

Rewriting Traditions and Expressing Anxieties: The Dark Academia Genre

14 January 2025

Valicskó Sára Viktória

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
ORIGINS AND CONTINUED PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA	2
LITERARY ORIGINS: A NEW GENRE FORMING	5
DARK ACADEMIA AS A REWRITING OF THE GOTHIC: DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS	8
Gothic influence	8
Setting and environment.....	9
Personal hardships: substance abuse, mental health and finances	12
Institutional problems: sexual abuse and campus security.....	14
Obsession, belonging, queerness and identity: group dynamics in dark academia novels	17
Narrative style and structure	20
CONCLUSION	23
WORKS CITED.....	24
Primary sources	24
Secondary sources	24

Introduction

The term ‘dark academia’ emerged on the social media site Tumblr around 2015 (Nguyen 55), starting out as a kind of internet subculture that has gained more and more followers over the years, though it is still far from being truly mainstream. Principally consisting of visual media materials (pictures, collages, videos etc.) and predominantly associating itself with the humanities (first and foremost the study of literature, languages and philosophy), dark academia describes a set of aesthetic principles that shape individuals’ fashion sense and clothing style, forming the so-called ‘dark academia aesthetic,’ which includes gloomy autumn weather, old university buildings, cozy sweaters, piles of books, and a desire for knowledge and perpetual learning. This aesthetic, however, often turns performative on social media: the object of desire ceases to be the actual knowledge or learning, rather it shifts to a desire to emulate college life and to personify dark academia principles without much substance behind it. Among members of this subculture, certain novels, especially Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History* (1992), became increasingly popular, and by the late 2010s, a new literary genre was taking shape.

Starting out from existing research concerning dark academia, including among others Maryann Nguyen’s article “Nostalgia in Dark Academia” (2022) and Simone Murray’s “Dark Academia: Bookishness, Readerly Self-fashioning and the Digital Afterlife of Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History*” (2023)—both of which explore and outline certain aspects of the dark academia genre with specific focuses on campus nostalgia and the social media aspect, respectively—and a collection of essays published on the site *Post45*, I set out to analyse dark academia as a rewriting of the Gothic. By outlining the genre’s origins and the common motifs and elements these novels share, specifically focusing on substance abuse, sexual abuse, relationship dynamics and narrative style, I will investigate the way these novels express contemporary anxieties surrounding academia, arguing that by using the Gothic as a framework and shifting the focus onto the psyche of the characters, the genre is able to offer a critique of the academic environment.

Origins and continued presence on social media

As I stated above, dark academia originated on the social media site Tumblr as a trend in aesthetics. Simone Murray defines dark academia in her article as follows:

DA [dark academia] is an online phenomenon based less upon a coherent set of beliefs than a particular aesthetic: bookish; university-based; Eurocentric; and dandyish. It principally manifests through online ‘moodboards’ which display a user’s collation of resonant still images or video snippets. (349)

In his essay titled “Tweed Jackets and Class Consciousness,” Gunner Taylor writes that “[f]or members of certain internet communities, the word ‘aesthetic’ refers not to the study of beauty, value, or taste, but instead to something between a fashion sense, a philosophy, a mood, and a found community—like a fandom, but unmoored from a specific object of devotion.” It can be surmised, then, that dark academia started as a social media trend which made its way through various sites (Murray 347-348) until the COVID-19 pandemic, when “TikTok served as the social media platform responsible for its second, massive rise” (Nguyen 65). Nothing illustrates dark academia’s popularity more than the fact that even *The New York Times* published a short article in 2020 about dark academia’s TikTok presence (“Academia Lives—on TikTok”), in which Kristen Bateman writes: “As study halls, workshopping essays and round table discussions go virtual, and many students are left wondering when they’ll be able to dress up and go to classes again, Dark Academia¹ is filling the void.” It can therefore be said that dark academia as a social media phenomenon may act as a way of self-expression and self-fashioning, with people flocking to online communities, especially during the pandemic, to “fill the void” of belonging.

However, especially with the steady rise in TikTok’s popularity, much of the dark academia content has become staged and performative. It is no longer just a certain aesthetic but an entire way of life for a lot of people who no longer simply find happiness in thrifting old sweaters for the ‘dark academia look,’ but they are often concerned with whether or not they look ‘dark academia enough’—sometimes going as far as to specifically look for dark academia-style furniture or décor, clothes, accessories, hairstyles etc. At the heart of dark academia lies a supposedly genuine desire for learning and knowledge, but even that is sometimes presented as only performative, commodified to serve as aesthetic material for a

¹ There is no decisive rule about the capitalisation of the term as both versions are found in online sources. In social media related contexts, capitalising seems to be more prevalent, while more academic sources tend to use the non-capitalised term. In line with that, this present paper does not capitalise the term.

TikTok video. Much of this content is seemingly inspired by *The Secret History*, with videos of people learning Latin as a hobby or reading by candlelight, and with many of them directly referencing the novel in the caption: according to research done by Murray (349-50), 14 out of the top 100 dark academia-themed TikTok videos “explicitly referenced” (350) the book (sample taken by Murray in November 2022 using the search term “Dark Academia”).

On sites like Reddit and Facebook, entire groups are dedicated to the dark academia aesthetic and literature with members from all over the world discussing topics ranging from clothing and fashion to literature and architecture. On Reddit, these groups, called subreddits, are divided based on their primary interests such as books or fashion, with the largest subreddit being r/DarkAcademia with 96,000 members, created in 2018 and encompassing all topics related to dark academia². On Facebook, these groups are more varied, demonstrating just how widespread and far-reaching dark academia is. The largest DA Facebook groups are Dark Academia (35,000 members, created in 2021) and Dark Academia Aesthetic (75,000 members, created in 2021) both of which discuss all things dark academia, but there are other DA groups with a narrower focus such as finding fellow dark academia-lover pen pals (Dark Academia Letter Writing and Pen Friends with 1,100 members, created in 2021) or dark academia-themed interior design (Dark Academia Style with 800 members, created in 2023). There are also groups that show that dark academia intersects with other online communities and aesthetics, such as Dark Academia and Classic Literature Addicts (3,600 members, created in 2019) or EVERYTHING VICTORIAN & SHABBY CHIC COTTAGECORE DARK ACADEMIA ROMANCE Group (27,000 members, name originally styled in capital letters, created in 2024). Members in these online communities often post pictures of themselves in ‘dark academia outfits’ or photos of their own university buildings to show off the ‘dark academia vibes,’ receiving positive feedback, encouragement and/or advice from other members. These comments suggest that these online communities seem to be wholesome and inclusive on the whole.

