



# Trauma and Character Transformation in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Received: 2026-06-01 Revised: 2026-06-18 Accepted: 2026-06-30</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Character transformation; psychoanalysis; trauma; self-healing</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.24256/ideasv14i1.10219</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Youvelka Shahia Ridha velkashrd27@students.unnes.ac.id English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang</p>	<p><i>This study examines the emotional trauma and psychological transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol through Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic framework, focusing on the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real orders. The study aims to identify the experiences underlying Scrooge's trauma and to analyze how his encounters with the three ghosts facilitate his process of self-healing and transformation. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research uses close reading and textual analysis of selected excerpts from the novel. The findings reveal that Scrooge's trauma stems from cumulative experiences of emotional neglect, loss, and isolation, which disrupt his identity formation and result in emotional detachment, distorted values, and social alienation. These conditions are reflected across Lacan's three orders: fragmented self-perception in the Imaginary, disconnection from social structures in the Symbolic, and unresolved emotional conflict in the Real. Furthermore, the encounters with the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to function as a structured psychological process that enables Scrooge to confront, reinterpret, and integrate his traumatic experiences. This process leads to increased self-awareness, emotional growth, and identity reconstruction, ultimately transforming him into a more compassionate individual. The study highlights that trauma not only shapes identity but can also be restructured through confrontation and symbolic reintegration, demonstrating the relevance of Lacanian theory in literary analysis.</i></p>

## 1. Introduction

Trauma is a psychological response to deeply distressing experiences that can significantly affect an individual's emotions, behavior, and sense of self. It not only impacts the mind but is also embedded in the body, as Bessel van der Kolk (2014) argues that "the body keeps the score," indicating that trauma has lasting effects on both the mind and the body. Due to its profound impact on human identity and

behavior, trauma has become an important subject not only in psychology but also in literary studies. Literary works often portray trauma through characters who struggle with painful memories and internal conflicts, revealing how past experiences shape identity, relationships, and personal decisions. In this context, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens offers a compelling portrayal of how trauma shapes character development, particularly through the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge. This narrative offers a valuable site for examining how emotional suffering is constructed and represented within literary discourse. It also allows exploration of how personal history shapes identity and behavior over time.

To examine these psychological dynamics, psychoanalytic approaches are frequently employed as analytical frameworks. One influential perspective is Jacques Lacan's (1950) conceptualization of human subjectivity through the Three Orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary concerns the formation of identity through self-perception, the Symbolic refers to language and social structures that shape human relations, and the Real represents aspects of experience that cannot be fully articulated and are often associated with trauma. These concepts provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how unresolved experiences influence psychological development and identity formation in literary characters. By applying this framework, literary analysis can move beyond surface interpretation and examine the deeper structure of subjectivity. It also enables a more systematic understanding of how trauma operates within both individual and social dimensions.

Several previous studies have examined *A Christmas Carol* and other literary works from various perspectives, including psychoanalysis, symbolism, Marxism, and semiotics. Supadmi, Nugroho, and Hidayat (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020) use psychoanalytic approaches to analyze personality development, trauma, and psychological change, emphasizing the influence of past experiences on identity. Hanafi, Bekkari, and Besseriani (2022) and Andress (2020) focus on symbolism and narrative structure, showing how meaning is constructed through symbolic elements and temporality. Oktaviana et al. (2014) apply a Marxist approach to highlight class inequality and socio-economic issues, while Miskatun, Thoyibi, and Setyabudi (2014), as well as Alfaruqi and Candraningrum (2020), examine trauma and memory in shaping identity, particularly in contemporary contexts. Although these studies contribute to understanding transformation, conflict, and meaning-making, they tend to remain fragmented, emphasizing psychological, symbolic, or social dimensions separately without fully integrating them.

