



## Salazar Slytherin as a Gothic Archetype: A Baldickian Interpretation of the Tyranny of the Past

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### Abstract

This paper aims to provide a detailed literary analysis of Salazar Slytherin, a character from *J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter* book series (1997–2007), as a quintessential Gothic figure. It repositions the 10th-century founder of Hogwarts not just as a historical enemy in the Wizarding World, but as a key figure in the Gothic tradition. The study focuses on the ideas of critic *Chris Baldick*, who identifies several aspects of Gothic literature, such as the "tyranny of the past," the "stifling of the present," and the physical representation of these forces in confined or underground "dead-end" spaces. The paper argues that Slytherin represents the Byronic Villain. He is marked by an aristocratic ego and an obsessive belief in blood purity, reflecting the Gothic themes of ancestral decline and the "bad blood" in failing dynasties. By looking at *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* book and film through the perspective of Gothic architecture, this study shows how Slytherin's underground lair acts as a "dead-end" crypt. This space physically embodies repressed secrets that burst into the modern world, disrupting the educational haven of the school. Furthermore, the analysis connects Slytherin's character to the Dark Academia subculture. It explores how his status as the "Master of the Macabre," defined by Parseltongue and the control of the Basilisk, connects with the Gothic concept of the "Sublime," where fear and wonder meet. By comparing Slytherin to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's ideas of "the unspeakable" and "the stifling of hopes," the article concludes that Slytherin is the main creator of the Gothic style at Hogwarts. His legacy is not a fixed history but a living "haunting." This shows that the Gothic nature of his character lies in his power to keep the ancient past in a harmful, overwhelming hold on the living.

Keywords: Salazar Slytherin, Gothic Fiction, Chris Baldick, Dark Academia, Byronic Hero

### INTRODUCTION

The "Gothic" as a literary style is defined by a fascination with the ancient, the eerie, and the breaking of societal rules in the quest for forbidden knowledge. In the landscape of 21st-century literature and the emerging digital cultures of 2026, Salazar Slytherin has evolved from a historical villain to a key figure in the Dark Academia and Gothic Horror genres. While traditional scholars often view Slytherin simply as a fantasy villain, his portrayal as a 10th-century noble master of the Dark Arts is marked by underground settings, the unique language of Parseltongue, and an obsession with bloodlines. This suggests a fit with the foundations of Gothic theory. Critics such as Chris Baldick and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offer essential insights into this change, particularly through the idea of a "tyranny of the past," which physically appears in hidden, underground dead ends. As Slytherin's legacy continues to haunt the modern Wizarding World, a formal analysis is needed to connect popular fantasy with established Gothic literary theory.

The primary goal of this research is to show that Salazar Slytherin is a clear Gothic archetype by using Chris Baldick's ideas of ancestral tyranny and claustrophobic spaces in relation to the lore of the Chamber of Secrets. This study will examine Slytherin's psychological profile, defined by Byronic isolation, sharp intellect, and paranoid ambition, in comparison to the typical traits of a Gothic hero-villain. Furthermore, the research looks at how Dark Academia aesthetics, like the emerald and silver colour scheme, blend with broader Gothic themes of "the unspeakable" and the weight of heritage. By breaking down these elements, the study aims to justify that Slytherin is not just a character in a story, but a creator of the story's Gothic atmosphere. This study makes a valuable contribution to literary criticism by linking popular contemporary fiction with the formal theories of Baldick and Sedgwick. It provides a deeper understanding of how Dark Academia uses Gothic elements to create morally complex characters, clarifying the aesthetic trends seen in 2026 media. Ultimately, this work serves the academic community by showing that the Gothic style remains an important and evolving way to explore the lasting influence of characters who embody the darker, hidden aspects of human imagination.

## METHODOLOGY

This study analyses qualitative data using Chris Baldick's framework as found in his book, *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (1992). The main data includes the historical background of Salazar Slytherin from the text of Harry Potter, and the architectural details of the Chamber of Secrets found in official Wizarding World-related texts and the movie. We selected key narrative elements based on how Slytherin's 10th-century isolationism and architectural works meet Baldick's criteria for the Gothic style, as seen in the introduction part of Baldick's aforementioned book.

