as in

⁶⁹⁵ Hollander, *Seeing through clothes*, 237-39.

ceremonies held by collective Irish universities in Dublin Castle for President John F Kennedy (1917-63) in 1963 and philanthropist Chuck Feeney (1931-2023) in 2012 (Figs. 6.16, 6.17).⁶⁹⁶ On these occasions the image and self-worth of the honourees, the authority of the institutions and government ministers in attendance are burnished by the ritual, clothing and historical setting.

Dress at Commencements – views from the dais

Interviews with past and current Pro-chancellors, summarized in Appendix 5, acknowledge the profound significance of Commencements at Dublin, emphasizing their role in celebrating achievement, honouring tradition, giving meaning and creating connection with the institution. For them the ceremony is secular ritual, having deeper personal significance to participants than theatre. The ceremony also marks a formal completion of the contract between College and the student. For one, a former Registrar, commencements are one of the most effective ways of winning support in the Irish community for the Trinity tradition of individual concern for each of its students.⁶⁹⁷

The symbolic attire worn by all participants, whether the platform party, the graduands, or their supporters, contribute the spectacle. It is an essential part of the ‘full panoply’ of this ritualistic tradition, adding to the mystique and solemnity of the occasion alongside the Latin script, music and other formal elements of the ceremony.⁶⁹⁸ The robes serve as a visual expression of respect, honouring achievement and acceptance into a community of scholarship. Wearing them imbues graduates with a sense of pride and connection to the institution, if only through the physical reaction to putting them on, making the wearer stand tall.

Commencements are above all a celebration, and the balance must be found between solemnity and joy. To achieve this the officiants must seek to create individual

⁶⁹⁶ "Anniversary of the conferring of an Honorary Degree on Charles Feeney," National University of Ireland, 2022, accessed April 16, 2025, <https://www.nui.ie/news/2022/Feeney.asp>. "Trip to Europe: Ireland, Dublin: President Kennedy receives honorary degrees from National University of Ireland and Trinity College, St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle" White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 1963, accessed June 10, 2025, https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/jfkwhp-1963-06-28-h#?image_identifier=JFKWHP-KN-C29360.

⁶⁹⁷ Sagarra, *Living with my century*, 262.

⁶⁹⁸ Prof. Eda Sagarra, Pro-Chancellor (1999-2008), interview with the author, Dublin, January 24, 2024.

connections, despite the unfamiliar setting and dress. Adaptations such as processing from the Public Theatre for the ritual photograph on steps of the Dining Hall concluding with the tossing of academic caps in the air make proceedings feel more relaxed and personal (Fig. 6.18). While the gown and hood may feel outmoded in modern life, or create perceptions of exclusion, in their proper context they add to the colour and authenticity of the formal university celebrations.

Rites of passage in all cultures, whether weddings, funerals or graduations have their own convention and expectations with respect to dress. The western tradition of graduating in cap and gown endures and has been appropriated globally as a recognition of scholarly achievement, institutional identity, and admission to community of peers. Though the codes and symbolism are not always understood, the oft-repeated ritual, played out in historic settings, with the unfamiliar costumes in rich colours and fabrics, for many worn once in a lifetime, convey occasion and activate emotion. Looked on by proud parents and supporters in their Sunday-best, the joyous tossing of academic caps on the Dining Halls steps celebrates scholarship and commencement on a new phase of life.

Discussion and Conclusions

Academic dress is laden with symbolism and invested with meaning for both wearer and viewer. As objects they resonate via the ways they are transformed and used by both wearer and the institution they represent. Owners have an emotional attachment to their robes, earned through sacrifice and endeavour. Scholarly achievement is rewarded, and progression recognized by the right to wear a particular costume. Beyond their initial practical use, these objects have been used to mark social distinction, venerate and shape ideas about the past, and in fashioning institutional identity and self-image. They can embody the names, life stories, memories, and histories of previous owners, enriching their significance. As a result, academic hoods and gowns are often carefully passed on both within families and between generations of scholars.

An integrated research approach, combining an understanding of the iconography of academic dress, the multiple ways it is represented and a study of the objects themselves, allows the purpose and evolving social attitudes to this form of dress and the values attributed to it to be decoded. Though historically less of a preoccupation than in Oxford and Cambridge, there has nevertheless been robust and evolving culture of costume at Dublin. Academic dress is a watermark, often unnoticed yet represented in a wide array of visual and textual sources through the fabric and collections of the College.

Dress and costume in the performance of university ritual has played a formative role in cementing the self-image and public profile of TCD since foundation. Eye-catching ceremonial and costumes, with doctors in scarlet in processions and grand civic occasion have served to remind authorities and the public of the utility and common purpose of educational pursuit in underpinning a stable and progressive society. Honorary degree ceremonies, with the attractive accoutrements of dress and colour provide opportunity not only to recognize career achievement but also to recruit support, influence and burnish institutional reputation.

In the rituals of University and College dress objectifies and materializes academic organization and governance, each player attired in the costume representing their

position in the institution and their role in the proceedings in hand. The signalling can be subtle. At Dublin for example, the fluid interface and distribution of power between University and College are arguably reflected in the custom and practice of academic dress worn by the Senior Officers of the two institutions. At Commencements long standing clothing protocols from the expensive ‘courtly’ robes of the Chancellor to the mass-produced rental gowns worn by graduates, academic dress is used to enhance the person and the settings in which it is displayed. For those presiding, Commencements are meaningful secular rituals that celebrate achievement, tradition, and connection. Symbolic attire and formal elements like Latin and music enhance its solemnity, fostering pride, respect, and a deep sense of institutional belonging among participants. The academic dress worn by participants and in the portraits of august predecessors guarding over events, serve to create connections with a noble past, convey institutional and scholastic continuity, validating of the achievements of the present. Academic dress thereby empowers, denotes prestige and position, engenders respect of others, reinforces self-worth and creates group identity and loyalty to the institution.