Dark academia books share and draw from this aesthetic, featuring humanities students, gloomy and grey settings, cosy sweaters and old buildings. Online DA communities differ in one important aspect: their overwhelmingly positive portrayal of universities and student life—acting as a kind of academic fantasy, a simulacrum of higher education. People of all ages and backgrounds can and do join these online communities to live out these academic fantasies they

² Other notable dark academia subreddits are: r/DarkAcademiaLibrary (8,100 members, created in 2020), r/DarkAcademiaMusic (1,300 members, created in 2021), r/darkacademiafashion (1,300 members, created in 2021), and r/DarkAcademiaBookClub (268 members, created in 2024).

would not otherwise get to experience. In the online sphere, everyone may indulge their desire for academia, even if they are unable to do so in real life. In contrast, dark academia novels, as I argue in this paper, show the underside of academia, even if not much of that is seen in the social media context.

Literary origins: a new genre forming

On social media, dark academia adherents quickly started curating lists of books that fit the ‘dark academia vibe,’ however, these books were not yet, strictly speaking, dark academia genre books. These lists featured titles such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oscar Wilde, 1890), *Crime and Punishment* (Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1866), *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818) and *Macbeth* (William Shakespeare, 1623). Above all, however, these lists featured US author Donna Tartt’s 1992 novel *The Secret History*, which, although published decades before the term ‘dark academia’ was even born, seems to embody all the notions dark academia stands for and as such, it is considered the urtext of dark academia as a literary genre.

Set in a New England college, with constant depictions of the autumn and winter weather and scenery, it features the tight-knit group of the six students of the Classics Department—a selective course taught by only one eccentric teacher. The elusive, mysterious, closed group of five entices fellow student and narrator Richard to want to join—to be allowed into this exclusive, almost cultish world where the students are fully immersed in Greek language and culture. Throughout the course of the novel, the group plans and commits a murder, then the members slowly descend into chaos as they try and ultimately succeed to evade the police investigation.

In his essay, Gunner Taylor asserts that “Donna Tartt couldn’t write a dark academia novel in 1992, because the category didn’t exist yet,” and since, “like all genre progenitors, it was not setting out to participate in the genre it created, but rather building on and subverting existing generic conventions.” While it may be true that Tartt did not specifically set out to write a dark academia novel, she still managed to rewrite existing literary conventions in a way that expresses many of the anxieties faced by students and offers a critique of academia by showing the students’ gradual descent into madness in their attempt to emulate ancient Greek traditions; goaded by their teacher into a deeper understanding of the classics. In an article titled “The Rise of the Academic Novel” Jeffrey J. Williams asserts that “[n]ovels set in a college or university have been a persistent occurrence over the past century in the US” (J. Williams 561)—with Tartt’s novel joining this long line of campus novels³. The names ‘academic novel,’ ‘college novel’ and ‘campus novel’ have been used mostly interchangeably, although some scholars have

³ Examples of campus novels include titles such as *The Groves of Academe* (Mary McCarthy, 1952), *Lucky Jim* (Kingsley Amis, 1954), *The History Man* (Malcolm Bradbury, 1975), and *Disgrace* (J.M. Coetzee, 1999) among many others.

made distinctions between them based on whose experience they centre, the students' or the faculty's (J. Williams 561-562).

Tartt pioneered a way of writing about academia that not only acts as an emotional outlet for students but at the same time remains critical of the academic environment. By mixing elements from campus novels and Gothic fiction, centring the students and highlighting the undersides of college life, Tartt laid the foundations for what slowly morphed into a new kind of novel: dark academia. In an essay accompanying her latest novella, *M. L. Rio* references campus novels, saying that the genre had a “firm grip” on her and that she “devoured every campus novel [she] could get [her] hands on” (*Graveyard* 116). It can therefore be seen that the need to write and read about academic anxieties—and these anxieties themselves—emerged long before the dark academia label and that issues related to higher education have been present in literature since the first half of the 20th century.

The Secret History has become a cult classic in recent years. Following its popularity, other novels have built on Tartt's work to form and shape a new genre: dark academia. Thus, since the late 2010s, more and more novels have been published that focus on a group of university students, enrolled at a prestigious institution, studying in some humanities department, who go on to do heinous things and commit crimes. Most authors writing dark academia books are American, with such titles as *If We Were Villains* (M. L. Rio, 2017), *Ninth House* (Leigh Bardugo, 2019), *The Atlas Six* (Olivie Blake, 2020),⁴ with the more recent ones being *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* (Ashley Winstead, 2021) and *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* (R. F. Kuang, 2022). However, non-US authors have also published in the genre: Canadian Mona Awad's *Bunny* (2019), British-Cypriot Alex Michaelides's *The Maidens* (2021) and Hungarian Diana Hunt's *House of Prey* (*Prédák háza*, 2024)⁵ are all such examples. Sometimes, the dark academia label is actually attached to the title of a book, as is the case with Joanna Margaret's 2022 novel entitled *The Bequest: A Dark Academia Thriller*. The genre now extends to short stories as well with two notable collections published recently: *Wilted Pages: An Anthology of Dark Academia* (Ai Jiang and Christi Nogle, editors, 2023) and *In These Hallowed Halls: A Dark Academia Anthology* (Marie O'Regan and Paul Kane, editors, 2023). The genre is clearly appealing to an international readership, since while original works are still being published, the number of translations is also on the rise: *The Secret History* has been translated into twenty-four languages (penguin.co.nz), *If We Were Villains* into fifteen

⁴ Since then, both Bardugo and Blake have written sequels to their original works: *Hell Bent* (Bardugo, 2023), *The Atlas Paradox* (Blake, 2022), *The Atlas Complex* (Blake, 2024).

⁵ Hunt's sequel, *House of Predators* (*Ragadozók háza*) will be published in the spring of 2025.

(mlrio.com). It is therefore visible, that dark academia will keep being a crucial part of contemporary literature.