The analysis unfolds in these few steps:

1. Identification of the Tyranny of the Past: This step shows how Slytherin's 10th-century beliefs and obsession with blood purity create a harmful and unavoidable influence over characters and events in the 20th and 21st-century Wizarding World.
2. Examining Physical Incarnations in "Dead-End" Spaces: This analysis examines the Chamber of Secrets as a physical Gothic underground crypt that contains the character's hidden secrets and monstrous legacies within a cramped, "dead-end" environment.
3. Analysing the Stifling of the Present: This step explores how Slytherin's transgressive medieval interventions, particularly the placement of the Basilisk, disrupt the functioning of a modern educational institution by suspending safety, rational order, and institutional continuity within Hogwarts.
4. Identification of the Anti-Gothic Function: This point demonstrates how Slytherin is not celebrated as a medieval founder but constructed as a figure of regression, whose beliefs are framed as barbaric, irrational, and dangerous by the modern Wizarding World.
5. Application of the Homeopathic Principle: This step examines how the narrative reintroduces Slytherin's archaic horrors, such as blood purity ideology, secrecy, and inherited violence, only to symbolically expose, confront, and ultimately neutralise their authority through narrative defeat and containment.
6. Emphasis on Historical Specificity Over Universal Fear: This step situates Slytherin's ideology within a specific medieval context of exclusionary power, demonstrating that the fear he embodies emerges from historically located structures of authority rather than from timeless or universal human anxieties.
7. Examination of Gothicized Spaces Rather Than Inherent Evil: This focuses on how locations, institutions, and symbols associated with Slytherin are rendered Gothic through narrative framing, rather than being presented as intrinsically monstrous.
8. Historical Construction of Lineage-Based Authority: This step examines how Slytherin's emphasis on lineage and blood purity functions as a historically situated system of power, Gothicized by the narrative to expose the dangers of inherited authority and exclusionary hierarchy rather than to evoke a romanticised vision of aristocratic decline.

In addition to Baldick's framework, secondary theoretical lenses are applied as well to this analysis: the Byronic hero archetype, which is inspired by Lord Byron, helps frame Slytherin's brooding isolation and dramatic exile; the concept of the uncanny, as theorized by Sigmund Freud in *Das Unheimliche*, explains the unsettling nature of his Parseltongue ability and the hidden terrors of the Chamber of Secrets; and Dark Academia aesthetics provide a contemporary lens to understand how Gothic themes of secrecy, intellectual elitism, and moral ambiguity resonate in modern interpretations of Hogwarts. Together, these perspectives support a multi-faceted reading of Slytherin as a quintessential Gothic figure.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Results:

The findings indicate that Salazar Slytherin operates as a Gothic structure of inherited transgression rather than a conventional antagonist, sustaining narrative conflict through ideology, space, and legacy. Textual and visual data were collected and organised according to the stages as defined by Chris Baldick, and other secondary data from other critics, as mentioned in Methodology. This ensures that the analytical focus remains consistent across both historical lore and environmental storytelling. Furthermore, this method ensures that theoretical coherence was maintained throughout the study. Notes from close readings of canonical histories and spatial transcriptions of the subterranean environments were coded thematically in light of Gothic structural categories such as ancestral tyranny, spatial repression, and the eruption of the past. The scenes, passages, and architectural descriptions were selected based on their direct connection to the characters' legacy and the narrative flow of the school's history.

These elements were chosen due to their direct relevance to the transition from a stable pedagogical environment to an atmosphere of Gothic dread, particularly where Slytherin's ancient paranoia alters the safety of the present or leads to institutional collapse. In the canonical records of the 10th century, key descriptions of Slytherin's departure and his ideological schism were prioritised for their articulation of Byronic isolation. In the visual and textual depictions of the Chamber of Secrets, pivotal moments were selected to demonstrate narrative disruption and the "physical incarnation" of his secrets, including the activation of the Basilisk and the discovery of the subterranean "dead-end" crypt beneath the school's foundations.