More importantly, previous research has not applied Jacques Lacan's framework of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real (RSI) as a comprehensive analytical lens. As a result, Scrooge's transformation is not fully explained as an interaction between illusion (Imaginary), social structure and language (Symbolic), and trauma or lack (Real). This indicates a gap in providing a more integrated

explanation of how subjectivity is constructed and transformed within the narrative. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by applying the RSI framework to provide a deeper, more comprehensive analysis of trauma and transformation in *A Christmas Carol*.

Despite these contributions, a gap remains in applying Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real to analyze Scrooge's emotional trauma and transformation, as previous studies tend to examine psychological, symbolic, or social aspects separately, without integrating these dimensions. To address this gap, this study is guided by the following research questions: What past experiences and psychological factors contribute to Ebenezer Scrooge's emotional trauma? And how does Scrooge's confrontation with the three ghosts guide his process of self-healing and transformation? Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze Scrooge's character through the psychoanalytic framework of Jacques Lacan to reveal the relationships among trauma, identity, and transformation. The novelty of this study lies in applying Lacan's concept of the Three Orders to examine both the origins of trauma and the process of self-healing within a single literary analysis, thereby offering a more integrated understanding of Scrooge's psychological development.

## **2. Method**

The study adopts a qualitative design to examine emotional trauma and character transformation in *A Christmas Carol*, with Ebenezer Scrooge as the unit of analysis. The data consist of selected narrative passages and dialogues that represent past experiences, psychological conflict, and moments of transformation. Data were selected using purposive criteria to ensure analytical relevance: (1) excerpts depicting memory or experience, (2) excerpts showing emotional tension or internal conflict, and (3) excerpts illustrating stages of change, especially during encounters with the three ghosts.

The study follows a clear analytical procedure comprising four steps: data selection, coding, categorization, and interpretation. First, relevant excerpts are identified based on the criteria. Second, the data are coded by marking key expressions that indicate psychological states or tensions. Third, the coded data are categorized using Jacques Lacan's RSI framework. For example, an excerpt such as "I am not the man I was" is categorized as the Imaginary because it reflects a reconfiguration of self-image; a statement structured by social or moral language is classified as the Symbolic; while moments of emotional rupture or anxiety are identified as the Real. Finally, the categorized data are interpreted to explain how trauma is constructed and how it shapes identity transformation.

To ensure rigor, the study applies interpretive validity by maintaining consistency between textual evidence and theoretical interpretation. This systematic and transparent procedure strengthens the reliability of the analysis and clarifies how trauma, subjectivity, and transformation are interconnected within the narrative.

### 3. Result

#### ***Past Experiences and Psychological Factors Contributing to Scrooge's Emotional Trauma***

Scrooge's early characterization reflects a psychological condition shaped by distorted perceptions of social values and human relationships. His understanding of meaning appears to be structured primarily by material considerations, suggesting a detachment from the emotional and social dimensions of experience. This condition suggests that past experiences have influenced not only his behavior but also the framework through which he interprets reality. From the perspective of Jacques Lacan, such a condition can be understood as a disruption of the Symbolic order, in which shared meanings no longer effectively mediate social interaction.

It was all the same to him. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! (Dickens, 1843, p. 8).

Within the framework of Jacques Lacan (1973), particularly as outlined in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, the Symbolic order refers to the system of language and social structures through which subjectivity and desire are constituted. Lacan (1973) argues that desire emerges within the movement of signification, which can be summarized as "desire is structured like a language", meaning that identity is produced through networks of signifiers rather than originating from an autonomous self. This is evident in the description, "Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge!", where "tight-fisted" and "grindstone" function as signifiers that construct Scrooge's identity as economically rigid and labor-oriented. These terms embed him within a symbolic system governed by productivity and accumulation, revealing how socially constructed meanings mediate his desire.

