

# Postcolonial Style, Economic Hauntology and the Rise of Dark Academia

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## Abstract

“Postcolonial Style, Economic Hauntology and the Rise of Dark Academia” interrogates the dark academic aesthetic as a postcolonial afterimage of whiteness, nostalgia, and neoliberal capital. The article argues that “dark academia” is less a subculture than a spectral economy of whiteness, an aestheticised melancholia for the lost prestige of colonial modernity. Beginning with the material history of Madras cotton and its transformation from colonial commodity to Ivy League style, it exposes how fabrics, fashions, and institutions of learning have long served as vehicles for reproducing racialised privilege under the guise of intellectual refinement.

Through close readings of *Take Ivy* (1965), *The Official Preppy Handbook* (1980), and Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History* (1992), this article reveals how class aspiration and aesthetic performance sustain the illusion of meritocratic belonging even as they perpetuate colonial hierarchies. Juxtaposing these Euro-American forms of cultural nostalgia with Rammellzee’s “Gothic Futurism” and Mark Dery’s theorisation of Afrofuturism, the essay identifies an alternative genealogy of knowledge and style that resists linguistic and racial domination. From the Sloane Ranger phenomenon to the luxury branding of Ralph Lauren and Virgil Abloh, “dark academia” becomes, in this reading, a hauntological mode through which neoliberal subjects aestheticise decline while clinging to myths of inherited power. The article concludes that the enduring allure of dark academia lies in its capacity to transform imperial amnesia into fashionable despair, a symptom of postcolonial capitalism’s most refined form of self-romanticisation.

**Keywords:** dark academia; postcolonial hauntology; neoliberal aesthetics; whiteness and privilege; fashion and cultural memory