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# "Your Reclamation": The Gothic Child and Moral Restoration in Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol

Ashten Roberts
*University of Southern Mississippi*

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"YOUR RECLAMATION": THE GOTHIC CHILD AND MORAL RESTORATION IN

CHARLES DICKENS'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*


by

Ashten Taylor Roberts


A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
and the Department of English
at The University of Southern Mississippi
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Approved:

_____
Dr. Alexandra Valint, Committee Chair
Assistant Professor, English


_____
Dr. Eric Tribunella, Committee Member
Associate Professor, English


_____
Dr. Katherine Cochran, Committee Member
Associate Professor, English


_____
Dr. Karen S. Coats
Dean of the Graduate School


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ABSTRACT

"YOUR RECLAMATION": THE GOTHIC CHILD AND MORAL RESTORATION IN

CHARLES DICKENS'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

by Ashten Taylor Roberts

August 2016

Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843), an example of Victorian Gothic literature, portrays spirits escorting Ebenezer Scrooge on a journey through time in order to transform him from a miser to a benefactor. Dickens's text has received much critical attention, and while most critics agree that the novella includes various elements of the gothic, few draw attention to the possibility of the child characters as gothic elements. I argue that *Carol*'s child characters can be read in terms of what Margarita Georgieva calls "the gothic child." According to Georgieva, the gothic child can be an adult's memory from childhood or a character that illustrates the connection between adulthood and childhood. Building on Georgieva's work, I imagine the gothic child as a character who helps Scrooge reach a moral reawakening by revealing to him his past, as well as truths society refuses to acknowledge. In *Carol*, the gothic child characters assist in the reformation of Scrooge through the embodiment and manipulation of well-known elements of the gothic genre such as the uncanny, the abhuman body, dismantled binaries, and monstrosity. Although most critics credit Scrooge's transformation to the three Christmas spirits who visit him, I argue that the novella's gothic child characters have an equally important role in assisting Scrooge with his reclamation.

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I also wish to offer my genuine appreciation to my committee members: Dr. Eric Tribunella and Dr. Katherine Cochran. Dr. Tribunella also worked tirelessly throughout a semester to assist me in creating a sophisticated thesis. His guidance offered insightful angles into my paper that helped in the development and expansion of my work. Likewise, Dr. Cochran offered a fresh pair of eyes and thoughtful advice in the final editing stages, all of which resulted in a polished final product.

## DEDICATION

To my caring, loving, and supportive family, I offer sincere gratitude. Your encouragement made this process enjoyable and successful.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Gothic literature of the Victorian period often depicts a foggy, gloomy, and industrialized London where characters are haunted by the past. As an example of the genre, Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) portrays spirits escorting Ebenezer Scrooge on a journey to the past, present, and future in order to transform him from a miser to a benefactor. While Dickens's text has received much critical attention, the work's child characters are often overlooked, with the exception of the iconic Tiny Tim. Also, while most critics agree that the novella includes various elements of the gothic, few draw attention to the possibility of the child characters as gothic elements. I argue that *Carol*'s child characters can be read in terms of what Margarita Georgieva calls "the gothic child." Georgieva asserts that this overlooked trope of the genre originates in gothic texts from 1764 to 1824. According to Georgieva, the gothic child can be an adult's memory from childhood or a character that illustrates the connection between adulthood and childhood. Building on Georgieva's work, I imagine the gothic child as a character (alive within the text or a spirit) who helps Scrooge reach a moral reawakening by revealing to him both his past and truths society has refused to acknowledge. In *Carol*, the gothic child characters help to reform Scrooge through the embodiment and manipulation of well-known elements of the gothic genre such as the uncanny, the abhuman body, dismantled binaries, and monstrosity. Although most critics credit Scrooge's transformation to the three Christmas spirits who visit him, I argue that the novella's gothic child characters have an equally important role in assisting Scrooge with his reclamation. These include the Ghost of Christmas Past, child Scrooge, Tiny Tim, little Fan, Want, and Ignorance.