This interpretation is further strengthened by studies such as Hanafi et al. (2022) and Andress (2020), which demonstrate that meaning in literary texts is produced through recurring symbols, linguistic patterns, and narrative structures. Their findings implicitly support Jacques Lacan's (1973) claim in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* that language is not a neutral medium but an active system that structures meaning. If symbols and linguistic patterns function as mechanisms that shape interpretation, then they also participate in organizing how the subject is positioned within that system. In this sense, language does not merely represent reality but actively constructs it, reinforcing the Lacanian view that subjectivity and desire are produced within the Symbolic order.

In addition to aggression, Scrooge demonstrates emotional numbness, which reflects a withdrawal from both external stimuli and internal experience. This condition suggests the presence of a protective mechanism that reduces emotional exposure.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. (Dickens, 1843, p. 8).

Within the framework of Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, the Imaginary order emerges from the mirror stage, where the ego is formed as a defensive response to an underlying sense of lack or “insufficiency.” The ego, therefore, is not a stable essence but a constructed image that masks internal fragmentation. This perspective can be applied to the statement, “*External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge*,” which, beyond indicating physical indifference, suggests a rigid self-image that suppresses emotional vulnerability. Scrooge’s detachment reflects an ego formation that protects him from confronting unresolved trauma, revealing how his identity operates as a defensive illusion rather than an authentic self.

This interpretation is further strengthened by psychoanalytic approaches in previous studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that trauma and past experiences shape personality through defensive behaviors such as emotional withdrawal. These findings align closely with Jacques Lacan’s (1950) concept of the Imaginary, where the ego is formed as a protective response to an underlying sense of lack. What these studies describe as coping mechanisms can thus be understood, in Lacanian terms, as the construction of a rigid self-image that stabilizes the subject against inner fragmentation.

In this context, Scrooge’s indifference is not merely a behavioral effect of trauma but a manifestation of an Imaginary ego that conceals vulnerability and unresolved wounds. By connecting these psychoanalytic insights with Lacan’s framework, the analysis more clearly demonstrates that trauma operates not only at the level of behavior but also in structuring subjectivity through defensive identity formation.

Scrooge’s distorted perception of social values becomes more evident in his tendency to equate happiness with financial stability.

Scrooge, having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said ‘Bah!’ again; and followed it up with ‘Humbug!’ (Dickens, 1843, p. 10).

From a Lacanian (1973) perspective, as developed in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, the subject is constituted through the *function of the signifier*, meaning that identity is produced within language rather than preceding it. The utterance “*Bah!*” said Scrooge. “*Humbug!*” exemplifies this process, as the signifier “*Humbug*” constructs Scrooge’s subject-position as one of rejection and negation. Rather than merely expressing an opinion, the word organizes his identity within a symbolic network that distances him from social and emotional engagement, stabilizing a defensive stance while concealing deeper psychological tension. Thus, his language reveals more than surface meaning; it exposes how his

subjectivity is formed through the Symbolic order, where the signifier "Humbug" both expresses and conceals his inner psychological conflict.

This interpretation aligns more closely with symbolic and structural approaches in previous studies, particularly Hanafi et al. (2022) and Andress (2020), which argue that meaning in literary texts is generated through symbolic elements and narrative structures. Their emphasis on how language produces meaning supports Jacques Lacan's claim that signifiers do not merely represent reality but actively organize it. In Lacanian terms, this implies that language is not a neutral medium but a structuring force that shapes subjectivity itself.

Therefore, the signifier "*Humbug*" can be understood not only as a symbolic marker of rejection but as evidence of how Scrooge's subject-position is constituted within the Symbolic order. While previous studies identify the function of symbols at the level of meaning, Lacan's framework extends this by showing that such signifiers simultaneously produce identity. In this sense, Scrooge's repeated utterance reveals that his hostility is linguistically structured, functioning as a defensive articulation that both expresses and conceals his unresolved inner conflict.

This pattern extends to his interpretation of social and cultural practices, where experiences are consistently framed in terms of utility and cost. The emphasis on calculation over meaning suggests a preference for predictability and control, which further distances him from emotionally grounded forms of interaction.

'Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money' (Dickens, 1843, p. 10).

From a Lacanian (1973) perspective, as developed in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, desire is constituted through speech and organized within the *Symbolic order*, the system of language and social structures that shape how subjects interpret reality. This is evident in Scrooge's statement, "*What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money?*", where his understanding of Christmas is framed entirely through economic language.

The phrase "*without money*" functions as a signifier of lack, which, in Lacanian terms, is the condition that generates desire. However, this lack is not purely personal; it is articulated within the Symbolic order of capitalism, where social meaning is structured through money, debt, and obligation. As a result, Scrooge's perception of Christmas reflects not an individual attitude but a subjectivity shaped by a symbolic system that prioritizes financial value over emotional connection.

This reading can be more closely aligned with Marxist-oriented analyses in previous studies, particularly Oktaviana et al. (2014), which demonstrate that socio-economic structures actively shape how characters perceive and interpret reality. This insight directly supports Jacques Lacan's argument that subjectivity is not self-generated but is structured by external systems that the subject

internalizes. In Lacanian terms, such internalization operates within the Symbolic order, where dominant discourses, such as economic language, organize meaning and desire.

Therefore, Scrooge's emphasis on "without money" should be understood not merely as a personal concern but as evidence of how the symbolic logic of capitalism has been absorbed into his linguistic and psychological structure. By linking Marxist emphasis on external structures with Lacan's focus on symbolic mediation, the analysis more clearly shows that Scrooge's perception is produced through language that encodes socio-economic values, reinforcing the idea that desire and subjectivity are shaped within the Symbolic order rather than originating from individual intention.

The impact of this condition is further evident in Scrooge's exaggerated expressions of hostility, which reveal the presence of unresolved internal tension. His reactions exceed proportional emotional response, suggesting that they are shaped by deeper psychological conflict rather than immediate circumstances.

'If I could work my will,' said Scrooge indignantly, 'every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should' (Dickens, 1843, p. 10).

From a Lacanian perspective, as formulated by Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, the "paranoiac structure of the ego" describes how the subject defends itself by projecting internal conflict onto others, particularly when confronted with what it cannot symbolically resolve. This mechanism is evident in Ebenezer Scrooge's violent rejection of those who say "Merry Christmas" in *A Christmas Carol*. His exaggerated hostility exceeds rational explanation, revealing not just moral or economic judgment but a defensive response to an internal lack. In Lacanian terms, this intensity signals the intrusion of the Real. This inarticulate anxiety disrupts his symbolic reasoning, while his aggression functions as a projection, displacing his own unresolved tensions onto others. Thus, Scrooge's hatred is less about Christmas itself than about defending a fragile ego against what it cannot confront within.

This interpretation is reinforced by psychoanalytic approaches in previous studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that identity and behavior are shaped by unresolved past tensions rather than purely rational choice. Their findings directly support Jacques Lacan's claim that what appears as deeper, often unacknowledged conflicts structure conscious reaction. In Lacanian terms, these conflicts correspond to a lack that cannot be fully symbolized and therefore returns through defensive mechanisms such as projection.

Rather than treating Scrooge's hostility as a stable personality trait, this perspective reveals it as a symptomatic response, an effect of the subject's attempt to manage the pressure of the Real. By aligning with these psychoanalytic insights,

the argument strengthens Lacan's framework: Scrooge's reaction is not simply emotional or ideological, but a structurally determined defense in which internal conflict, symbolic articulation, and the disruptive force of the Real converge.

Based on these findings, it can be suggested that Scrooge's emotional trauma is shaped by accumulated experiences of instability that manifest in distorted values, emotional detachment, and defensive responses. Scrooge's trauma reflects a psychological condition in which disrupted symbolic meaning, emotional withdrawal, and unresolved internal conflict interact to shape both his identity and his engagement with the social world.