Dark Academia as a Rewriting of the Gothic: Defining Characteristics

Gothic influence

Many of the recurring motifs in dark academia novels are part and parcel of Gothic fiction. From the gloomy weather, dark forests and old buildings to the mental disturbance, substance abuse and the occult, dark academia continues to revitalise tropes and topics “traditional” North American Gothic fiction concerned itself with. This rewriting could be a result of dark academia having a similar focus on characters’ mental state and psychological deviance, a notion that originally helped popularise the Gothic in North America. As Alan Lloyd-Smith writes in his book *American Gothic Fiction – An Introduction*, “American Gothic appealed to the popular audience in a rapidly growing readership,” helped along by new, cheaper printing methods and a boom in “magazine production and consumption” at the beginning of the 19th century (25). He writes that sensational articles, especially crime reports piqued the interest of not only a “relatively unsophisticated new audience,” but also that of the “better educated,” as it offered a “field in which previously unexamined aspects of society might be explored” and then “a growing popular interest in psychology and deviance became a further element to intrigue a wide readership” (25). What Lloyd-Smith terms the “psychoanalytical potential of Gothic in providing a metaphorical representation of trauma and anxiety in its readership” (26) is, in my view, very apparent in dark academia—fitting into Jeffrey J. Williams’s observation that “the contemporary academic novel presents ‘anxiety narratives’” (581). As I shall demonstrate, the narrators often come from underprivileged backgrounds, yet they are the focalisers of the narratives which could be in line with what is, according to Lloyd-Smith, the Gothic’s greatest strength: “its ability to articulate the voice of the ‘other’” (8). In the nineteenth century, the “other” was often a woman (like in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper”) or a person of colour, in dark academia novels this kind of “othering” seems to be based on financial status and background. By building on the established tropes and motifs of the Gothic, dark academia is able to quickly and strongly establish the atmosphere of oppression/suppression wherein “the horror is now within the self” (Lloyd-Smith 53) and the characters’ and the readers’ anxieties, which thus far have been suppressed, come to the surface and manifest themselves in these novels in criminal acts, violence and sexual abuse.

Setting and environment

First and foremost, the most salient characteristic of the dark academia genre is the academic setting. The main characters in dark academia novels are usually students of the humanities—common majors include literature, theatre, art, writing, classics, languages, and philosophy. In my view, this serves as a kind of academic fantasy for many readers, since statistics show that these departments are shrinking⁶ because of marketability and students are often discouraged by friends, family and even teachers from choosing this path. At the same time, through the students' struggles to get into and continue to attend these institutions, the novels offer readers a critique of elitism in higher education.

These settings share many of the same characteristics: prestigious, elite, selective places of higher education modelled on Oxbridge and Ivy League universities, set in rural college towns, surrounded by picturesque landscapes, with the campuses littered with old buildings—and with many Gothic-like features, such as dark forests and eerie lakes, stone buildings, towers, attic rooms, basements, claustrophobic spaces, dirty and dingy rooms. These institutions can be fictitious as is the case in e.g. Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, which features Hampden College or in M. L. Rio's *If We Were Villains*, where the students attend Dellecher Classical Conservatory. In some cases, the novels are set in real institutions, though there might be some caveats such as changing the layout of campus or inventing a fictitious department within that institution—Leigh Bardugo's *Ninth House* is set at Yale University, while R. F. Kuang's *Babel* is set at Oxford University, though in an alternate reality, at the fictitious Royal Institute of Translation.⁷ However, there are also instances where the setting is a high school or a preparatory school—such as Welton Academy in *Dead Poets Society* (N. H. Kleinbaum, 2006 based on the 1989 film by dir. Peter Weir), which is an all-male boarding preparatory school.⁸

The high prestige of these institutions is always stressed in dark academia novels, and the narrators often emphasise how lucky they are to attend such a college—yet, frequently depicting the rocky road it took them to get there and showing the lengths they are willing to go to in order to continue attending. For instance, in Tartt's *The Secret History*, the narrator Richard had to make special arrangements with the college to help finance his travelling to his interview and in Ashley Winstead's *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* the narrator Jessica is willing to sleep with a professor to obtain a recommendation letter to apply to a postgrad fellowship.

⁶ See further: Jaschik (2022), Heller (2023), Truong (2024), T. Williams (2024)

⁷ The movie *Saltburn* (dir. Emerald Fennell, 2023), which is often considered dark academia, though much of the movie is off campus, also features Oxford students.

⁸ The dark academia-adjacent movie *Miller's Girl* (dir. Jade Bartlett, 2024) also features a high school.

It seems dark academia acts as an outlet for ‘academic desires’ in a sense—a simulacrum that provides a kind of safe space to live out academic fantasies that in many cases sharply contrast with the realities of academia. In his non-fiction book about the bleak state of the new neoliberal higher education, titled *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*,⁹ Peter Fleming discusses the connection between a department’s marketability and the funding it receives, arguing that, under capitalism, the humanities are pushed aside for more profitable fields of study:

For all but the elite universities today, the impact agenda has drastically narrowed the scope of desirable scholarship, with disciplines considered more practical to industry judged superior: namely, STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), with the addition of medicine when appropriate. ... The big loser in this high impact culture are the humanities, of course. Their funding has dwindled, leaving English, classics and cultural studies little more than empty husks. (106)

Corroborating Fleming’s point, Nathan Heller writes in a 2023 article for *The New Yorker* that “During the past decade, the study of English and history at the collegiate level has fallen by a full third. Humanities enrollment in the United States has declined over all by seventeen per cent ... The trend mirrors a global one; four-fifths of countries in the Organization for Economic Coöperation [sic] reported falling humanities enrollments in the past decade.”

In line with these developments, *The Secret History* concludes with the Classics Department closing down due to lack of interest both on the part of the university and on the part of the students. In *If We Were Villains*, the narrator’s father is critical of the acting program his son is enrolled in, being sceptical of its real-world value—a sentiment that deeply hurts Oliver, even though he himself often questions what he will do once he graduates.

In all of these novels, the students are under near-constant stress stemming not only from the demanding institutions and teachers, but, as the paper discusses later, from personal and financial hardships as well. Students worry about finishing homework assignments, graduating on time, preferably with honours, getting accepted into the university of their choice (if the novel is not set at university) or getting a job with their newly obtained degree—especially those who do not come from privileged backgrounds as for them, degrees mean an important step in upward social mobility. Towards the end of *The Secret History*, Julian abruptly leaves Hampden upon learning of the murder his students committed. Once he is gone, the fate of the

⁹ Fleming explores the plights of academia and higher education, such as the mental health crisis of both students and instructors, the inherent competitiveness and obsession with metrics and ranking, calling for change to reverse this trajectory.