### 1. Justification for the Selected Framework, Text and TV Series: Chris Baldick's Gothic Criteria

The framework established by Chris Baldick (1992) was selected due to the fact that it provides a rigid, structuralist, and clear set of metrics with which one can define the Gothic as something that is beyond mere atmospheric "mood." Baldick's criteria of the tyranny of the past, the stifling of the present, and the physical incarnation in dead-end spaces do indeed offer a tangible way to measure Salazar Slytherin's narrative influence. This model allows us to move beyond the label of "fantasy villain" and argue that Slytherin's role is structurally Gothic, as his 10th-century legacy functions as a literal and psychological trap for the contemporary characters.

The primary texts selected for this paper, and the analysis done on them, are based on the canonical historical records of Salazar Slytherin as the founder of Slytherin house, and as a character who was obsessed with purity, leading to the dark themes with which he can be argued as a Gothic archetype. The text and film references are from *J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter* (1997–2007) book series. The architectural lore is specifically taken from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, both the text (1998) and the film (2002) version. These were chosen because they offer a thousand-year narrative arc necessary to observe the "tyranny of the past" in action.

Furthermore, the visual depictions of Slytherin's legacy in the Harry Potter film series (specifically *The Chamber of Secrets*), as well as the implied legacy of Slytherin throughout the books and movies, and the environmental storytelling in *Hogwarts Legacy* (2023), are utilised to analyse the "physical incarnation" of Gothic themes. These sources provide the aesthetic density, such as green-hued lighting that can be argued as a Gothic element, titanic subterranean statues, and serpent motifs that are required to validate the character's status as a master of the macabre and an architect of the subterranean. This research tries to achieve validity by strictly aligning canonical character traits (e.g., Parseltongue, blood-purity obsession) with Baldick's specific definitions. The study ensures that the "Gothic" label is not applied broadly but is substantiated by specific narrative evidence of historical "eruptions" into the present. Theoretical consistency ensures reliability; by using the three-point Baldickian scale, the analysis remains objective.

### 2. Limitations of Baldick's Model

Despite its structural strengths, Baldick's model possesses some inherent limitations when applied to Salazar Slytherin as a character. Since Slytherin is a 10th-century figure, a figure that is very much mysterious even in the wizarding world of *Harry Potter*, and so he is mostly described primarily through legend, theories, and hidden lore from the author and thus the reason why the model must rely on "inherited data" rather than direct character dialogue, which can obscure the psychological nuances of his Byronic temperament.

The framework of Baldick, with which we are analysing and viewing the character Salazar Slytherin in this paper, was originally intended for 18th and 19th-century literature. Thus, it poses some problems because applying it to a 21st-century high-fantasy context requires careful navigation to ensure that "magical" elements are not mistaken for "Gothic" elements unless they specifically serve the "tyranny of the past."

### Discussions:

This discussion section is the part where we shall synthesise the theoretical framework of Chris Baldick with the narrative data of Salazar Slytherin that can be accessed throughout the web, demonstrating how his character functions as a structural anchor for the Gothic mode. By mapping Slytherin's specific traits shown throughout all sources of the wizarding world of *J. K. Rowling* onto the Baldickian "Tyranny of the Past," and some other theories, we can confirm his status as a quintessential Gothic figure.

#### 1. The 10th-Century Ideological Ghost

The point of tyranny of the past is taken from this line of Chris Baldick, as written in his aforementioned book, "typically a Gothic tale will invoke the tyranny of the past (a family curse, the survival of archaic forms of despotism and of superstition)." Baldick's "tyranny of the past" can be interpreted through Slytherin's blood-purity ideology. Although he existed a millennium before the main narrative, his beliefs are not static history; they are an active, suffocating force. This illustrates how an ancient prejudice acts as a Gothic "haunting" that

contemporary characters cannot escape. His ideas behave as a curse passed through time because in the books, we observe how the house of Slytherin acts as an entity altogether that is against anything that is not pure from their perspective. The stereotype of this house is of blood purity and hate towards anything that is not pure in terms of blood and magic. This ideology, although not for all, is still followed by most of the students of this house. Also, most who come to Hogwarts with such prejudice are sorted into the Slytherin house automatically, for an example, the character *Draco Malfoy*. This ideology of Purity and isolation comes from Salazar Slytherin himself, as he was the only founder who did not want Muggles (non-magic folks) into the school as students or in the magical world in general.