### ***Scrooge's Confrontation with the Three Ghosts and His Process of Self-Healing and Transformation***

Scrooge's transformation is initiated through his encounters with the three ghosts, which function as a structured process of psychological confrontation. These encounters do not merely present external visions but compel him to reassess previously suppressed experiences and reconsider the assumptions underlying his identity. This process disrupts his earlier sense of stability and opens a space for reinterpretation. Within the framework of Jacques Lacan, such a shift reflects a disturbance in the Imaginary order, where the coherence of the self is no longer sustained and becomes subject to re-evaluation.

'Spirit!' he cried, tight clutching at its robe, 'hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be

the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope!' (Dickens, 1843, p. 84).

From a Lacanian perspective, as articulated by Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, the mirror stage reveals that identity is formed through an unstable process of identification, driven by lack and continually disrupted by the Real, an unsymbolizable dimension that resists full integration into language or self-image. This is evident in Ebenezer Scrooge's declaration in *A Christmas Carol*, "I am not the man I was." While this appears to mark a coherent transformation, it is in fact triggered by a confrontation with the Real: a traumatic recognition of his past that cannot be fully articulated or resolved. His rejection of his former self is therefore not a stable redefinition, but a defensive reconfiguration of identity in response to this rupture, exposing the self as structurally incomplete and continually reshaped.

This interpretation is reinforced by psychoanalytic approaches in previous studies, particularly those of Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that identity transformation is shaped by unresolved past experiences rather than by linear or fully conscious development. Their findings directly support Jacques Lacan's argument that deeper psychic tensions structure apparent moments of change. In Lacanian terms, these tensions point to a fundamental lack linked to the Real, something that cannot be fully symbolized yet continues to

influence the subject. As a result, Scrooge's transformation is better understood not as a complete resolution but as a symptomatic reconfiguration of identity, in which the pressure of the Real forces a restructuring within the Symbolic order.

This awareness develops into a deliberate commitment to reconstruct his values and reorient his understanding of meaning. The process involves not only acknowledging past errors but also redefining the principles that guide his actions.

The kind hand trembled.

'I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the past, the Present, and the Future' (Dickens, 1843, p. 84).

From a Lacanian perspective, as articulated by Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, the mirror stage reveals that identity is formed through an ongoing movement from lack toward an anticipated self-image, yet this process is never complete because it is disrupted by the Real, an unsymbolizable dimension that resists full coherence. This is evident in Ebenezer Scrooge's statement in *A Christmas Carol*, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." While this appears to affirm a stable transformation, it actually functions as a symbolic attempt to secure identity in response to an underlying lack. The insistence on continuity ("all the year") signals not completion, but anxiety, an effort to stabilize a self that remains structurally unsettled by the Real. Thus, Scrooge's new identity is not a resolution, but a provisional construction shaped by what cannot be fully articulated.

This interpretation is supported by previous psychoanalytic studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which demonstrate that identity change is shaped by unresolved past experiences rather than by conscious, linear development. Their findings directly reinforce Jacques Lacan's argument that transformation is driven by underlying psychic tensions rooted in lack. In Lacanian terms, these tensions point to the Real, something that cannot be fully symbolized but continues to exert pressure on the subject. As a result, Scrooge's reform is not a complete or stable resolution but a symptomatic response to this pressure, in which the subject attempts to reorganize himself within the Symbolic order while remaining structured by an unresolved excess.

The transformation becomes more comprehensive as Scrooge begins to integrate different temporal dimensions of his experience, particularly those he had previously avoided. This integration reflects a willingness to confront aspects of his past that had been repressed or ignored.

'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.' (Dickens, 1843, p. 84).

From a Lacanian perspective, as articulated by Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, identity is formed through an ongoing movement from lack toward an

anticipated self-image, yet it remains unstable due to the persistent intrusion of the Real, an unsymbolizable dimension that disrupts coherence. Rather than signaling a complete transformation, this declaration functions as a symbolic attempt to unify a fragmented self by integrating temporal experience into a coherent identity. The very need for such totalization indicates a prior rupture: an encounter with the Real that cannot be fully resolved, only managed through symbolic rearticulation. Thus, Scrooge's transformation remains provisional, structured by lack and the ongoing pressure of what exceeds representation.