The gothic child characters of the novella substantially impact Scrooge's transformation, but critics often read Scrooge's miraculous change as improbable or credit Scrooge's conversion to the counsel and effect of the three visiting spirits. For example, even though Scott C. Lowe and Kathleen Poorman Dougherty both argue that Scrooge reverts to his better, prior self rather than completely transforming into a new person, they consider the three ghosts crucial to that reversion. Both critics overlook the roles of child characters in that transformation. Lowe argues that Scrooge represents a man of principle even at the start of the novella through moral ideas he perpetuates in his discussions with others (33). He suggests that the three visiting spirits prompt Scrooge's supposed transformation by showing him moments in his life that evoke a sense of empathy (27-28). Like Lowe, Dougherty argues that the visiting spirits inspire Scrooge to reconsider his present habits by showing Scrooge aspects of his own past (300). Both of these critics acknowledge Scrooge's transformation as a regression to dormant, but preexisting, tendencies. However, they ignore the child characters' roles in that change. I add to the discussions of Lowe and Dougherty by calling attention to the existence of the gothic child within the text and his or her power to assist Scrooge's journey of transformation through the text's use and manipulation of gothic tropes.

Other critics do contribute extended attention to the child characters in *Carol*, but they do not consider such characters within a gothic child framework as I do. For example, Laurie Langbauer reads the suffering children of the novella, who hide under Christmas Present's robes—Want and Ignorance—as the symbolic representation of human suffering and the terrors humanity must face. Similarly, Sue Saltmarsh also analyzes these two characters and argues that the children represent the negative impact

of global capitalism and industrialization. In contrast, Gregory Pepetone, who studies *Carol* as gothic children's literature, considers the gothic elements of the novella through Scrooge's viewing of his youth but does not address the manipulation of the gothic by the youthful characters. Instead, Pepetone finds that Scrooge makes a journey of enlightenment within the text with the aid of gothic elements such as the uncanny doppelgänger found in Scrooge's former selves (20). I also analyze child Scrooge but as a gothic child who actually assists Scrooge's transformation. Through his analysis of Dickens's short tale, Pepetone argues that Scrooge must view his childhood in order to remember his former, childlike qualities (12). Pepetone, though, does not argue that the child characters of the text actually manipulate gothic elements with the purpose of helping Scrooge achieve his transformation. Langbauer, Saltmarsh, and Peptone give attention to the child characters of *Carol*, and Pepetone even considers gothic elements and their effects on Scrooge's transformation. However, these critics do not reflect on the ability of the child characters to assist Scrooge's change through the text's manipulation of gothic elements.

Unlike the novella's other child characters, Tiny Tim has excited an abundance of critical attention, but many critics, such as Charles W. Callahan and John Glavin, focus on his disability and not his possible agency. Callahan reads Tim as a pathetic but loved character whom Dickens employs in order to transform the hardened Scrooge. Glavin mostly analyzes depictions of Tiny Tim on screen but does briefly acknowledge his characterization in Dickens's novella. He interprets Tiny Tim as a primarily spiritual character who represents the innocence of childhood and serves to soften the hearts of others, especially Scrooge (190-191). In contrast, Julia Miele Rodas works against

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conventional readings of Tiny Tim and asserts that Tim represents more than merely a

sentimental character meant to evoke sympathy or even ridicule from the readers (68).

She finds that Dickens actually empowers this child character within the text, which

further suggests the subversive power of the child in this novella. Besides Tim's effect on

Scrooge, little has been written that suggests the connection between the child characters

and Scrooge's transformation or that addresses the employment of gothic tropes by child

characters.

CHAPTER II – THE GOTHIC, THE VICTORIAN CHILD,

AND THE GOTHIC CHILD

In the Victorian period, Christmastime often produced many ghost stories, thus

infusing Christmas tales such as *Carol* and other works by Dickens with gothic elements

(Moore 2). In his "Introduction to the Gothic in Western Culture," Jerrold E. Hogle

defines elements of the genre, all of which appear in *Carol*. For example, the narratives

usually take place in old, antiquated, or ruined dwellings such as a prisons, castles, or

graveyards. Gothic settings represent an important aspect of the genre because not only

does the setting have to maintain this dreary and obsolete or haunting aura, but it must

also contain or hide some repression or secret from the past (2). In *Carol*, Scrooge's

home is described as "a gloomy suite of rooms" that was "old . . . and dreary" (Dickens