Academic pursuit marked by the notion of continuity and that scholastic achievement is underpinned by the work of predecessors, a continuum building ‘on the shoulders of giants.’ Dress, in addition to denoting academic status and individual achievement connects the wearer to their chosen discipline and *alma mater*. Thus, the iconography of scholarship pays homage to scholarly antecedents. Academic dress in particular, with its roots in medieval monasticism, associates the wearer with ancient traditions of western learning. It is perhaps no accident therefore that the display of these costumes reached a zenith during the late-Victorian-Edwardian period, with the burgeoning of medieval revivalism, and the creation of new universities in Ireland, the former British colonies and the United States.

Perhaps more than other forms of clothing, academic dress has been enlisted for a myriad of purposes beyond the initial practical needs of protection and warmth. Through much of its early history College authorities saw dress as a uniform, projecting rank and status, a

means of identification, discipline and control. Unsurprisingly, dress became a proxy for political cause and affiliation, initially puritan versus traditionalist, catholic vs protestant faction fighting, morphing by the mid-eighteenth century into Whigs versus Tories. Academic costume also provided access to the legislative processes and political networks for young elites, while nationalist tensions of the late eighteenth – early nineteenth century spilled over into sartorial controls on dress in student societies and assemblies. Such shifts in ‘sumptuary’ regulation appear to map closely onto key events at times of upheaval and heightened social tensions in Irish political history.

The emergence of an independent Ireland led to an identity crisis for TCD which had been founded as instrument of colonization. Codification of the Dublin academic dress regulations around this time may have been a response to uncertainty and change as student and authorities grasped at symbols and tradition as coping mechanisms. In any case, the standard system of academic dress, largely inherited from Oxford, had begun to diverge with the creation of new degrees at Dublin from the 1890s. The new State was nonetheless sensitive to the power and symbolism of dress, particularly judicial attire. Douglas Hyde as first President, appropriated academic dress to lend ceremonial dignity to his position and promote image of Ireland as a land of learning and respect for the law.

The system of academic dress that emerged in Ireland is a tangible reflection of the complex political and social evolution of higher education on the island. The RUI based its system of academic dress on TCD, which was inherited by its successor institutions NUI and QUB. The DNA of the Dublin academic dress was thus inserted into the systems of Irish university dress from inception. Epitoges, emanating from the Pontifical University of Maynooth and more characteristic of European Universities, are now particularly developed in Irish dress schemes compared to the UK. Indeed, Dublin now deploys epitoges for its post-graduate diplomas and thus the circle is complete.

Sartorial cultures evolve with time and circumstances. Gowns were obligatory for TCD students through to the 1950s and students, originally men, had an ambiguous relationship with official dress. Enthusiastically flaunted as a badge of achievement and

symbols of status, the gown was also rejected as a constraint sometimes defiantly shredded or weaponized in youthful acts of identity construction. College dons have used the robes of their degrees to project identity and personal ideologies, sometimes so pretentious as to become their own caricatures.

Women were generally more respectful concerning academic attire, as they took their place in higher education from the late 1800s. Although initially imposed to identify and control access, the gown and hood were nevertheless adopted with alacrity by women, as arguably gender-neutral symbols of hard-won rights to higher education. Though slow to be accepted by male students and viewed tentatively by women in wider society, prominent supporters such as the Princess Alexandra and the Duchess of Connaught promoted women's role in higher education by publishing their images in academic dress in the embryonic mass media. Pioneering Irish women educators and Steamboat ladies proudly wore their Dublin dress in striking portraits and photographs, asserting their leadership role in women's education and the suffrage movement.

Dress in portraiture, like the books, visual and textural quotations in the backdrops, reminds the viewer of the origins of scholarship and legitimises learning. University, and to some extent school, portrait collections have a public and a private purpose in celebrating institutional success and disciplinary scholarship. As with costume in military and legal portraits, academic dress displayed conveys collegiate identity and defines the space as institutional. Without it, the viewer is left with few signals to guide their reading of the works. Commissioned by intricate networks following unwritten codes and implicit understandings, spatial and temporal patterns nevertheless emerge, based on the costume depicted. In TCD monumental portraits in grand public spaces depict University officers encased in glorious robes, reflecting the potency of the office as much as the persona.

Dublin Provosts and senior administrators continue to acknowledge their scholarly roots by including academic dress in the portraits, even if only as props. In the more intimate collegiate spaces, cultural norms and etiquettes of academic costume and their representation become apparent. Where they appear in academic dress, sitters are almost

exclusively portrayed Dublin costume, marking institutional commitment and loyalty. By unwritten convention portraits are relocated on the death of the sitter as they move from living to collective memory. Departmental portraits celebrate academic achievement and international reputation and here sitters are often found in the robes of other institutions.

Decoding patterns in costume and their representation in portraiture enhances their value as 'social documents'. The TCD collection constitutes a visual record of trends in higher education and sartorial culture since the late eighteenth century. The hegemony of Doctors of Divinity is supplanted with the gradual rise in portraits depicting sitters in the robes of science and humanities from the late-nineteenth century. The PhD appears in twenty-first century portraits with the advent of the professional university administrator drawn from the ranks of researchers. The grandeur of medical doctors in academic regalia however remains ever present.

Collections also reveal trends in social attitudes to academic dress. Up to the mid-1900s portraits in the College collection were largely formulaic, painted by tried and trusted artists. Subjects are shown conventionally sitting or standing in their academic costume, though De László's innovative treatment of dress in portraits of Steamboat ladies in the 1920s appropriately broke the mould for these revolutionary women. The mid-twentieth century saw a marked decline in interest in academic dress and portraits of Irish academics from the 1960s and 70s show the sitters more often in business attire than academic dress or simply using their robes as props. More recent College commissions, awarded to a more diverse panel of Irish artists, display a renewed appreciation of academic costume. These portraits are more individual, the result of a dialogue encouraged between sitter and artist. Here, academic dress is employed for self-fashioning, incorporated in the compositions in greater variety of ways than in the past. In some the sitter proudly wears their trappings of office, others to one side, in the background or even none at all, reflecting the variety of relationships academic regalia.