Greek group is ambiguous because the college can barely find a replacement as Julian did not follow a traditional syllabus, therefore, they might not be able to graduate on time. Most of the class is undisturbed by the news, Richard however is deeply upset about the prospects of having to fund more semesters, unsure if he will even have the means for it:

When the Dean had said ‘two extra semesters,’ my blood ran cold. I knew, with the certainty I knew that night follows day, there was no way I could get my parents to make their measly, but quite necessary, contribution for an extra year. ... why, I asked myself, oh, why, had I been so foolish, why hadn't I picked something and stuck with it, how was it that I could currently be at the end of my third year of college and have basically nothing to show for it? (Tartt 583)

Richard looks around him, seeing his wealthy friends and their nonchalance which upsets him even more because he knew that to them, college did not matter as much as it did to him, and the possibility of needing to take extra semesters is of no concern.

What was it to them if they had to go an extra term? What did it matter, if they failed to graduate, if they had to go back home? At least they had homes to go to. They had trust funds, allowances, dividend checks, doting grandmas, well-connected uncles, loving families. *College for them was only a way station, a sort of youthful diversion. But this was my main chance, the only one. And I had blown it.* (Tartt 583, emphasis mine)

It then becomes clear that for underprivileged, financially struggling students like Richard, higher education is not just a stop along the way but a means of climbing the social ladder in order to have more opportunities and a better future. When that is on the line, college quickly turns into a more serious undertaking.

As Peter Fleming phrases it: “student culture has become isolating, high-pressured and anxious” (84). Uncertain career prospects, especially in the post-COVID era and pressure from parents and family, not to mention finances also add to the stress (136) until there comes a point when “[g]rades no longer measure academic performance only, but *life performance* as well” (136, emphasis original). M. L. Rio details her own experiences of pursuing a PhD in English as working “90-hour weeks just to keep the lights on” (*Graveyard* 117), as in the months leading up to her dissertation defence she went through sleep deprivation psychosis (*Graveyard* 120) and “made [herself] so sick that [her] heart stopped and [she] was dead on the table one week before [her] defense” (*Graveyard* 121). She writes:

The perpetual exhaustion of graduate school is both a basic requirement and a badge of honor. Nowhere is the virtue signaling of productivity culture more pervasive and more insidious. End-game capitalism has equated our worth with our willingness to work

beyond normal human limits, and in higher education this compulsion is compounded by self-righteous self-destruction for the cause: If you don't work yourself to death for the sake of your subject, are you really a "serious" scholar? (*Graveyard* 120)

It can then be surmised that dark academia offers readers a fantasy of higher education, one in which students can freely immerse themselves in the humanities, and enrolment in these prestigious institutions is made possible even for those who come from a lower-class background. However, it also seems clear that there are anxieties present in this academic 'haven,' and the dark academia genre seems to provide an outlet for these fears and worries, showing how horrendous university life can sometimes be for students—allowing for possible readings that are a critique of academia as the environment in which students only have equal opportunities on paper and grades, productivity and performance come above all else.

Personal hardships: substance abuse, mental health and finances

As in many works of Gothic fiction, the characters in dark academia novels suffer from numerous personal hardships and ailments, which may be considered a 'side effect' of the dark and twisted academic climate. As a possible way of coping with stress, a common feature of these books is substance abuse. More than the 'regular' college parties, the characters in these novels often engage in excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, and smoking is prevalent. While some of these incidents are at least partly due to the characters' criminal acts during the course of the novels, they are, in all cases, present from the very beginning. Charles in *The Secret History* becomes an alcoholic by the end of the novel—his descent, of course, exacerbated by having committed murder, while Alexander in Rio's *If We Were Villains* starts out as a casual drug user but, following the death of Richard, his drug use worsens and he overdoses and almost dies. Especially harrowing is Jessica's case in *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*: she does everything to gain her professor's favour to get him to write a good recommendation letter, including agreeing to sleep with him, but receives nonetheless a very generic letter and is subsequently denied the fellowship, causing her to consume so much alcohol that she cannot remember the rest of the night.

Furthermore, connected to the topic of substance abuse, a common element shared in dark academia novels is the prevalence of mental health issues, which may be a manifestation of the rise of mental illness in college students in real life. According to the Health Minds survey for the 2021–22 academic year, "44 percent [of the 96,000 US students surveyed] reported symptoms of depression, 37 percent said they experienced anxiety and 15 percent said they

have seriously considered suicide—the highest rates in the survey’s 15-year history” (Alonso). It is repeatedly implied that the narrator of Mona Awad’s *Bunny*, Samantha, suffers from schizophrenia—while the text never states it explicitly, it can be inferred, though the novel leaves a lot up to the readers’ interpretation in terms of what is and is not real in Samantha’s story. In *If We Were Villains*, Richard has anger issues leading him to be verbally and physically abusive towards the others, while Tartt’s novel’s Francis suffers from hypochondria and panic attacks, making frequent trips to the hospital throughout the novel—himself never believing his problems to be psychosomatic in nature and insisting on searching for underlying physical causes.

Finally, a recurring theme in dark academia novels seems to be financial disparity. It is common in these novels to contrast the privileged life of many of the students at the given prestigious university with that of a less privileged, lower-class student, which showcases the inequality prevalent in academic environments, as the novels present how much harder the underprivileged students have to work to attend the same program as their wealthier peers. Usually in dark academia novels, the student coming from a lower-class background—often put in the position of the narrator—somehow manages to get in with the help of scholarships, work-study programs, financial aid, benefactors etc. In this construction, the narrator starts out as an outsider and has to work harder than the others to keep up with the group and their studies while keeping up a façade to hide the differences. For example, in *The Secret History* Richard comes from a regular, lower middle-class family in California while the rest of the group come from generational wealth—as such, Richard has to work while studying since he does not get an allowance from his parents as opposed to the others who live off of trust funds and monthly stipends. In a very similar vein, Rio’s narrator Oliver in *If We Were Villains* almost has to cut his studies short when his family announce they are no longer able to pay his tuition: he has to spend about half a day making calls to try to make arrangements for his last semester. He also does a work-study program, which involves cleaning the dorms, however, he hides this from his friends out of shame.