48, 49). Scrooge lives in a dilapidated building that once belonged to his deceased

business partner, Marley. Hogle explains that the mysteries from the past within settings

like Scrooge's abode can take various supernatural forms such as ghosts, altered beings,

or the undead (2). In Scrooge's own home, Marley visits him in the form of a ghost to

prepare him for the visitation of the three Christmas spirits. Through these supernatural

elements, gothic fiction allows a text's characters and readers to consider "some of the

most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and

mental to the widely social and cultural" (Hogle 4). The gothic genre, then, encourages

readers to confront their own hidden desires and problems within society. Like Hogle,

Jamieson Ridenhour discusses how, in the gothic, the past threatens the present of its

characters through the revelation of buried secrets (5). In fact, Ridenhour describes one of

the most defining characteristics of the gothic genre as its creation of tension between the

past and present (4). The slow revelation of the past to Scrooge allows him to transform throughout his journey and assimilate each truth he has repressed within the novella. For example, he must revisit his own past to reclaim his lost ideas of morality and youthful innocence. Also, he must come to terms with his and society's poor treatment of the impoverished and needy. Neither Hogle nor Ridenhour, though, acknowledges the child's relation to the gothic. These traditional discussions of the gothic have left out the child.

While the basic tropes described by Hogle and Ridenhour have been accepted as staples of the genre, critics like Georgieva have recently begun to analyze the gothic child as another important element of the gothic. While Georgieva recognizes that depictions of the "murderous" or "vampirised" child in twentieth-century literature has recently engaged critics, she argues that the gothic child actually originates in the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and emerges as a specific trope of the genre (x-xi). Rather than offering a precise definition of the gothic child, Georgieva uses a wide range of texts to close read a myriad of characters that she considers to be "gothic children" such as Frankenstein's monster and the vampire children in *Dracula*. To Georgieva, a gothic child does not have to even technically be a child. In other words, even a memory of a child counts as a gothic child to Georgieva. A character may become a gothic child if it fuses opposite characteristics like youth and old age, if it resembles a parent, thus reminding the parent of his or her own suppressed youth, if it faces a traumatic experience, or if it is ghoulish. Georgieva also studies elements of the gothic such as obscurity, mystery, monstrosity, and violence to further understand the function of the child in gothic texts (xii). For example, when Georgieva considers Frankenstein's monster a gothic child, she links the creation—which is, in a sense, Frankenstein's

child—to the eighteenth-century fear that a mother could give birth to a "monster." So, even though the monster is not technically a child, Georgieva considers him a gothic child because he represents the child of Frankenstein. As another example, she considers the children that vampire Lucy bites in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as gothic children because they incite fear into the readers. Georgieva's book usefully explores the connection between child characters and the gothic genre. However, I both revise and build on Georgieva's scholarship by offering a specific definition of the gothic child. In this study, the gothic child becomes a child character who reveals manipulated elements of the gothic in order to help a main character—in this case, Scrooge—reclaim a dormant morality.

My conception of the gothic child in Dickens's *Carol* aligns with the angelic child found in much of Victorian literature. Prior to the Victorian era, children were thought of as sinful beings who needed to be indoctrinated with moral values. However, the Victorians began to view children as innately innocent specimens not yet tainted by society. In fact, as Naomi Wood observes, many Victorian writers idealized the child as superior to adults through their innate innocence (116). These writers considered the child as one not yet tainted by the sinful adult world and actually somewhat immune to the corruptive nature of society through his or her angelic status (116). Wood argues that Victorian literature often addressed two contradictory constructions of the child: angelic agents of innocence versus "primitive pre-humans" society must shape into functioning citizens (116). These two ideas resulted in either fantastical texts that illustrate the child as pure and immune to the adult world, or realistic texts that depict the child's indoctrination into accepted societal norms (116). *Carol* represents an exemplar of a