Such hate of his reflects the injustice and prejudice of his time. His action of leaving behind a Basilisk, a giant snake-like creature that can kill just by looking in the eyes, inside the very school itself, to kill all those whom he does not consider pure, affects the current wizarding world as well. His millennium-old hate is still reflected in the entire house of Slytherin, and the house thus produces more dark wizards than any house, being the perfect example of "tyranny of the past" from Baldick's idea of the Gothic. Thus, it can be argued that Slytherin can be considered a Gothic fiction character. The ideology of Slytherin ideas outlive him. The ideology of his is much clearer through this quote in the book, "*Slytherin wished to be more selective about the students admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families. He disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy*" *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Chapter 9 (Professor Binns explaining the legend)*.

## 2. The Chamber as a "Dead-End" Physical Incarnation

The dead-end physical incarnation point used in this article is taken from a line of Baldick's book that refer it clearly, which is "*within the dead-end of physical incarceration (the dungeon, the locked room... schools, madhouses)*." Following Baldick's requirement for a subterranean space, the Chamber of Secrets, which is seen in the second book and the film (1998, 2002) of the series, serves as well as reflects the literal "physical incarnation" of Slytherin's psyche. It is a "dead-end" space as well as a damp, claustrophobic labyrinth. A dark place where his repressed hatred is physically housed, mirroring the dungeons of 18th-century Gothic novels. The book describes the place through this quote: "*He was standing at the end of a very long, dimly lit chamber. Towering stone pillars entwined with more carved serpents rose to support a ceiling lost in darkness, casting long, black shadows through the odd, greenish gloom that filled the place*" — *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Chapter 17*.

The Chamber, as the name implies, is a secret place. Still, it is also the place where the deadly snake-like creature, the Basilisk, was left behind by Slytherin, another symbol of his ideology and hatred for people of non-magic origin. This architecture reinforces the Gothic themes of hidden terror and creates a space where the past is literally seen waiting to strike the present. The narrow, winding corridors, the echoing emptiness of the chambers, and the sense of being trapped all in a dark place may be seen as a reflection of Slytherin's obsession with control, purity, old-world values and paranoia, making the Chamber in and of itself a manifestation of his enduring influence in the wizarding world. In this way, the Chamber doesn't just act as a repository, a place for the Basilisk, a dangerous creature, but also acts as a physical reminder that the founder's unresolved prejudices towards the Muggle community continue to dominate and threaten the lives of those within Hogwarts. This can be interpreted as embodying Baldick's idea of the Gothic "dead-end" space where the tyranny of the past lingers. A chamber that is metaphorically fueled by immortal, timeless hate. Visual symbols such as the recurrent use of green and silver, serpentine imagery, and monumental stone architecture reinforce the Gothicization of Slytherin's legacy. Following Baldick's assertion that the Gothic is imposed upon institutions and spaces, these visual codes function as narrative tools that materialise ideological fear rather than aesthetic decoration.

## 3. Stifling the Hopes of the Present

This point with which Slytherin is being analysed in this part is understood from this quote by Baldick in his book: "*with such weight as to stifle the hopes of the present.*" Slytherin's legacy serves to "stifle the present" by creating institutional rot in the wizarding world. Slytherin's idea of blood purity, along with his desire to kill all those who belong to the non-magic world, serves as the motivational point for many, thus justifying violence in the name of purity and racial superiority. This dynamic creates such situations in which institutions like Hogwarts rot morally, metaphorically, and literally. Thus, the term of this point comes to play because it's clear that his ideology, his view on racial superiority, and blood purity still affects the present day, even though the man behind the ideology is long gone many years ago. The "hope" for a unified and progressive Hogwarts is repeatedly destroyed by the "eruption" of Slytherin's ancient traps. This is where, again, stifling the hopes of the present

comes into play, because many institutions like Hogwarts cannot be unified or progress, all because Slytherin's very ideology hints at separatism.