To conclude, dark academia literature, then, showcases the underside of academia: students becoming obsessed with their studies and grades, the hardships of funding their education and the often squalid living quarters quarters. As Fleming writes in a chapter aptly titled “Student Hellscape”: “What is your score as a human being? All perspective is lost and academic results can take on a life or death urgency. Additional worries about student debt, job insecurity and greedy landlords amplify this false universalisation of academic performance,

crowding out other sources of value and dignity. No wonder so many are cracking under the stress” (136-137). Through these oft-horrifying portrayals of student life and the college environment, dark academia novels manage to convey the current anxieties and the states of mind of the students, thus reflecting on and critiquing higher education while simultaneously providing a kind of escape, an alternate reality, a fantasy of college experience to current real life students.

Institutional problems: sexual abuse and campus security

Ever-present in dark academia novels are the unhealthy student-teacher relationships and issues of campus safety, evoking notions of the Gothic such as sexual violence, the silencing of victims, abuses of power and the violation of boundaries. This reoccurring motif of abusive teachers in dark academia literature could reflect contemporary anxieties around the rising number of sexual assaults committed on university campuses.

As the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) writes based on statistical reports, “13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (among all graduate and undergraduate students)” and “[a]mong undergraduate students, 26.4% of females and 6.8% of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation” while “5.8% of students have experienced stalking since entering college.” Sadly, “[o]nly 20% of female student victims, age 18-24, report to law enforcement.”

As I have discussed above, there are cases of sexual abuse and an abuse of power in dark academia fiction, such as with the case of Jessica in *In My Dreams I Hold A Knife* or the teacher in the Hungarian dark academia novel *House of Prey* (*Prédák háza*) who drugs and rapes at least one girl, and attempts to do so with a second. But even more typical is the kind of student-teacher relationship that is not necessarily sexual in nature, yet there is still something unnerving or unnatural about it. These overly close student-teacher relationships cross all socially acceptable boundaries. Often the teachers provide more emotional comfort than would be appropriate—as is the case in *Bunny* with Samantha and Alan Reid, her thesis supervisor: the two of them get so close to each other that everyone on campus begins to speculate that they are having an affair, when in fact they are only emotionally involved with each other; however, their relationship ends when Samantha has a breakdown in front of Alan. His lack of reaction strongly affects Samantha, causing her to avoid Alan and not submit any work during the autumn term.

Julian, the eccentric teacher of the classics group in *The Secret History*, is the epitome of this kind of teacher: he insists on separating his students from everyone and everything else, only allowing them to have classes with himself or people he specifically chooses, he talks freely with his students about everything and seems to encourage their dangerous ideas (such as taking drugs in order to recreate an ancient Greek bacchanal). Once the secret is out—that the missing member of the group was killed by the rest of them,—Julian flees the country, most likely not wanting to get entangled in it all, possibly fearing repercussions for his involvement in the students' lives.

In some cases in dark academia novels, the lack of teacher and faculty interference is also present, which may correspond to notions of institute apathy and lack of responsibility. Teachers and faculty do not step in when needed, and often do not adequately address or consolidate matters of student conflict—which can once again be read as a critique of an academic environment that lets abuse and violence fester without intervention. Examples of 'turning a blind eye' by the faculty can be seen when neither in Samantha's (*Bunny*) nor in Jessica's (*In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*) case does someone step in to investigate or even question the matters—even though in Samantha's case it is very visible how close she gets to her thesis advisor (with persistent rumours of a sexual relationship), while in Jessica's case it is almost an open secret that this particular professor coerces female students into sleeping with him. In *If We Were Villains*, the teachers witness Richard's violent outbursts multiple times but do nothing to effectively step in and control his behaviour—there are no repercussions for him even when a rehearsal has to be stopped after he physically assaults his classmates during a scene.

However, it is not only the teachers and the faculty who are at times abusive. In dark academia novels, the students themselves are abusive towards each other, with notable portrayals of intimate partner violence, thus, by bringing this issue to light, these novels depict contemporary student anxieties about sexual, physical and emotional abuse on campus. In 2017—the year when *If We Were Villains* was published, and dark academia's popularity was growing—Ashley Reicher published an article about the prevalence of intimate partner violence on college campuses, titled "What's Love Got to Do With It? How Current Law Overlooks the Complexities of Intimate Partner Violence on College and University Campuses." In it, she began with an overview of the data and statistics about the topic, stating:

Sexual violence on college and university campuses has been at the forefront of national attention in recent years. ... Research reveals that as many as forty-three percent of

women who are dating on college and university campuses experience abusive behavior from their partner. ... Intimate partner violence most commonly takes the form of psychological abuse, and reports indicate that between eighty and ninety percent of students are subjected to psychological abuse by an intimate partner during their time at a college or university. (837-839)

The issue of intimate partner violence and violence among students in general has been present in academia and at the forefront of discussions since the 2010s, with often worsening statistics and more and more publicity—coinciding with the rise of dark academia’s popularity.

The most climactic instances of abuse and violence perpetrated by the students in the novels are the murders, such as: Henry pushing Bunny to his death (*The Secret History*), James hitting Richard with a boat hook (*If We Were Villains*), or Mint stabbing Heather 17 times with a pair of scissors (*In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*). There are other instances of violence such as, as I mentioned above, Richard (*Villains*) physically and sometimes verbally abusing his classmates (for example, using real force and aggression instead of staged combat) or Mint (*In My Dreams*) beating up the TA who told him about the professor who slept with Jess. Cases of intimate partner violence are also present: Charles abuses Camilla (*History*) to the point where she has to flee their apartment for her personal safety, and Mint actually intends to kill his girlfriend, Jessica for humiliating him by sleeping with a professor—completely disregarding the fact that she was not an enthusiastically consenting party and that this was an abuse of power on the part of the teacher.

In the author’s note to his book *These Violent Delights*, Micah Nemerever describes his conception of his narrative as such:

Along with many other members of the post-Columbine generation, I spent my childhood being told by the culture at large that adolescent anger was a latent threat of violence—that the alienation and sense of grievance living inside me could erupt at any moment into monstrosity. I was terrified of my own anger and of where it might lead me, perhaps without my even realizing it. (461)

It may well be that for students in the United States, the history of school shootings and the constant threat thereof, creates an environment wherein violence becomes normalised and aggressive outbursts become not uncommon. Nemerever’s protagonist Paul had such an outburst in high school (beating up another boy from his school) so now at university “[i]t wasn’t that he was afraid of the others, exactly. ... Paul didn’t trust himself to listen too closely to what the boys said outside the door. If he heard the wrong thing, he knew his self-control would snap” (90).