fantastical novel through its unrealistic illustrations of various characters and events. Wood argues that fantastical depictions of child characters figured the child as "an angelic emblem both of uncorrupted nature and of spiritual truth beyond the material" (116). The youthful characters within *Carol* reveal truths to Scrooge and the readers through often spiritual or fantastical means. Interestingly, Wood finds that Victorian writers such as Dickens often included the death of an angelic child within their works, and this depiction became a staple of the gothic genre (117). In *Carol*, the death of little Fan and Tiny Tim's impending doom affect Scrooge's transformation. Also, these child characters are represented as angelic—Tim is associated with religious goodness, and Fan ardently admires and cares for her brother, Scrooge. Within this fantastical, Victorian text, Dickens certainly employs an understanding of the child as angelic.

The Victorian child was often considered innocent, and the gothic child of *Carol* can be understood as innocent as well. In line with Wood's work, Laura C. Berry studies the child in the Victorian novel and concludes that they are represented as innocents who often become victims of society. She argues that while angelic children were evident in fiction, the innocent child negatively affected by society was also a topic of real-world discourse (4). The gothic child characters of *Carol* frequently illustrate the discourse Berry outlines of the Victorian child. For example, Tiny Tim demonstrates a sense of innocence and even self-determination through his spiritual devotion but is a victim of his family's financial welfare. Want and Ignorance also symbolize victimization by societal issues. Interestingly, child innocence mitigates the association between the gothic and guilt, sin, or crime; that is, the innocence of the child diffuses the crime and guilt typically associated with and revealed by the gothic. Though one might assume that

gothic characters would not be innocent, the children of *Carol* are simultaneously gothic and innocent. Both the gothicness and the innocence enable the gothic children to help Scrooge on his process of moral restoration. The gothic child's gothicness is somewhat tamed by its innocence. Rather than simply terrifying Scrooge, the gothic children, therefore, can also emotionally affect him. Tim, Want, and Ignorance, especially, demonstrate the negative treatments of society without inciting horror in Scrooge that causes him to run terrified. Instead, these characters produce sympathy in him for their victimized states, thus inciting his transformation.

CHAPTER III  - GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The Ghost of Christmas Past represents the first gothic child of *Carol*, but the novella's narrator describes him as a child and an old man, which only strengthens his relation to the gothic. The Ghost of Christmas Past is described as "a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man" (Dickens 61). Claudia Nelson argues that the Victorian fascination with childhood stimulated a similar fascination with the elderly: old age "often represented . . . an allied" state of childhood and was referred to by many as a "second childhood" (2). Old age becomes childhood once again. The elderly, then, can be read as childlike characters. While the spirit cannot be accepted as only a child, the description of the ghost as both young and old provides an opportunity for an analysis of the figure as a gothic child. In fact, since its description as "an old man" suggests its connection to a "second childhood," this spirit ironically becomes the most childlike figure of the text through its link to two instances of childhood. Also, the spirit depicts a dismantled binary, a typical element in the gothic trope, as it represents both youth and old age. The narrator describes the spirit's appearance as one with hair "white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it" (Dickens 62). Again, the spirit appears both old and young in overall age and in appearance. Hogle acknowledges blurred binaries as an element of the gothic: "the intermixed transitions of this era . . . become embodied in . . . the half-alive/half-dead, half-organic/half-artificial, and obscurely desirable/obviously repellant scepter/creature" (5-6). Through the spirit's incarnation of old age and youth, he represents the past memories of childhood he has yet to bestow on the now elderly Scrooge. These memories will help Scrooge towards his transformation.