These commissions also afford the portraitist the opportunity for self-expression, particularly appreciated by contemporary artists. The flowing robes and rich fabrics add

interest and allow the artist a rare opportunity to experiment and demonstrate their bravura in handling drapery.

For the art historian academic dress can reveal, through its design, cut and colour, and chronology, indicators of time, place and identity. These are important clues to help with the provenance and interpretation of a particular artwork and give insights into individuals, their self-perception, status within their profession and the institution.

Academic dress can be portrayed as costume, drapery or accoutrement laden with symbolic meaning. How it is incorporated in the composition, either worn in full pomp, discreetly hanging over the back of a chair, conveys the subject's attitude to their academic dress and achievements. The artist's interpretation of academic dress as object or costume, accoutrement or drapery thus communicates personal, institutional as well as societal purpose and achievement. Group portraits of academics curiously rare, perhaps reflecting the solitary nature of much scholarly pursuit or the internal politics in the selection of subjects and sitters. Collectively however, portraits reveal how the university and college commemorate and honour its own, both publicly and privately.

Threads of future work

Academic robes have multiple purposes as items of display, symbols of identity and as ritual objects which can be associated with individuals and shared collectively as personal, family and institutional souvenirs. Items of academic dress are also preserved as secular relics and memorabilia in national and institutional collections and archives.

Although TCD collections of art and silverware are carefully curated, historically significant robes existing in various locations across the College have been overlooked. While the conservation of dress as fragile objects is challenging, identifying a responsible entity, documenting holdings and enlisting relevant curatorial expertise to advise on their preservation would be logical first steps. The list in Appendix 2 includes historically significant robes held in various locations in TCD, though not comprehensive, while Appendix 6 gives an example of a cataloguing system for historically significant academic

robes in use at the University of Melbourne, though the degrees represented are not allocated a specific data field.⁶⁹⁹

Uncertainty over original colours intended, and the unregulated drift toward varying hues and lighter shades mediated by robemakers, can result in unfortunate visual outcomes, particularly the Dublin PhD and MPhil. Improved statutory definition of the academic colour scheme at TCD using objective colour standards may be desirable. Oxford University, for example has historically maintained a register of the colours and material of gowns and hoods for degrees of that University.⁷⁰⁰ Table 5 suggests a basis for TCD, using “type specimens” drawing on historically significant robes and using BCC colour standards. These colour definitions are however little known and outdated and more modern systems and technologies such as the pantone system could usefully be applied to define and communicate its schedule of degree colours for colour definition.⁷⁰¹

Whilst these aspects of academic costume as an accoutrement of ceremony can be addressed, the history and evolution of the Dublin graduation in the face of changing social context and values deserves more detailed attention. Although views of those presiding at such ceremonies have been solicited, the views of other participants, graduates, parents and events teams could be investigated, perhaps taking a sociological or anthropological approach to the topic.

Finally, portraits and collections in Irish schools are an a potentially fruitful area for further research. Though mentioned in passing in various school histories and memoirs, they are sparingly covered in the literature of Irish art history. A systematic analysis of these works, whether in academic dress or not, may yield insights into the role of teachers in creating the intellectual, cultural and emotional foundations on which higher level education and wider society depend.

⁶⁹⁹ "Historic Academic Gowns," University of Melbourne, 2025, accessed June 26, 2025, <https://archives.library.unimelb.edu.au/nodes/view/70006>.

⁷⁰⁰ Described in Andrew James Peter North, "The Development of the Academic Dress of the University of Oxford 1920–2012," *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 13 (2014), 111–14.

⁷⁰¹ e.g. "Schedule of Dress Colours in the Pantone Color Matching System®," University of Galagow, 2023, accessed July 17, 2025, <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/apg/policies/uniregs/regulations2023-24/introduction/academicdresscode/#scheduleofdresscoloursinthepantonecolormatchingsystem%C2%AE>.

Appendix 1: Contemporary Dublin Hoods and Gowns

This appendix presents a representative selection of contemporary Dublin academic hoods and gowns made by Revd Kenneth Crawford, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK.⁷⁰² Colour codes cited were those used by the official University Robemaker, Bryson Ltd, Church Lane, Dublin and quoted Shaw, George W. *Academical Dress of British Universities*. Cambridge: Heffer, 1966.

Undergraduate



Figure A1. Dublin undergraduate gown. Black polyester/wool cloth, with tassels. Maker's label, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK. Photographs courtesy of the robemaker, The Revd Kenneth Crawford.

⁷⁰² 18 Spen Road, West Park, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5BT.

Master's and Doctor's undress gown



Figure A2. Dublin Masters and Doctor's undress gown. Black polyester/wool cloth. Note distinctive crescent shape cut-out at base of boot sleeve. Maker's label, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK. Photographs courtesy of the robemaker, The Revd Kenneth Crawford.

Bachelor in Arts and Master's hoods - 1



a.



b.



c.

Figure A3. Dublin hoods and neckbands, all bound 1". a. BA, hood shell in black grosgrain, lined and bound white artificial fur. Neckband bound white grosgrain. b. MA, shell and neckband in black grosgrain, lined and bound dark blue (Empire blue 87) silk. c. MLitt, shell and neckband in white grosgrain, lined and bound dark blue (Empire Blue 87) silk. Maker's label, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK. Photographs courtesy of the robemaker, The Revd Kenneth Crawford.

Bachelor's and Master's hoods - 2



a.



b.



c.

Figure A4. Dublin hoods and neckbands all bound 1". a. MB, shell black polyester/wool cloth, lined and bound crimson silk. b. MTh, purple polyester/wool cloth, lined purple silk, bound black silk. c. MPhil, shell and neckband in white grosgrain, lined and bound yellow (Lemon 52) silk. Maker's label, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK. Photographs courtesy of the robemaker, The Revd Kenneth Crawford.