This interpretation is supported by previous psychoanalytic studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that identity is shaped by unresolved past experiences rather than linear development. Their findings reinforce Lacan's claim that transformation is driven by deeper psychic tensions that persist beneath conscious articulation. By aligning with this perspective, the analysis strengthens Lacan's framework: Scrooge's statement reflects not a resolved self but a restructured subjectivity formed in response to trauma, in which symbolic coherence is continually negotiated against the disruptive force of the Real.

The impact of this process is evident in Scrooge's emotional state, which undergoes a significant transition from detachment to openness.

'I don't know what to do!' cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings.' (Dickens, 1843, p. 85).

From a Lacanian perspective, as articulated by Jacques Lacan (2001) in *Écrits: A Selection*, identity formation is inherently unstable, emerging through a movement from lack toward an anticipated self-image that is never fully achieved. Rather than signaling mere confusion, this moment exposes a divided subject caught between identities. The coexistence of contradictory emotions reflects the breakdown of a unified self, revealing transformation as a disruptive process rather than a coherent transition.

This interpretation is supported by previous psychoanalytic studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that identity is shaped by unresolved past experiences rather than by conscious, linear change. Their findings directly reinforce Jacques Lacan's argument that subjectivity is structured by underlying psychic tensions rooted in lack. In Lacanian terms, these tensions cannot be fully resolved or articulated, which is why they reappear as instability within the subject. Thus, Scrooge's emotional contradiction is not a temporary phase but evidence of a structurally divided self, where identity is continuously negotiated under the pressure of unresolved conflict.

The culmination of this transformation is reflected in Scrooge's behavior, where internal change is translated into consistent social action.

He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world.

(Dickens, 1843, p. 91).

From a Lacanian perspective, as articulated in *Écrits: A Selection*, identity is not a fixed essence but a continuous process of becoming, structured by lack and sustained through identification within the Symbolic order. The emphasis on “*became*” signals not completion but an ongoing rearticulation of the self through social roles. Rather than resolving his earlier fragmentation, this moment constructs a new identity that remains contingent on recognition and symbolic positioning, revealing transformation as structurally incomplete.

This interpretation is supported by psychoanalytic approaches in previous studies, particularly Supadmi et al. (2014) and Sari and Tohari (2020), which show that identity remains structured by unresolved past experiences rather than fully stabilized through change. Their findings directly reinforce Jacques Lacan’s argument that subjectivity is driven by persistent tensions rooted in lack. In Lacanian terms, this lack cannot be eliminated but only rearticulated through new forms of identification. Thus, Scrooge’s transformation does not resolve his prior fragmentation; instead, it reorganizes it within the Symbolic order, confirming that what appears as coherence is actually a structured response to an enduring instability.

Based on these findings, it can be suggested that Scrooge’s encounters with the three ghosts function as a structured process that enables the confrontation, reinterpretation, and integration of past experiences. Scrooge’s transformation demonstrates that self-healing occurs through a sustained process of self-recognition, meaning reconstruction, and the integration of previously unresolved experiences into a coherent and socially engaged identity.

#### 4. Discussion

##### ***Past Experiences and Psychological Factors***

This study argues, and explicitly aligns with Jacques Lacan’s position, that Ebenezer Scrooge’s emotional trauma is structured not merely by past events, but by how those experiences are psychically organized through lack. His earlier experiences of insecurity do not function as direct causes; rather, they produce a persistent sense of absence that shapes how he interprets himself and others. This supports Lacan’s claim that subjectivity is not grounded in stable meaning but in a disrupted relation to the Symbolic order, as seen in Scrooge’s reduction of social life to economic logic.