In *Carol*, the gothic child helps Scrooge transform by revealing to him to his past, and the Ghost of Christmas Past literally takes Scrooge to memories of his childhood. Georgieva writes that the ability to remember marks the difference between an infant and a child, thus an "obsession with memory is characteristic of the gothic child" (109). She then links the child character to the gothic through this relation to an understanding of the past: memory "makes the child's character compatible with the gothic ruin as a place of memory . . . [a] message from the past" (109). The gothic trope itself embodies an obsession with memory as it sets out to expose past secrets. The child in a gothic text becomes gothic through this similar connection. The "obsession" with memory that Georgieva notes becomes apparent through all of the gothic child characters in *Carol* but especially through the Ghost of Christmas Past. This spirit most obviously presents a link to memory through its name—it is the ghost of the past. The spirit then accompanies Scrooge through a return to past memories, especially through a return to Scrooge's childhood, in order to help him reclaim his forgotten youthful qualities. Like Hogle explains, secrets from a character's past often haunt the character by taking the form of something usually terrifying or dangerous such as a ghost, a spirit, or the undead. This ghost, however, does not merely represent haunting secrets but literally takes Scrooge through the memories that help him to begin a regression towards a happier sense of self that existed during his youth.

While the spirit holds a key to Scrooge's repressed past, its role as a gothic child also assists Scrooge in his transformation through its embodiment of the uncanny. In fact, the gothic "provides the best-known examples of those strange and ghostly figures that Freud saw as examples of 'the Uncanny'" (Hogle 6). Sigmund Freud defines the uncanny

as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" and "frightening precisely because it is unknown and unfamiliar" (Freud 124, 124-125). The narrator's description of the spirit creates a sense of the uncanny for the narrator. The spirit becomes familiar through its connection to Scrooge's repressed past. Scrooge attempts to understand its appearance and first notices its familiar aspects. For example, he comprehends the spirit's physical attributes such as its arms, legs, feet, and hair but is de-familiarized as the spirit changes or does not meet expectations: "the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness" and "in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct" (Dickens 62). Its uncannily familiar and unfamiliar body in flux also relates to the frightening aspect of the uncanny because this fluctuation was "its strangest quality," thus suggesting a sense of fear or, at least, apprehension (62). Again, the spirit's sense of familiarity links to its connection to the past—an important component of the uncanny. However, as a gothic child who makes use of elements such as the uncanny to transform Scrooge, the spirit embodies only those elements that help it reach its goals. By definition, the uncanny is scary, and, while Scrooge is not at once terrified, he does have to look upon the spirit long enough to gain a sense of "increasing steadiness" (62). The spirit, then, manipulates understood definitions of the uncanny by becoming at once familiar and unfamiliar while not becoming terrifying. It embodies Scrooge's repressed memories but does not openly terrify him in order to present to him these revelations. The gothic child character does not just embody the gothic element of the uncanny but manipulates it to help Scrooge trust and follow it into the world of his past in order to uncover his previous, arguably better, self. Although, since Scrooge has repressed the past and does not necessarily wish to revisit his childhood, the ghost cannot

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help but remain somewhat frightening in its very existence. The spirit's childlike qualities enable this manipulation. The innate innocence of the Victorian child becomes perpetuated in the form of the gothic child as it tames the often horrifying gothic elements. Its childlikeness also becomes uncanny as it is connected to the past. Again, Georgieva recognizes the child's relation to the past through its connection to childhood and adulthood.

Moreover, the fluctuation of the spirit's body, summarized briefly above, also suggests the abhuman subject—another gothic element. Kelly Hurley describes the abhuman as "the spectacle of a body metamorphic . . . in place of a unitary and securely bounded human subjectivity" (3). Additionally, she understands the abhuman as the transitioning body that is becoming monstrous in order to argue that gothic literature concerns itself with the remaking of the human subject in a terrorizing manner (3-5). The spirit, though, does not become, or at least remain, monstrous as Hurley understands this mutation. Its continual bodily fluctuation, though unsettling, instead emphasizes the fluctuating or "strangeness" of the past and memory itself: "the figure . . . being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body . . . dissolving parts" (Dickens 62). While possibly terrifying through its metamorphosis, the spirit does not intend to harm. Its mutable body instead calls attention to its ability to traverse time and space and reveal to Scrooge his past memories. Also, a child's body is especially and spectacularly mutable. All bodies change, but a child's body changes in relatively fast and visual ways as the child ages. Thus, the child body is monstrous in itself through its unnatural or strange changes in

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comparison to the adult body. The spirit's body, representative of the child and a "second childhood," seems to tame this monstrous formation with a childlike innocence.