PhD Robes



Figure A5. Dublin PhD robes. Scarlet polyester/wool cloth, faced with yellow (Lemon 52) silk. Hood of the same. Maker's label, Robes of Distinction, Leeds, UK. Photographs courtesy of the robemaker, The Revd Kenneth Crawford and Dr Cillian Long, pictured.

Appendix 2: Historically Significant Dublin Academic Robes in Archives and other Collections

- Armstrong & Oxford (fl.1946-). *LittD robe belonging to Prof. Barbara Wright (1935-2019)*, 1995. Post office red cloth, faced with empire blue art satin silk with red and gold cord beading around yoke. Red cloth covered button with red and gold cord on yoke. Maker's label, Armstrong & Oxford. Robe is depicted in portrait of Prof. Barbara Wright (1935-2019) by Andrew Festing (1941-), 2005. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Armstrong & Oxford (fl.1946-). *Senior Master Non-Regent's gown and hood*. Gown, black Russell Cord with boot sleeves of TCD MA pattern with crescent cut-out. Hood, black coarsely ribbed silk, lined and bound empire blue ribbed silk. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Armstrong & Oxford (fl.1946-). *Senior Proctor's gown and hood*. Gown, black Russell cord with bell shaped sleeves of TCD BA pattern. Hood, black ribbed silk, lined bound with white rabbit fur and ermine tail powdering. Fur supplied by Barnardo at a cost of €480 per hood. 2025. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Armstrong & Oxford (fl.1946-). *Dublin (Trinity) MPhil Hood*. c.1980. Hood, black silk lined and bound primrose yellow silk. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WBS-199.
- Brambell, Amelia Jane Mary née Rogers (1869-1951). *First Dublin PhD robe and hood made for Prof. Francis Brambell (1901-70)*, 1924. Robe, fine post office red wool with straw/gold ribbed silk facings with scarlet wool strings, with scarlet covered button and string yoke. Hood of same materials lined and bound with yellow ribbed silk. No maker's label. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Bryson Ltd. (fl.1912-1981). *BA gown and hood belonging to Rev. Desmond Sinammon B.A. (1965)*. c.1965. Gown, black Russell Cord. Hood, black ribbed silk lined and bound with white fur, neckband bound 1" white silk. Maker's label, Bryson Ltd., 3 Church Lane, Dublin. College Chapel Collection, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Bryson Ltd. (fl.1912-1981). *Academic gowns and hood, worn by Professor Ernest Walton [M.A. 1934] of T.C.D., winner of the Nobel Prize in 1951*. MA gown Cambridge shape, black fabric finely pleated at back yoke and around shoulders; press stud fasteners down front edges, also one each on either side of neck; hanging sleeves with arm slits edged in black braid. Includes two long narrow pieces of red felted fabric which when attached by press fasteners a facings signify a PhD from the University of Cambridge. 'E.T.S. Walton' written in ink on label. Maker's label, Bryson Ltd., 3 Church Lane, Dublin, College Green. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. DT:1993.32.1-3.1, DT:1993.32.1-3.1.
- Bryson Ltd. (fl.1912-1981). *MA hood worn by Professor Ernest Walton [M.A. 1934] of T.C.D., winner of the Nobel Prize in 1951*. Black ribbed silk lined and bound with blue ribbed silk; braid loop attached to collar. Maker's label, Bryson Ltd., 3 Church Lane, Dublin, College Green. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. DT:1993.32.2
- Dallas & Sons. (fl.1868-). *BD hood belonging to Jack Shearer BD (1953), Dean of Belfast (1926-2001)*. c.1953. Black ribbed silk, lined and bound black fine ribbed silk. Maker's label, Dallas & Sons, Tailors & robemakers, 9 Angelsea St, Dublin. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. Dublin B.D. WBS-658 (f & b).

- Ede & Ravenscroft Ltd. (fl. 1689-). *Gown, hood and cap from academic dress of MD of Dublin University, belonging to Sir Charles Tomes LLD, FRCS in steel box. Part of: Sir Charles Tomes' LLD robes, London, England, 1909. 1901-1910. Silk, felt. Maker's label, Ede, Son & Ravenscroft Ltd. Sir Henry Wellcome's Museum Collection, London. A661304/1. Accessed, July 17, 2025. <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8236351/sir-charles-tomes-academic-dress-london-england-1901-1910-academic-robe>.*
- Iilnry, W (?). *LittD robe*. Late nineteenth - early twentieth century. Fine scarlet wool with sapphire blue ribbed silk facings. Maker's label, W. Iilnry, Examination Hall, Trinity College, Dublin. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Thompson (fl. 1846-1933). *Steamboat Ladies [BA] Gown*. 1904-1906. Black Russell Cord. Maker's label, Thompson, 8 Westmorland St, Dublin. Newnham College Archive, Cambridge. Accessed, July 17, 2025. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PH-NEWNHAM-GOWN/1>
- Thompson (fl.1846-1933). *ScD robe belonging to Prof. Louis Bouvier Smyth. c.1924*. Fine signal red wool with green beetle ribbed silk facings and scarlet woven wool strings. Maker's label, Thompson, 8 Westmorland St, Dublin. Collection Prof. Patrick Wyse-Jackson, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Thompson (fl.1846-1933). *Duke of Connaught's academic gown as honorary LLD of the Royal University of Ireland*. 1903. Robe, signal red superfine wool with dawn pink/cyclamen pink silk taffeta facings. Hood of same materials scarlet lined and bound rose silk. Square cap, black velvet, gold lace trim around skull cap, heavy gold braid tassel. Maker's label, A. & F. Thompson, 8 Westmorland Street, Dublin. Royal Collection, Windsor. 33842a, b, c.
- Thompson (fl.1846-1933). *MD robe. c.1920*. Fine scarlet wool with cherry satin silk facings. Maker's label, Thompson, 8 Westmorland St, Dublin. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Unknown. *Dublin (Trinity) BMus hood*. n.d. Hood. Cambridge blue ribbed silk lined and bound with white fur. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WBS-244.
- Unknown. *Dublin (Trinity) DD hood*. n.d. Hood, fine scarlet wool, lined black ribbed silk. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WPG-034 (1 & 2).
- Unknown. *Dublin (Trinity) DD robe*. n.d. Robe fine scarlet wool with black velvet facings. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WBS-738 (f & b).
- Unknown. *DD robe and hood belonging to Prof. Hugh Frederic Woodhouse DD (1912-2010), Regius Professor of Divinity (1963-1982). c.1950*. Robe of fine post office red cloth with black ribbed silk facings with red and gold cord beading at top of front facings and around yoke. Red cloth covered button with red and gold cord on yoke. No maker's label. Provost's House, Trinity College Dublin.
- Unknown. *Dublin (Trinity) MD or LLD robe. c.1870-1900*. Robe fine post office red wool originally faced claret silk, refaced neyron rose. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. MD WBS-875 (f & b).
- Unknown. *MusD robe and hood*. Late nineteenth - early twentieth century. Ecru flower patterned damask, the coat fully lined and faced with peony red silk. No maker's label. Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin.