Furthermore, the study supports Lacan’s argument that unresolved experiences do not disappear but return through indirect and often excessive expressions. Scrooge’s hostility and emotional numbness are therefore not accidental traits, but symptoms of deeper tensions linked to the Real, elements of experience that cannot be fully articulated yet continue to exert pressure. His reactions appear disproportionate precisely because they are structured by what

exceeds conscious control, reinforcing Lacan's view that behavior is shaped by underlying psychic conflict rather than rational intention.

To manage this instability, Scrooge constructs a defensive identity characterized by emotional detachment. In Lacanian terms, this reflects the Imaginary: a self-image that creates the illusion of coherence and control. However, this coherence is fragile, as it depends on suppressing vulnerability and avoiding social connections. Taken together, the study demonstrates a clear process of lack (Real), disruption of meaning (Symbolic), and defensive self-construction (Imaginary). This study shows that Scrooge's trauma is not simply psychological or situational, but structurally produced, offering a more integrated understanding of his condition in *A Christmas Carol*.

### ***Process of Transformation***

The study supports Jacques Lacan's argument that the dynamic interplay of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic structures subjectivity. That transformation emerges not from resolution but from reconfiguration. In *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge's encounters with the three ghosts function as a structured process that compels him to confront different temporal dimensions of his experience. Rather than merely revisiting memories, these encounters expose the underlying causes of his trauma: past loss, present isolation, and anticipated future, thereby disrupting the stable self-image he previously maintained.

From a Lacanian perspective, this process begins with an intrusion of the Real, as Scrooge is forced to face experiences that resist articulation and had previously been repressed. This confrontation produces a rupture in his sense of self, destabilizing the Imaginary order by challenging the coherence of his prior identity. As this fragmentation unfolds, Scrooge gradually rearticulates his experiences within the Symbolic order, reconstructing meaning and redefining his relation to others.

However, the study agrees with Lacan that this transformation is not a complete resolution. The ghosts do not "heal" Scrooge in a direct or linear sense; instead, they create the conditions for self-healing by forcing him to confront and reinterpret what had been unresolved. His shift toward empathy and social connection reflects a reorganization of subjectivity rather than the elimination of trauma. Thus, Scrooge's transformation confirms Lacan's argument: self-healing emerges through the ongoing negotiation among the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic, in which identity is continuously restructured rather than fully stabilized.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study examines the factors contributing to Ebenezer Scrooge's emotional trauma and the process through which he undergoes self-healing and transformation. The findings reveal that his trauma is shaped by the interaction of

past experiences, unresolved internal conflict, and emotional detachment, all of which influence how he interprets meaning and engages with others. His reliance on material values, along with his resistance to social and emotional connection, reflects a disruption in the structures that support interpersonal understanding. This condition is gradually addressed through his encounters with the three ghosts, which function as a structured process of self-confrontation. Through this process, Scrooge revisits the past, reassesses the present, and anticipates future consequences, allowing previously unacknowledged experiences to be recognized and integrated into a more coherent sense of self.

Despite these contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. The scope is limited to a single literary work, *A Christmas Carol*, and focuses exclusively on the character of Scrooge, which narrows the range of interpretation. In addition, the analysis is grounded in the psychoanalytic perspective of Jacques Lacan, which may not fully capture alternative viewpoints offered by other theoretical approaches. Moreover, as the findings are derived from textual analysis, they remain interpretative and context-bound rather than empirically generalizable. These limitations indicate that the conclusions should be understood within this specific analytical framework.

In light of these limitations, future research is encouraged to explore emotional trauma and character transformation through alternative theoretical perspectives, such as cognitive, sociological, or trauma studies approaches, to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Expanding the scope to include multiple literary works may also offer broader insights into how trauma and self-healing are represented across different contexts. Such approaches would contribute to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the relationship among trauma, identity, and transformation in literary studies.

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