Through its metamorphic body, the Ghost of Christmas Past again becomes related to memory. Jen Cadwallader argues that the spirits within Dickens's work often represent the troubled psyche of his characters (57). In other words, Cadwallader finds that the ghosts represent reflections of Scrooge's "fractured self" (57). Literal images of the "fractured self" call attention to the Ghost of Christmas Past and his physical fluctuation of fractured and dissolving parts of the body. By reading the spirit's image in relation to memory, the ghost becomes the fractured image of Scrooge's past memory. Like other ghosts in Victorian works, the spirit constitutes some part of the seer's past or inner psyche. The spirit's link with the past and "monstrous" body, though, becomes less threatening as the spirit manifests the role of the gothic child. While Cadwallader is more interested in the spirits' relations to time and how time affects Scrooge's transformation, the discussion of at least one spirit as a gothic child helps readers to better understand Scrooge's ability to comprehend and assimilate the effect seeing his past has on his moral reawakening. The spirit's undeniable childlikeness tames the terror usually so apparent in other elements of the gothic. In order to incite a change in Scrooge and help him towards reclamation through a regression to the past, the novella's gothic child character accomplishes another turn of a gothic component. The spirit maintains transformative powers over the main character without terrifying him through a representation of the abhuman body.

The Ghost of Christmas Past embodies the gothic child by deliberately using gothic elements to assist Scrooge's transformation. For example, when Scrooge asks the

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Ghost of Christmas Past why it has come to him, the spirit answers, "[y]our welfare" and "[y]our reclamation" (Dickens 63). The character again represents a gothic child as it knowingly guides Scrooge to change through a regression to his past self—a reclamation of his better state. Cadwallader also argues that Scrooge's traversal through space and time help him to grow morally and spiritually (57-58). The spirit's own goals are to reclaim Scrooge's past self by traversing time, which will then morally reform him. The spirit, however, must employ elements of the gothic and a childlike appearance in order to reach the goal within this text—the moral reawakening of Scrooge. Its uncanny familiarity and abhuman body allow it to embody Scrooge's repressed childhood and traverse the time and space necessary to reveal to Scrooge the parts of himself he must reclaim.

CHAPTER IV – CHILD SCROOGE, LITTLE FAN, AND TINY TIM

The Ghost of Christmas Past introduces us to Scrooge's past self as a boy who is gothic through his surroundings and his communication with a spirit world via his reading. Scrooge and the spirit find the young Scrooge alone in a dreary set of rooms used as a school: "their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed" (Dickens 64). The description of this gothic setting continues as the pair finds a "lonely boy" in a "bare, melancholy room" (65). Child Scrooge is not only a projection of a past memory, thus encompassing a spirit-like function, but is also surrounded by a gothic, dreary, and aged setting. The narration describes the boy as "neglected," "lonely," and "forgotten" (64-65). While the other pupils have returned home for the Christmas holidays, Scrooge—abandoned by his own friends and family— sits alone in the decrepit school. However, child Scrooge does not react to his bleak situation with hopelessness, sadness, or bitterness. Instead, he consoles his own sense of loneliness and neglect by imagining the fictional character Ali Baba from *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*. In fact, Scrooge seems to fully imagine several fictional characters as imaginary friends. He does not just think about Ali Baba—Ali Baba actually "appears" to Scrooge as he reads. The childlike innocence of the young Scrooge as a figure of the Victorian child allows the boy to embrace a world of spirits and create his own bubble of happiness and friendship. As a child, he can more easily accept the gothic bleakness of the world by creating a sense of home and friendship in the world of spirits. Like the adult Scrooge, the child Scrooge is surrounded by spirits who aid him in his happiness at a time of loneliness and despair.

Each gothic child helps Scrooge on his journey, and engaging with his child self stimulates Scrooge's transformation. Adult Scrooge also reacts with childlike wonder and joy to seeing his long, lost imagined friends: "'it's Ali Baba!' Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy" (Dickens 65). Scrooge's reaction to the past and his forgotten connection to a world of manifested spirits begins to chip at his bitter personality. As a character obviously connected to the elements of the gothic and very much a child, young Scrooge maintains the ability to assist Scrooge's moral reawakening by reminding him of his youthful contentment. Scrooge, now acquainted with his memories of childhood, "clasp[s] his hands together" and exclaims "I was a boy here" (63). Scrooge immediately demonstrates signs of emotion, expectancy, and even joy. The narrator explains that "[Scrooge] was conscious of a thousand odors . . . each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten" (63). Scrooge obviously remembers being happier as a child, though often neglected and surrounded by bleakness.