Unknown. *ScD robe and hood belonging to Prof. Kenneth Claude Bailey Junior Dean & Registrar TCD*. c.1925, Robe, fine post office red wool with cedar green ribbed silk facings with scarlet wool strings, with scarlet covered button and string on yoke. Hood, fine post office red wool lined and bound with cedar green ribbed silk. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WBS-240 (f & b).

Unknown. *ScD robe belonging to Prof. William Wright*. c.1962. Robe of fine scarlet cloth with green silk facings with gold beading at top of front facings and around yoke. No maker's label, but probably made by Prof. Barbara Wright's dress maker (Prof. Jane Grimson, e-mail to author, December 7, 2023). Collection Prof. Jane Grimson, Trinity College, Dublin.

J. Wippell & Company (fl.1789-2024). *Academic Hood for Louise Gavan Duffy Honorary Degree [LLD] by the National University of Ireland*. 1948. Green ribbed silk lined and bound prune ribbed silk. Maker's label, J. Wipple & Co. Ltd, Exeter, London & Manchester. National Library of Ireland. Louise Gavan Duffy Papers, 1884-1982. MS 46,274/6.

J. Wippell & Company (fl.1789-2024). *Dublin (Trinity) DD hood*. n.d.. Hood, fine scarlet wool, lined and bound black velvet. Maker's label, J. Wipple & Co. Ltd, Exeter, London & Manchester, England. Burgon Society Archive, Bedford. WBS-407 (1 & 2).

J. Wippell & Company (fl.1789-2024). *DD robe*. n.d. robe fine scarlet wool with black velvet facings. Maker's label J. Wipple & Co. Ltd, Exeter in leather sewn upside down" during a period of circa 1965 - 1975 (the reason for this was when the gown was on a coat hook and the top half folded back the owner's name could be seen added to the label). Made for a wearer around 6'5" in height with chest over shirt was 43" but cut larger to be worn over a jacket or cassock. Maker's code 774463 on label inside front left facing, fabric number 6851, a heavy scarlet superfine pure wool cloth. The gown was the 4463rd made by the gown section of Wippell's, Buller Road, Exeter. c.July 1967. Label information Robin Richardson, former Managing Director, J. Wippell & Co., Exeter, e-mail to author, March 9, 2026. Provost's House, Trinity College Dublin.

Notes

Where provided colour qualifiers (e.g. post-office red), are those used by *The British Colour Council Dictionary of colour standards*. 1st ed. (version 2nd impression 1936). London: British Colour Council, 1934 and *The British Colour Council Dictionary of colour standards*. 2nd ed. London: British Colour Council, 1951.

Items in the Burgon Society Archive, Bedford may be consulted online. Accessed, August 24, 2025. <https://burgon.org.uk/archive/dublin>.

Appendix 3: Steamboat Ladies in Portraiture

Painted and photographic portraits of women appearing in Dublin academic dress having graduated *ad eundem gradum* between 1904-07 include:

Dugdale, Thomas Cantrell (1880-1952). *Miss Grace Fanner MA, Headmistress at Mayfield (1907-34)*. 1924. Oil on canvas. 92 x 70.5 cm. Wandsworth Collection, London. Accessed July 7, 2025. <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/miss-grace-fanner-ma-headmistress-at-mayfield-19071934-102768>

Elliott & Fry, published by J.J. Banks & Son (fl.1863-1962). *Miss L M Faithfull MA (1865-1952)*. 1907-19. Bromide postcard print. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG x196302. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

de László, Philip Alexius (1869-1937). *Frances Ralph Gray MA (1861-1935)*. 1922. Oil on canvas. 39 x 31 cm. St Paul's Girls School, London.

de László, Philip Alexius (1869-1937). *Dame Emily Penrose MA (1858-1942)*. 1907. Oil on canvas. 102 x 76 cm. Royal Holloway, University of London. P1605.

de László, Philip Alexius (1869-1937). *Sketch for 'Dame Emily Penrose MA (1858-1942)*. 1907. Oil on canvas board. 36 x 26 cm. Royal Holloway, University of London. P1683.

de László, Philip Alexius (1869-1937). *Bertha Phillpotts DBE, MA, LittD (1877-1932)*. 1921. Oil on canvas. 91 x 71 cm. Queen Mary, University of London. QMU004.

Eves, Reginald Grenville (1876-1941). *Dame Margaret Janson Tuke MA (1862-1947)*, 1914/15. Oil on canvas. 122 x 78 cm. Royal Holloway, University of London. POO20A.