His influence prevents the school from evolving, and makes it so that people still differentiate among themselves in the wizarding world even years after he is gone, keeping it perpetually anchored to his 10th-century paranoia. This goes very well with the target critics' definition of Gothic, and thus proposes Slytherin as a quintessential Gothic figure.

#### 4. The Byronic Isolationist

The character of Salazar Slytherin connects to the Gothic archetype of the Byronic Hero-Villain. His departure from the other three founders cannot ever be labelled as just a simple disagreement, but a dramatic, moody exile. His disagreement on how the school, and by extension, the rest of the wizarding world should be run is what makes him isolated. This "dark, brooding intellectual" persona is a cornerstone of the Gothic and Dark Academia aesthetics prevalent in 2026.

Slytherin, as a character, as seen in the texts and from other sources, is very much an isolated character, the reason being his dramatic departure from the original three founders, which also happened due to his disagreement over whether or not Muggles should be allowed into the school as students. When these are seen through the lens of an antagonist, he is a proper opposing force for the "good side" in the wizarding world. His dramatic and moody exile, along with his isolation, make him a proper candidate for a Gothic figure.

While this study is primarily grounded in Baldick's Gothic framework, the concept of Byronic heroism is employed here as a supplementary interpretive lens. Slytherin's self-imposed exile, intellectual arrogance, and moral absolutism align with the Gothic Byronic figure, whose isolation and defiance function not as romantic rebellion but as a source of ideological corruption. This supports Baldick's argument that Gothic figures often embody regressive forces masquerading as principled authority.

#### 5. Parseltongue as Linguistic "Otherness"

In Gothic theory, "the uncanny" refers to something that is both familiar and deeply unsettling, as Freud explains in *Das Unheimliche*. In the second book of the Harry Potter series, we see and learn about Parseltongue and how very few wizards have this gift. Such a gift is rare to the point that most don't even know about it or do not believe it actually exists, making it truly uncanny.

Here, we also learn that Salazar Slytherin himself was a Parselmouth, making him as uncanny and unsettling as one can be. Slytherin's gift of Parseltongue connects to this point due to the fact that this gift is about a human voice speaking a non-human language, a language that is heard by all but understood by very few, and thus creates a sense of otherness in the character of Slytherin. This linguistic barrier is what marks him as a "transgressive" figure who has stepped beyond the boundaries of normal human society as we know it, thus providing the necessary points to argue Salazar Slytherin as a Gothic fiction archetype or a Gothic figure in general. Rather than functioning as a purely psychological phenomenon, Parseltongue operates as a historically coded marker of exclusion and archaic survival. In this sense, linguistic otherness supports Freud's notion of the uncanny by showing how what is hidden or rare here, Slytherin's secretive language, can return to unsettle the familiar, while also reinforcing Baldick's insistence on historical specificity, as Slytherin's speech aligns him with pre-modern, feared, and marginalised forms of authority rather than universal or abstract monstrosity.

#### 6. The Basilisk as the Gothic "Monster of the Mind"

The Basilisk functions as the Gothic "monster of the mind," which indicates to the fact that this monster is not simply just a physical beast but a manifestation of Salazar Slytherin's repressed hatred and violent ideology. In Gothic tradition, monsters are rarely ever seen as just some random plot or entity, due to the fact that they are created as an external expression of internal corruption, guilt, or the forbidden desire within one. Slytherin's decision to hide such a creature within a school of all places, a place that is typically associated with safety, childhood, and learning, creates a highly disturbing contrast between the domestic and the horrific, which is a classic Gothic strategy. The Basilisk exists only because Slytherin's ideology exists, and it awakens only when that ideology is revived. The monster is not independent by itself, metaphorically speaking; it is an extension of Slytherin's beliefs, acting on his behalf centuries later.

The Basilisk's method of killing, which is sight alone, further strengthens its Gothic symbolism. It represents an unspeakable horror, something that can destroy any form of life without physical contact, mirroring the fact that how ideology itself can kill without any direct violence. The idea of Baldick that Gothic monsters often reveal the hidden sins of their creators can be directly applied here, as the Basilisk embodies Slytherin's hate for the Muggles, as well as his secret wish to purge the school of those he considered impure.