The child Scrooge reminds adult Scrooge of the possibility of happiness and goodness in a world seemingly devoid of both. By bringing Scrooge first to this memory, the spirit encourages Scrooge to embrace a time when his innocence enabled him to be comforted by the spiritual world. Scrooge must remember his acceptance and even use of a spiritual world to overcome his own hardships. Also, Scrooge learns to have sympathy for his poor, younger self, which will help him to gain sympathy for other suffering youths in the novella, such as Tim, Want, and Ignorance. It may seem easy, or even obvious, to read the young Scrooge as a passing example of the gothic child element rather than an active character promoting Scrooge's transformation. However, his mere existence evokes long repressed emotions from Scrooge and encourages Scrooge's

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present journey towards reclamation, especially by inducing a sense of empathy for

suffering children and promoting a trust in the spiritual world to aid him in his hardships.

While this child character has little autonomy as a mere memory, he becomes crucial to

Scrooge's transformation by illustrating to Scrooge his once less forlorn self, who found

joy in a world of spirits. The child Scrooge can be read as a gothic child, especially

through his connection to the Ghost of Christmas Past as this spirit manipulates the past

memories that evoke emotional responses from the present Scrooge. The child Scrooge's

connection to spirits—real or imagined—illustrates Scrooge's ability to transform to a

more positive and warm-hearted nature through his involvement with the spirit world and

a connection to his childhood innocence. This particular character, then, arouses an

emotional response from Scrooge, reminds him of his more positive nature, and supports

the spirits' undertakings of adult Scrooge's transformation. After seeing his younger self

in the schoolroom, Scrooge admits to the spirit that there was a boy singing a carol at his

door, and he "should like to have given him something" (Dickens 66). Obviously, this

return to his youth pushes Scrooge towards a show of empathy for the suffering of others,

especially children.

Immediately following this memory, *Carol* introduces readers to yet another

gothic child, little Fan, who is gothic because she is close to death. The text reveals Fan,

Scrooge's little sister, in a later Christmas memory where Fan visits a youthful Scrooge at

school. Fan is now deceased, but in this memory, she is very much alive and has come to

bring Scrooge home for the holidays. Like child Scrooge, Fan enters this tale within a

gothic setting: "the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling"

(Dickens 66). Also like child Scrooge, Fan ignores the bleak setting and comforts herself

by finding joy through a relation with another—her older brother. However, her health is not as bright as her attitude. The Ghost of Christmas Past describes Fan as "a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered" (68). While she appears happy within the memory, even "brimful of glee," her delicate form could be "withered" at any moment (67). The gothic elements of the novella such as dilapidation and ruin seem to linger just on the edge of Fan's characterization. Like child Scrooge, Fan possesses a childlike innocence that presents itself despite her relation to the gothic. For example, once united with her brother, Fan "clapped her hands and laughed" and "being too little" to touch his head, she "stood on tiptoe to embrace him" and "drag him, with childish eagerness, towards the door" and home (67). Fan continues to display her sense of youthful innocence through her size and energetic response to being again with her brother.

As a gothic child, Fan helps Scrooge through his journey of transformation even as just a memory revealed by the Ghost of Christmas Past. Within the memory, Scrooge seems elated to see Fan with whom he obviously shared a loving and happy familial connection, but her later death inhibits Scrooge's connection to this happy nature. In fact, Fan's delicate state eventually leads to her death, which is an obvious turning point in Scrooge's own loss of morality as illustrated through Scrooge's present treatment of Fan's son. In the start of the novella, Scrooge's nephew, like Fan, is described as jovial and lighthearted, but Scrooge pushes him away. A connection to this nephew could only remind Scrooge of his loss of the once jubilant Fan. In the memory, she finds Scrooge alone once again after his friends have left school for the holidays, but this time, she has come to bring him home. She admits, "Father is so much kinder than he used to be" (Dickens 67). Obviously, Scrooge's own connection with his father was tenuous at best.