To conclude, the students in these novels face extraordinary personal hardships that seem to mirror contemporary issues surrounding academia. The sexually predatory nature of some teachers and the unhealthy emotional entanglement of others—along with the tendency of the institutions to turn a blind eye—create a damaging academic environment wherein the lines are blurred, the boundaries violated, leading to a confusion in the roles of both students and professors. The students start to feel a kind of personal responsibility to the teachers, wanting to live up to higher standards with the fear of disappointing the teacher, while the teachers get too close to and involved in the students' personal lives and are therefore unable to remain professional. It is also clear that, in line with real life statistics, the abuse and violence inflicted upon students by their peers goes unchecked and unquestioned for the most part, contributing to further mental health problems experienced by the victimised students, a general feeling of stifling secrecy and alienation, and an overall unsafe academic environment.

Obsession, belonging, queerness and identity: group dynamics in dark academia novels

“I am nothing in my soul if not obsessive” says Richard, the narrator of *The Secret History* (Tartt 30). Throughout dark academia novels, obsession is a permanent fixture—be that an obsession with ideals, with studying or with each other. These all-consuming interests and relationships create a Gothic-like atmosphere of secrecy and seclusion, riddled with dark secrets and suppressed desires. The students at the heart of these novels always form a closed, tight-knit group into which entry is near impossible and which seems mysterious and elusive to outsiders. These groups are often formed on the basis of field of study, such as the Greek class in *The Secret History* or the final year acting students of *If We Were Villains* or general proximity, such as the East House Seven in *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*, named after the dorm they all lived in during their freshmen year. It may be inferred that the students' lack of strong family ties make them susceptible to forming these overly-close bonds to their peers, even bordering on obsession in some cases, in order to fill their emotional need to belong and be accepted. In turn, this may make them desperate to maintain these attachments in lieu of blood relations at all cost and thus lead them to do or excuse actions they otherwise would not for the sole purpose of maintaining the group's integrity, and ensuring their place within it.

The main characters of these books are often described as coming from dysfunctional families which may be the reason they gravitate towards these groups. Absent or mentally ill parents, parents who have passed away, parents who are not supportive of the student's

aspirations, divorced parents, abusive parents are all featured in one way or another in these novels, usually in the context of a character admitting (at least to themselves) that they are deeply hurt and/or traumatised by this. Oftentimes a character has nowhere to go home to for school breaks, or even if they do go home, the situation there makes them wish they were back on campus. This is how Richard presents his home life and background at the beginning of *The Secret History*: “[m]y father was mean, and our house ugly, and my mother didn't pay much attention to me” (Tartt 6); Oliver (*If We Were Villains*) when asked if he misses his home says no and thinks to himself: “I could have told him that as far as I was concerned, Dellecher [the college] was home” (Rio 194).

A common feature in dark academia novels is an us versus them mentality with these core groups separating themselves from the rest of the student body, forming a separate entity and interacting almost only with each other, forming deep attachments to one another—a behaviour that could stem from the unsupportive, absent or abusive family background experienced by students. Often the students of these groups live together in a separate dormitory space or have classes in a separate part of campus. They mostly interact with one another, and oftentimes only have classes with each other and a limited number of teachers (usually just one or two). For example, *The Secret History*'s Greek class is taught by only one teacher, Samantha's (*Bunny*) entire semester consists of a workshop led by just one teacher, and, in *If We Were Villains*, the class has two main teachers and one stage combat instructor with whom they occasionally have classes. Of the East House Seven in *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* it is said that “[w]hen they were together, they moved like a flock of birds, in perfect sync, legs extending, arms swinging in unison. It had an effect. Other people moved out of their way, allowing them to glide through spaces with a buffer, move as freely through campus as if they owned it” (Winstead 167). The members of these groups depicted in dark academia novels clearly stand out while staying apart from their fellow students.

This seclusion on the one hand contributes to the elite status of these groups and adds to the enticing mystique surrounding them: students outside these groups look on them with curiosity, either intrigued by what goes on behind closed doors or considering the group odd and looking on them with suspicion. On the other hand, this seclusion from the rest of the student body makes it significantly harder for members of the group to access resources or ask for help when needed—both because of the internal pressure of the group to ‘handle matters amongst themselves’ but also because seclusion and alienation often make it harder to recognise harmful behaviours surrounding oneself while the secrecy of these groups veils what is going on from everyone else. For instance, even though Bunny (*The Secret History*) fears for his life

at one point, he does not alert any authorities, but simply writes a letter to their teacher which is then misplaced and not found until too late. Many characters in these novels do not seek help because of shame, like Richard (*The Secret History*) who would freeze to death sleeping in an abandoned warehouse rather than tell anyone he has nowhere to go during winter break, since he does not want to admit that he has no money and thus risk being excluded from the group.

Characteristic of these groups of friends depicted in dark academia novels is that their closeness to each other very often includes sexual and/or romantic relationships between them—often in the form of ‘love triangles,’ multiple people having dated or wanting to date the same person, or two members sleeping together in secret. This may be a manifestation of the group’s closedness, that is, the members of the group engage only with each other and thus use these borderline obsessive relationships to fill every aspect of their lives, including their desire for romantic and sexual contact. While there is an instance of actual incest (between Charles and Camilla in *The Secret History*), the group’s closedness may be conceived of as metaphorical incest, as the members keep interactions with ‘outsiders’ to a minimum in most cases and prefer to limit their romantic pursuits to members of the core group making the group seem strangely ‘inbred’. Most notorious in this respect is probably *The Secret History* where Richard and Henry are both attracted to Camilla, Camilla to Henry, Charles is in an abusive incestuous relationship with his twin sister Camilla, while also sleeping with Francis in secret. In *In My Dreams*, the narrator even remarks that the group is “[l]ike a damn cult, all of them so wrapped up in each other they [are] practically in love” (Winstead 144). Even in the cases where there is no romantic or sexual involvement, the friends are very protective of one another and often suspicious or even jealous if a member of the group interacts with an outsider, especially if the interaction is not casual (e.g. Bunny in *The Secret History* is in a relationship with Marion, a regular girl at their college on whom the others always look down on; Caro in *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* feels left out so she stalks and follows the others to check what they are doing).