The monster becomes the physical proof of the fact that Slytherin's hatred was never symbolic or rhetorical, but was deeply violent and premeditated. Through the Basilisk, Slytherin's mind continues to operate long after his body is gone, reinforcing his role as a Gothic figure whose inner darkness takes material form. This description of the monster and its intense nature from the book can be seen as a justification for this point: *"The Basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death"* — *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Chapter 16 (from the library page Hermione ripped out)*

## 7. Aristocratic Decay and Blood Obsession

The aristocratic decay and blood obsession perspective was obtained through Baldick's description of it in this quote: *"preoccupation with the inherited powers and corruptions of feudal aristocracy."* Baldick's Gothic framework frequently addresses the decay of aristocratic families, and Slytherin's obsession with blood purity fits directly into this tradition. His belief that magical worth is inherited through blood reflects the Gothic idea that greatness, power, or madness is passed down through lineage. However, Gothic narratives consistently show that such obsession leads not to preservation but to decay. This can be read as a reflection on the fate of Slytherin's descendants, particularly the Gaunt family. Despite their pure-blood status, they are totally gone as only three of them were left; they are described as physically deformed, and one of them is even mentally as well. They live in poverty, isolation, and instability, which can be seen as blood purity offers no moral or social superiority. They just create a fake sense of superiority and ego that makes these families unstable, leading to the collapse of most of them.

This collapse mirrors the Gothic trope of the fallen noble houses, where an obsession with ancestry and blood purity results in internal rot. Slytherin's ideology does not strengthen his lineage; it destroys it. His bloodline, through the texts, is seen becoming a symbol of corruption, violence, and madness, culminating in the symbol of all darkness, Lord Voldemort, who embodies the extreme outcome of this obsession that he proudly stood for. Baldick's focus on sanguinary themes is evident here, as blood becomes both a marker of identity for many but a source of doom for others as well. The legacy of Slytherin demonstrates that the Gothic does not merely or blindly glorify aristocracy but exposes its fragility, and through this decay, Slytherin emerges as a Gothic figure whose ideals poison his own lineage.

## 8. The Subterranean Unconscious

The Chamber of Secrets, located beneath the foundations of Hogwarts, represents what Gothic theory, particularly Freud's concept of the unconscious, describes as the "repressed unconscious." In Gothic fiction, underground spaces often can be depicted as a symbolism for buried shame, forbidden knowledge, or unresolved violence that the society refuses to confront. Hogwarts, which can be seen as a symbol of enlightenment and education, is literally built upon Slytherin's hidden chamber, suggesting the fact that progress, in this case, and in many cases, is constructed over unresolved darkness. This can be emphasised when the Chamber is seen as being described as an ancient, sealed, and deliberately concealed place, reinforcing the idea that it was meant to be forgotten rather than resolved.

However, what Gothic logic and Freudian theory dictate is that what is repressed will always return, no matter what. So, the reopening of the Chamber can be interpreted as Slytherin's unconscious fears and prejudices were never eliminated, only buried. Much like the Gothic castles with secret passages and hidden rooms all around, the Chamber also represents the violent foundation upon which the institution rests now. Baldick's argument that the Gothic exposes the instability beneath our civilisation is fully realised here, as Hogwarts' moral authority collapses each time or each moment entirely when the buried past resurfaces. Slytherin's unconscious hatred, both Freudian and Gothic, becomes an active threat to all in society, reinforcing his position as a Gothic figure whose legacy operates from beneath the surface.

## 9. The Architect of Terror

Salazar Slytherin cannot ever be described merely as an extremist thinker; he is an architect of terror who deliberately designed spaces meant to preserve fear across generations. Fear that was not only meant to ward off

the Muggles, but also to kill them. Gothic fiction frequently includes figures who shape environments to control, trap, or haunt others, and Slytherin fulfils this role quite well through the careful construction of the Chamber, its concealed entrances, and its internal symbolism. The enormous stone statue of Slytherin himself within the Chamber reinforces his desire for eternal presence and also may be seen as turning architecture into memory.