Eves, Reginald Grenville (1876-1941). *Study for portrait of Dame Margaret Janson Tuke MA (1862-1947)*. 1914/15. Oil on canvas. 75.5 x 62.5 cm. Royal Holloway, University of London. POO19.

Unknown. *Portrait of Eugénie Sellers Strong LittD (1860-1943)*, n.d. photograph. Università di Bologna. British School at Rome. BSR Collection BS 1315. Accessed August 24, 2025. https://scienzaa2voci.unibo.it/gallery_view?id=883-sellers-strong-eugenie

Vandyk (fl.1881-1947). *Portrait of Lilian Charlotte Anne Knowles LLD (1870-1926)*. c.1921. Bromide print from glass negative with pencil drawing. 42 x 33 cm. London School of Economics, London.

Appendix 4: University of Dublin Commencements Protocol “Buff Flyer”⁷⁰³

THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN



CHANCELLOR

Mary Patricia McAleese

PRO-CHANCELLORS

Donnell Justin Patrick Deeny
Ignatius Thomas McGovern
Jane Barclay Grimson
Shane Patricia Ann Allwright
Stanley Swee Han Quek
George Bernard Francis Clarke

PROVOST

Linda Elizabeth Doyle

COMMENCEMENTS

⁷⁰³ University of Dublin, *Trinity Commencements Buff Flyer 2022-2023* (Dublin: Academic Registry, March 30, 2023). www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/graduation/assets/graduands/commencements-flyer.pdf.



Commencements ceremonies are meetings of the Senate of the University of Dublin for the purpose of conferring degrees; they are performances recalling the old traditions of European universities conducted in Latin.

'Commencements' is an ancient term which came to the University of Dublin through its founding scholars in the late 16th century, most of whom were graduates of Cambridge University. The term stems from more ancient practices in medieval universities where one of the main methods used to advance learning and understanding, especially in theology and philosophy, was disputation ('*disputatio*' in Latin), a formal debate of a proposed thesis known as the Question ('*quaestio*').

The role which members of the University could perform in such disputations depended on their degree status. Bachelors in Arts were permitted to counter an argument ('reply to the question'). Masters in Arts could propose a question – the Latin formula for their degree includes the words '*ad incipiendum*' which means 'to initiate'. Only Doctors or Professors could 'moderate', i.e. chair or preside over, the debate. The award of a degree signified a step from one level of responsibility to another in the disputation. The degree recipient commenced a higher role in the search for knowledge and understanding so we speak of the degree-giving ceremony as 'Commencements' (and of students being commenced).

The terms '**Moderatorship**' for an honors degree in arts, and 'Moderator' for one who receives an honors degree, also derive from Medieval disputation but were not used here until honors degrees began in the 19th century.

The Senate is comprised of the Caput together with doctors and masters of the university. **The Caput** consists of three people: the Chancellor or a Pro-Chancellor, the Provost, and the Senior Master non-Regent, who is the most senior of the Junior Fellows and is elected annually to reflect the interests of graduates. Each member of the Caput has the right to veto any Grace, or proposal, for a degree; a right that has been exercised only once in the last century.

The Order of the ceremony varies from one meeting to another: at some only Bachelors are commenced, at others Doctors and Masters also receive their degrees, and, occasionally, honorary degrees are awarded. **The following description is intended as a general guide to Commencements ceremonies.**

The procession into the Public Theatre is led by the Book Porter bearing the Proctors Book, which contains the old statutes on the conferring of degrees and the signatures of Senior and Junior Proctors since 1625. Then follow any who are to be commenced as Doctors including, on occasion, recipients of honorary degrees. Next comes the Senior Proctor wearing, as the Statutes require, a Bachelor's gown with a black hood lined with ermine. The Mace Bearer precedes the Caput: the Senior Master non-Regent, the Provost, and finally the Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor.

The Chancellor opens the meeting with the following words:

Salvete senatores omnes, Domini Doctores, Domini Magistri; salvete candidati seniores junioresque; salvete hospites undique hic benignissime congregati. Comititia fiant in nomine Dei. Amen.

We greet all members of the Senate, learned Doctors and Masters; we greet the candidates senior and junior for admission to degrees; we greet our guests whose friendly interest has caused them to gather here from many places. Let Commencements begin, in the name of Almighty God. Amen.



The Registrar reads a formal statement in Latin of the minutes of the last meeting of the Senate, which is signed by the Chancellor. The Proctors, who prepare the lists of candidates for Board approval, then supplicate, or ask, the Senate to approve the award of these degrees. The Junior Proctor supplicates for Bachelor in Arts degrees in the following words:

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie totaque Universitas, supplicant reverentiis vestris ei, qui in his chartis quae in manibus nostris sunt nominantur, ut his Comitibus ad gradum super nomina designatum admittantur. Ego fide mea testor ac spondeo toti academiae unumquemque candidatorum his chartis nominatum omnia exercitia ad gradum ad quem unusquisque adspirat pertinentia pro legibus academicis rite complevisse.

Most honourable Chancellor and all members of the University, those whose names appear on the sheets that are in our hands respectfully request that they be admitted to the degree inscribed above their names. I solemnly affirm to all members of the University that each of the candidates nominated has completed, in accordance with the academic rules of the University, all the requirements pertaining to the degree to which each seeks admission.

The Senior Proctor supplicates for all other degrees. After the two Proctors have made their supplications, the Mace Bearer announces the voting, saying 'ad scrutinium', and the Chancellor calls first for the votes of the Doctors and then for the votes of the Masters; each group responds by saying 'placet'.

The award of the degrees having been approved, the admission of the candidates begins. Candidates for degrees stand in their places and are presented to the Senate; they are then called to the platform in groups. Candidates for Honorary degrees and Gold Medallists are called to the platform before being presented. The Junior Proctor presents the Bachelors in Arts and the Senior Lecturer introduces the Moderators. The Junior Proctor presents Bachelors in Arts saying:

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie totaque Universitas, praesento vobis hosce meos filios, tam doctrina quam moribus habiles et idoneos ut admittantur ad gradum Baccalaureatus in Artibus.