Numerous dark academia novels and films feature LGBTQ+ themes and plots—even *The Secret History* discusses homosexuality with an openness that is surprising for a 1992 novel. Simone Murray writes in her article that on social media, dark academia has a “strongly queer flavour” especially among male adherents (349) and similarly Bateman in her *New York Times* article claims that dark academia “has a dedicated LGBTQ+ following” and it “emphasizes inclusivity and gender fluidity.” However, while the characters depicted in these novels are themselves usually not homophobic, the characters involved in queer relationships often keep their relationship secret, or at least semi-secret. Notably, both *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* and *If We Were Villains* concludes with revelations about queer love: in the former, an

entire relationship is revealed between Frankie and Jack, while in the latter, James declares his love for Oliver, who decides to assume the blame for James's crime as an act of love for him. In *The Secret History*, Francis admits to sleeping with Charles on multiple occasions but notes that Charles was always drunk when he came to Francis's room, suggesting that Charles was ashamed of this desire and felt the need to dull his senses with alcohol. Micah Nemerever's 2020 novel, *These Violent Delights* also features two openly queer main characters in a relationship with the novel's "prevailing concern" being "the kind of toxic and identity-consuming romantic friendship that many queer people experience in their teens" (462). There is one significant outlier, namely Olivie Blake's *The Atlas Six*, which features a basically all-queer cast of characters. The author herself wrote on the publishing company Pan Macmillan's website:

My version of telling the truth puts character before genre. What some call queer representation, I call 'a book' – in this case, a book that looks past social conventions of sexuality and identity and towards a more inclusive version of the world that I exist in. ... In crafting the characters of *The Atlas Six*, rather than using the typical labels for sexuality, I allowed them to exist on a sliding scale.

All this may signify that while the academic environments depicted in these books are not, strictly speaking, unwelcoming or hostile towards members of the LGBTQ+ community, there still seems to be a stigma around queer relationships, with the characters possibly having to overcome internalised homophobia and self-loathing, or ultimately having to live their lives in secret. On the one hand, this inclusivity is refreshing and comforting to many, especially the ability to be part of welcoming, inclusive online communities in real life, as well as reading about queer characters in stories where the main focus is not the homophobia experienced by them. On the other hand, the representation of closeted characters leaves a lot to still be desired. Although, with authors like Blake along with dark academia's commingling with the fantasy genre, matters may shift towards more positive representations—as she writes, "a universe with powers beyond comprehension does not waste time on bigotry."

Narrative style and structure

The narrative style and structure of dark academia novels is very similar: the two most often employed characteristics are first-person narration (often with an unreliable narrator) and non-linear timelines. Through the first-person narration the reader becomes more involved and invested in the story, while it may be surmised that this fragmentation of narratives symbolises

and reflects the mental disturbance experienced by the students involved and at the same time, the unreliable narrators shroud the story in more secrecy adding to the mystique of these elusive groups—much like in the case of Gothic fiction.

Usually, the novels are told in the first person, with the narrators acting as focalisers—though there are some exceptions. *Ninth House* and *These Violent Delights* are told in the third person, while others present the story through different narrators and focalisers. *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* has a first-person narrator, Jessica, who is the focaliser through most of the novel; however, as the characters piece together the events of the past, certain chapters are written in the third person, employing a limited non-participant narrator with a different focaliser for each of these chapters whose name is included in the chapter title. These chapters ‘fill in the blanks’ by revealing crucial information that neither the reader nor Jessica knew; yet they seemingly come unprompted, unrelated to the present discussion in many cases and in no particular order (not chronologically). These chapters may be a way to further involve the readers by letting them in on the secrets of individual group members. In *House of Prey*, the first-person narration is sometimes interrupted by testimony-like monologues from different characters with the change also being visually represented by white letters on black pages. Another common feature is having unreliable narrators: probably the most notable among them is Samatha, who supposedly suffers from schizophrenia, but many dark academia books use unreliable narrators possibly to ‘muddy the picture’ and hinder the reader’s understanding in order to convey the confusion experienced by the characters as they wade through the secrecy permeating their relationships.

What is more, often these novels operate with non-linear timelines and convey the events through fragmented narratives. Regardless of the number of perspectives, focalisers and narrators, dark academia novels seem to regard time as a crucially important factor, and very often emphasise temporality—and the fragmentation and confusion thereof. It is not a rare occurrence that these novels name a specific time period in the chapter titles such as *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife* (e.g. Chapter 2: Now; Chapter 3: August, Freshman Year) or *Ninth House* (e.g. Chapter 1: Winter; Chapter 2: Last Fall). In *Graveyard Shift*, wherein the plot takes place over the course of just one night, the specific “timestamps” serve as chapter titles, e. g. “12:00 AM” or “3:50 AM.” Oftentimes there is a frame story in the present, embedded in which is the story of the past told by one or more people. For instance, in the case of *If We Were Villains* whose structure mimics a play (consisting of five acts, each containing a prologue and numerous scenes), Oliver talks to a police officer (in the prologue of every act, set in the present) about what happened in their final year of college 30 years ago (with the events

unfolding in the scenes); or *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*, in which the present is the class reunion (chapters titled “Now”) where the murder of Heather is being discussed and the story of their college years is reconstructed through each individual’s narrative (for which the timeframe is given in the chapter title). This evokes detective novels and murder mystery thrillers, both of which serve as components of the dark academia genre. Twisting the traditional “whodunit” stories into “whydunits”, these novels often reveal the murder itself early on in the narrative, and then slowly reconstruct the “hows” and the “whys” of the crime as the story progresses, thus shifting the focus away from the crime itself onto the psychological elements thereof, showcasing the characters’ straying from stability and a sense of normalcy and the creeping descent into chaos and mental distress.

It may be inferred that this focus on the psychological side, the placing of mental stability and subsequent disintegration and unravelling in the centre along with the narrative choices of non-linearity and first-person narration could all act as manifestations of student anxieties, a reflection of the real-world shift in attention paid to student mental health problems.