This architectural planning ensures that fear is not only a temporary situation but a structural part of the school. The tunnels, enchantments, and secrecy of it all demonstrate premeditation, showing that Slytherin wanted his ideology to endure physically. Baldick's Gothic framework used in this paper highlights how buildings themselves can actually act as agents of terror, and Slytherin's design ensures that his influence is felt through the very stones of Hogwarts throughout the centuries. His architectural legacy transforms the school into a haunted space, making him a classic Gothic figure whose power survives through the environment rather than the direct presence of the character or their soul.

## 10. The Unresolved Ending

Finally, Salazar Slytherin aligns with the Gothic tradition through the concept of the unresolved past. Baldick argues that Gothic narratives exist only because conflicts are never properly settled, and Slytherin exemplifies this idea. Instead of resolving his ideological disagreement with the other founders, he abandons Hogwarts entirely while leaving behind a violent mechanism designed to activate in the future. This ensures that his conflict never truly ends.

His decision to entrust his mission to an heir creates a recurring Gothic cycle where the past continually returns to terrorise the present. Each reopening of the Chamber functions as a reminder that Slytherin's narrative remains fundamentally unresolved. His ideology remains an unfinished business, guaranteeing repetition for eternity rather than resolution. In Baldick's framework, this eternal return of unresolved history is the essence of the Gothic. Slytherin's legacy ensures that Hogwarts can never fully escape his influence, solidifying his position as a Gothic figure whose existence depends on haunting, repetition, and the refusal to be buried.

## CONCLUSION

This literary deconstruction of Salazar Slytherin through the lens of Chris Baldick's criticism and idea of the Gothic confirms that the character of Slytherin is far more than just a conventional fantasy antagonist; he is the foundational anchor of the Gothic mode within the Wizarding World. By applying the metrics of the "tyranny of the past," the "stifling of the present," and the "physical incarnation in dead-end spaces," this study has demonstrated that Slytherin's narrative function is synonymous with the Gothic haunting. His 10th-century ideology of blood purity does not remain a relic of history but acts as a malevolent, suffocating force that prevents the modern institution of Hogwarts from achieving peace and progress.

The Chamber of Secrets serves as the ultimate proof of this classification, acting as a literalized Gothic crypt where the "unspeakable" secrets of this founder are physically housed. This subterranean "dead-end" space ensures that Slytherin's paranoia is immortalised in stone, providing a stage for the past to periodically erupt into the present through the monstrous form of the Basilisk. Furthermore, his characterisation as a Byronic isolationist, defined by intellectual arrogance and a moody, aristocratic temperament, aligns him with the enduring Dark Academia aesthetic, a subculture that, in 2026, continues to romanticise the tragic and transgressive nature of the "villainous scholar." Salazar Slytherin embodies the core of Gothic horror: the terrifying realisation that the past is never truly buried. He is the architect of a legacy that demands a recurring cycle of violence and reckoning, ensuring that his presence is felt not as a ghost but as a structural reality of the world he helped build. As a figure of intense, dark, and romantic ambition, Slytherin remains a quintessential Gothic archetype, proving that the most enduring horrors are those born from pride and etched into the very foundations of our history. The invocation of the Dark Academia aesthetic does not function here as a stylistic or cultural trend, but as a contemporary interpretive framework through which Gothic themes of elitism, secrecy, and institutional decay are rearticulated. In this reading, Dark Academia serves as a modern cultural manifestation of the Gothic mode Baldick describes, translating historical anxieties about knowledge, hierarchy, and exclusion into a recognisable twenty-first-century academic setting.

Although multiple critical perspectives are employed throughout this discussion, they are not used competitively but hierarchically. Baldick's Gothic framework remains the primary analytical structure, while Byronic heroism, linguistic otherness, and contemporary academic aesthetics function as supporting lenses that

clarify how Gothic mechanisms operate across character, language, and space. This layered approach ensures theoretical consistency while avoiding the essentialism Baldick critiques in modern Gothic criticism.

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