Most honourable Chancellor and all members of the University, I present to you these my sons and daughters who are by character and ability fit to be admitted to the degree of Bachelor in Arts.

The Chancellor presents them with their parchment and admits them to their degrees saying:

Gratum munus mihi demandatum est ut vobis in manus tradam has chartas honorarias; accipite illas ergo, egregii juvenes, honorificas quidem in praesenti, ominis vero fausti felisque in futurum. Ego auctoritate mihi concessa admitto vos ad respondendum quaestioni in Artibus.

I have been entrusted with the pleasant task of handing to you personally these certificates. Receive them, you who have distinguished yourselves in your studies, as conferring honour on you today as an earnest sign of your future success and happiness. By the authority vested in me, I admit you to the degree of Bachelor in Arts.



In accord with long standing custom the Professors of Law, Medicine and Surgery introduce candidates for degrees in these subjects. The Senior Proctor, or the head of the appropriate faculty or school, presents the candidates for degrees other than Bachelor in Arts. Essentially the same formulae are used, with appropriate variations, in admitting candidates to the different degrees. Each is admitted by the Chancellor, and presented with the parchment. Each new graduate signs the Register of Graduates before returning to their seat. Honorary degrees are normally awarded at two Commencements ceremonies each year. At these ceremonies the name of each candidate for an honorary degree is announced by the Senior Proctor. The candidate then comes forward, stands before the Chancellor and is introduced in an oration by the Public Orator. The candidate is admitted by the Chancellor and signs the Roll of Honorary Graduates.

The Senior Proctor then presents the list of persons who are unable to be present to receive their degrees in person (*'in absentia'*). Finally the Chancellor closes the Commencements ceremony with the following words:

Valete senatores, non diutius vos morabimur; valete candidati novis honoribus decorati; valete et vos, hospites acceptissimi. Comitia solvantur in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

We bid farewell to you, members of the Senate, we shall not detain you further. We bid farewell to the candidates adorned with new honours. We bid farewell also to you our most welcome guests. Let Commencements be adjourned in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Caput then processes out of the Theatre led by the Mace Bearer, followed by the Senior Master non-Regent, Provost, Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor, Registrar, Proctors and Senior Lecturer, and then all the new graduates starting with the Doctors and Masters.

- Registrar

The Public Theatre Organ of Trinity College Dublin

In May 1684 the then Provost signed an agreement with the great organ builder Lancelot Pease for construction of a new organ with one manual and eight stops that was to cost £120. This was for the "old" College Chapel, and it was to be enclosed in a case 24 feet high and 10 feet wide, which was to be painted and gilded. There was also to be a "faulse organ" in front of the main case, presumably to make the instrument look more imposing. This is the oldest existing Irish made organ case and as such is one of the most important in Ireland and Britain. However in recent times, it had become almost unplayable, with several stops being virtually useless and with the façade pipes collapsing. Something had to be done!

In 2017 a new instrument was installed, with tracker action and an authentic 18th century stop-list, superbly constructed by the UK firm of Goetze & Gwynn while the case and façade pipes have been restored. The original, magnificent polychrome decoration on the façade pipes, which was not known to exist, and which was hidden under layers of ugly brown paint, has been uncovered and restored, and the original 1684 pipes now "speak" again, having been silent for a very long time. The instrument now has two manuals, the second being for a new and no longer "faulse" Chair Organ, which retains the original Pease façade but now breaks through the Gallery railing and is cantilevered over the ground floor. Likewise, the 1684 Pease case has also been restored, repainted and regilded and this, together with its three magnificent shields, now brilliantly complements the decoration of the Public Theatre. The organ is now the jewel in the crown of the College's musical portfolio, and an asset to the City and to the Nation.

The College is immensely grateful to the private donors that have assisted in funding this project, particularly to the Executors of the estate of the late John and Ann Boland, and to the TCD Association & Trust.

Appendix 5: Costume at Commencements - views from the Dais

Prof. Eda Sagarra - Pro-Chancellor 1999-2008⁷⁰⁴

Sagarra emphasizes the ceremonial significance of the robes as part of a ritualistic tradition. As secular ritual Commencements has more personal meaning for all participating than theatre. The robes, alongside Latin and other formal elements, help maintain the mystique of the ceremony. The clothing worn by all participants, whether graduating, by parents and friends, or on the dais contributes to the overall spectacle. The attire, especially the distinctive robes, is a key part of the “full panoply” of the ceremony. Nevertheless, the comportment of those on stage has particular importance for making the occasion feel special for everyone involved. She acknowledges that while some might view this formality as outdated, it still plays an essential role in creating meaning and connection to the institution, both for graduates and the wider public.

In her 2021 Memoirs Sagarra remarked as first woman Registrar, that:

Commencements provided an insight into how Trinity was perceived by the outside world. The evidence was, on the whole, reassuring. Following my five years as Registrar, and in a slightly contrary way, I held the offices of Senior and Junior Proctor, in that order, and still feel that Commencements are one of the most effective ways of winning support in the Irish community for the Trinity tradition of individual concern for each of its students. This still seems to me one of College's most attractive qualities, and its most consistent achievement in the period of extraordinary change that College has lived through in the last quarter of a century.⁷⁰⁵

Prof. Shane Allwright – Pro-Chancellor 2020-⁷⁰⁶

For TCD, commencements are deeply symbolic events, with the robes playing a central role in establishing the ceremony's formal atmosphere. As secular ritual they differ from theatre as they mark the formal completion of the contract between the institution and the student. The robes not only signify status and tradition but also imbue participants with a sense of pride and privilege, if only through the physical reaction to putting them on, making the wearer stand tall. The robes add to the solemnity of the event, especially for PhD graduates, who experience a heightened sense of achievement. However, there is awareness that such traditional dress can also create a sense of exclusion in a modern,

⁷⁰⁴ Prof. Eda Sagarra, interview by the author, January 24, 2024

⁷⁰⁵ Sagarra, *Living with my century*. 262.