Conclusion

Dark academia, then, originating on social media as a trend in aesthetics, grew into what is now a distinguishable literary genre over about a decade. It still remains strong on social media, its popularity steadily growing, now with entire online communities built up around the enjoyment of the “dark academia aesthetic,” allowing people to immerse themselves in an academic fantasy in a world where humanities departments do not always get their due. In terms of literature, the genre also keeps growing and evolving, merging with new genres, centring new protagonists—yet still keeping in line with most of the characteristics outlined by this present paper. In short, dark academia in literature reflects the real-life experiences of students in academia. It may act as a coping mechanism for readers who are themselves students experiencing certain anxieties about their lives or studies. It gives voice to underprivileged students, frequently centring them in narratives thus highlighting their added difficulties in a system that often favours those who come from wealth. Often utilising first-person narration, dark academia novels involve the readers more directly, while the unreliable narrators make the core groups, and the plot on the whole, seem more elusive and intangible. The genre’s use of fragmented narratives and non-linear timelines may be a reflection of the disrupted mental state of the characters, of the unravelling and disintegration of the central friend groups—all of which might be conceived of as the narratological representation of real-life student anxieties. By invoking notions of the Gothic—from the bleak, gloomy settings to the subject material, namely mental health and substance abuse—and shifting the focus to within, by emphasising the psychological aspects, the dark academia genre is able to portray not only the dire mental health crises experienced by students (grounded in real-world data) but through this, the novels are able to offer readers a critique of academia as an environment in which students are “allowed” to sink and sink without faculty intervention. In conclusion, dark academia may be seen as a complex literary genre with an intermingling of established literary traditions and contemporary anxieties and trends; and with the possibility of reading it for the sake of the pure enjoyment of thriller murder mysteries set in an academic environment, or reading it for the critique of academia, as Gothic-inspired psychological horrors that showcase the darker side of university life.

Works cited

Primary sources

- Awad, Mona. *Bunny*. Penguin Books, 2020.
- Bardugo, Leigh. *Hell Bent*. Gollancz, 2024.
- . *Ninth House*. Gollancz, 2020.
- Blake, Olivie. *The Atlas Complex*. Tor, 2024.
- . *The Atlas Paradox*. Tor, 2024.
- . *The Atlas Six*. Tor, 2022.
- Hunt, Diana. *Prédák háza [House of Prey]*. Magánkiadás, 2024.
- Kleinbaum, N. H. *Dead Poets Society*. Hyperion, 2006.
- Kuang, R. F. *Babel or the Necessity of Violence*. HarperVoyager, 2023.
- Michaelides, Alex. *The Maidens*. Celadon Books, 2023.
- Nemerever, Micah. *These Violent Delights*. Harper Perennial, 2021.
- O'Regan, Marie, and Paul Kane, editors. *In These Hallowed Halls: A Dark Academia Anthology*. Titan Books, 2024.
- Rio, M. L. *If We Were Villains*. Titan Books, 2017.
- . *Graveyard Shift*. Wildfire, 2024.
- Tartt, Donna. *The Secret History*. Penguin Books, 1993.
- Winstead, Ashley. *In My Dreams I Hold a Knife*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023.

Secondary sources

- “7 Surprising Facts About *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt.” *Penguin*, 25 Oct. 2022, <https://www.penguin.co.nz/articles/3708-7-surprising-facts-about-the-secret-history-by-donna-tartt>. Accessed 9 Jan. 2025.
- “About.” *M. L. Rio*, 5 Apr. 2023, mlrio.com/about. Accessed 9 Jan. 2025.
- “Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics.” *RAINN*, <https://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2024.
- Alonso, Johanna. “Student Mental Health Worsens, but More Are Seeking Help.” *Inside Higher Ed*, 16 Mar. 2023, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2023/03/17/student-mental-health-worsens-more-are-seeking-help>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2024

- Bateman, Kristen. "Academia Lives — on TikTok." *The New York Times*, 30 June 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/style/dark-academia-tiktok.html>. Accessed 26 Oct. 2024.
- Fleming, Peter. *Dark Academia: How Universities Die*. Pluto Press, 2021.
- Heller, Nathan. "The End of the English Major." *The New Yorker*, 27 Feb. 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/the-end-of-the-english-major>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.
- Jaschik, Scott. "Humanities Graduate Education Is Shrinking." *Inside Higher Ed*, 28 Apr. 2022, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/04/29/study-humanities-graduate-education-shrinking>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.
- Lloyd-Smith, Alan. *American Gothic Fiction – An Introduction*. Continuum, 2004.
- Murray, Simone. "Dark Academia: Bookishness, Readerly Self-fashioning and the Digital Afterlife of Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*." *English Studies*, vol.104, no.2, 2023, pp.347-364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2023.2170596>.
- Nguyen, Maryann. "Nostalgia in Dark Academia." *East-West Cultural Passage*, vol.22, no.1, 2022, pp. 54-72. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ewcp-2022-0003>
- Olivie, Blake. "Olivie Blake on Why Fantasy has Become a Welcome Home for LGBTQIA+ Characters and Themes." *Pan Macmillan*, 22 Mar. 2022, <https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/science-fiction-and-fantasy/olivie-blake-why-is-fantasy-a-welcome-home-for-lgbtq>. Accessed 19 Nov. 2024.
- Reicher, Ashley. "What's Love Got to Do With It? How Current Law Overlooks the Complexities of Intimate Partner Violence on College and University Campuses." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, vol.44, no. 3, 2017, pp. 833-865. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ulj/vol44/iss3/8/>.
- Taylor, Gunner. "Tweed Jackets and Class Consciousness." *Dark Academia*, edited by Olivia Stowell and Mitch Therieau, *Post45*, 2022, <https://post45.org/2022/03/tweed-jackets-and-class-consciousness/>. Accessed 26 Oct. 2024.
- Truong, Zoe. "The Decline of the Humanities Is Not Willful, It's Just Ignorance." *JCAL*, 15 July 2024, <https://www.jcal.news/stories/the-decline-of-the-humanities-is-not-willful-its-just-ignorance/>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.
- Williams, Jeffrey J. "The Rise of the Academic Novel." *American Literary History*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2012, pp. 561–89. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23249750>. Accessed 9 Jan. 2025.

Williams, Tom. "Disadvantaged Students Suffer As New Subject 'Cold Spots' Develop."
Times Higher Education, 20 Nov. 2024,
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/disadvantaged-students-suffer-new-subject-cold-spots-develop>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.