⁷⁰⁶ Prof. Shane Allwright, interview by the author, January 16, 2024.

inclusive society. Despite this, robes are essential to maintaining the dignity and meaning of the ceremony.

Prof. Jane Grimson - Pro-Chancellor 2016-⁷⁰⁷

Grimson highlights that while the traditional robes are important, they should not constrain the joy and celebration of the occasion. The balance found by the Registrar between warmth and formality, together with changes like the procession from the Public Theatre to the Dining Hall steps and more informal elements (such as cap tossing) have helped make the ceremony feel more relaxed and personal. However, she recognizes that the formality of the robes remains central, and that they along with the formal setting, still serve as key symbols of tradition, though there is a desire for the event to feel more accessible.

Prof. John Hegarty – Provost 2001- 2011⁷⁰⁸

Hegarty stresses the importance of formal dress, including the robes, in maintaining the tradition and mystique of the event. The robes serve as a visual expression of respect for the conventions and rituals of the university. They are integral to the ceremony's formalism and its role in celebrating academic achievement. Hegarty compares the robes to other professional attire, such as business suits, that serve as symbols of acceptance into a particular community. He suggests that, while ceremonial dress may feel peculiar outside of its context, it is essential to the authenticity of the occasion.

Conclusions⁷⁰⁹

Across all views, academic dress is universally acknowledged as central to the TCD commencement experience. The robes symbolize tradition, formality, and solemnity, while providing colour and contributing to the joyous atmosphere to the occasion. In this way costume provides graduates with a sense of pride and connection to the institution. While there is a recognition of the potential for the robes to create feelings of exclusion, they remain a crucial part of TCD's long-standing ceremonial practices, balancing ritual with the modern desire for inclusivity and celebration.

⁷⁰⁷ Prof. Jane Grimson, interview by the author, November 17, 2023.

⁷⁰⁸ Prof. John Hegarty, interview by the author, March 14, 2024.

⁷⁰⁹ Interview summary compiled with the aid of ChatGPT, April 22, 2025.

Appendix 6: A Curatorial System for Academic robes.

Representative extracts from the collection management system for historical academic dress in the University of Melbourne Archives, illustrating the key data recorded.⁷¹⁰

 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE	THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES
NAME OF COLLECTION	Historic Academic Gown Collection
ACCESSION NO	2009.0028
CATEGORY	University, official
ACTIVITY	University Administration
DATE RANGE	c.1897 – c.1960s
SIZE OF COLLECTION	38.34 meters
HISTORICAL NOTE	
DATE OF TRANSFER	08/12/2009
ACCESS CONDITIONS	Restricted
DESCRIPTION	Collection is registered 001 - 029
NOTE ON COLLECTIONS	
NOTE ON LISTING	
LISTED BY	Claire Lockyer, Helen Arnoldi
DATE	August 2007 - August 2008

E:\COLLECTION MANAGEMENT\Inventories\UMArchives\Lists(U) UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
(various)\University of Melbourne. Historic Academic Gown Collection (2009.0028) Version: 26 Nov 2012

⁷¹⁰ Melbourne, "Historic Academic Gowns."

Registration number

001

Object name

Academic Gown

Present location

Robing Room

Storage location

Cupboards in corridor outside Council Chambers, 1st Floor, Old Quadrangle

Classification 1

Regalia

Classification 2

Academic Gown

Key search terms

Dr P.R Bull

Brief description

The academic gown comes in two parts there is the pale red gown with cascading sleeves (001.1) and the matching black and pale red hood (001.2)

Inscriptions

Hand sewn label printed with "The/Mutual Store/Melbourne". Hand written in blue ink on the label "Dr PR Bull". On a small material tag pinned to garment "125"

Dimensions overall

126 x 40 cm

Dimensions comments

These are approximate measurements of the gown while it was hanging on dressmakers model.

Production method

Machine made

Materials

Cotton and other unidentified fabrics

When made

c. 20th century

Where made - country

Australia

Where made - region

Melbourne

When used

c. 1960s

Where used - country

Australia

E:\COLLECTION MANAGEMENT\inventories\UMArchives\Lists(U) UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
(various)\University of Melbourne. Historic Academic Gown Collection (2009.0028) Version: 26 Nov 2012

Where used - region
Melbourne

Maker
The Mutual Store Ltd

Condition
Good.

Condition details
There is a small area of insect damage on the upper back section of the gown (001.1)

Photographed
Yes

Notes
There are two parts to this object - the gown (001.1) and the hood (001.2)
The Mutual Store Ltd. was Melbourne's first department store, the large emporium was located on the corner of Flinders and Degraes streets. The company, established as a profit-sharing co-operative between shareholders and staff, was incorporated in 1872 but suffered a significant setback when fire destroyed the original building in 1891. Architects Reed, Smart & Tappin, who had designed the Melbourne Town Hall and the Royal Exhibition Building, designed a new building in the Mannerist style on the same site. Despite the interruption, the company thrived and within a year of rebuilding, its range of products filled a catalogue of over 40 pages. In 1961 the Mutual Store was taken over by Peter Kaye Consolidated Ltd, which changed its name to Mutual Stores Holdings Ltd. Three years later Cleckheaton Ltd (Yorkshire) took over the company and closed the department store in 1965. The Mutual Stores Ltd collection is held at the University of Melbourne Archives. [information from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/>]

Cataloguer name
Helen Arnoldi

Catalogued date
17/7/2008



E:\COLLECTION MANAGEMENT\Inventories\UMArchives\Lists(U) UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
(various)\University of Melbourne. Historic Academic Gown Collection (2009.0028) Version: 26 Nov 2012

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