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Scrooge experiences neglect or, at least, estrangement from his father but finds familial

love and happiness through his connection with his sister. Though Scrooge once sat in his

boarding school "alone again . . . not reading now, but walking up and down

despairingly," the sight of his sister turns him gleeful (67). In the previous scene, child

Scrooge comforts his own loneliness through his connection to reading, imagination, and

a world of spirits. Here, though, his connection to the childish Fan brings him back to a

happier state. While Scrooge's own youthful innocence has seemed to fade, his

connection to the young Fan reinvigorates his good-natured attitude as well as the

possibility of being accepted by his father for the holidays. After her death though, little

Fan cannot continue to keep Scrooge from his "despairing" path through her youthful

nature, which suggests that Scrooge must create a new connection to this nature in order

to revert to his own more moral self. Scrooge does not retain his own childlike goodness,

and his link to happiness—little Fan—perishes.

Scrooge's need for a new connection to childhood brings readers to the Ghost of

Christmas Present and the text's revelation of Tiny Tim as a gothic child. Tiny Tim is

gothic because he reminds Scrooge of his own repressed childhood and, like Fan, hovers

on the edge of death. Freud suggests that "the uncanny is represented by anything to do

with death, dead bodies" because corpses remind us of our own mortality (148). Scrooge

actually witnesses Tim's dead body, though we do not get his reaction, when the Ghost of

Christmas Yet to Come takes him to the future. Tim's disabled body seems to have a

stronger effect on Scrooge than the viewing of Tim's corpse. Disability in the nineteenth

century was certainly not uncommon. In fact, a Victorian fascination with freak shows

indicates a sordid history of the malformed body as entertaining, fascinating, and even

disturbing, like the gothic. Lillian Craton writes that the "Victorian relationship to images of physical difference was complex, marked by conflicting impulses to reject, exploit, and celebrate the odd body" (2). Despite this odd and often disturbing fascination with the malformed body apparent in Victorian culture, Tiny Tim represents the only character in the book whose abnormal body does not illustrate an aura of spiritness, like the Ghost of Christmas Past. Tim's disability is not explained away by the gothic elements. His disabled body, though, can be understood as an element of the trope, since the Victorian people once saw the disabled body as malformed and grotesque, which can be linked to the monstrous creations often employed in the genre. Thus, Tim can be read as a gothic child through his disability.

Like the other gothic children in the novella, Tiny Tim pushes Scrooge to a moral transformation. Tim's body actually becomes the tool that encourages Scrooge towards transformation. Scrooge's childhood self lacks familial attachment and suffers from neglect. Similarly, Tim's body suffers from a disability. Both of these characters suffer from some issue within their childhoods. Tiny Tim as a character does not excite terror, but his body draws attention to the often unhappy and certainly repressed memories of Scrooge's childhood. This connection pushes Scrooge towards reclamation through his desire to aid Tiny Tim—an act he can no longer perform for his own childhood self. In fact, at the work's conclusion, Scrooge becomes "a second father" to Tim Cratchit (Dickens 123). In her brief nod to *Carol*, Craton argues that Scrooge is in part reformed through his newfound relationship with Tiny Tim, and these cultivating "relationships demand engagement with the world, so child rearing served as an antidote to miserliness" (102). Scrooge needs this developing relationship with and connection to Tim in order to

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transform himself despite the disabled and malformed body that marks Tim as different, just like the Ghost of Christmas Past. His body, then, becomes the thing that makes Tim gothic through his representation as different within the novella. Tiny Tim survives because of Scrooge's generosity, and Scrooge rights the wrongs of his past by regaining a familial attachment between father and son in his relationship with Tim. Scrooge embraces Tim's gothicness as a connection to his own undesirable, neglected, and repressed past. In short, Tiny Tim becomes a gothic child through his disabled body, though unintentionally. Through Tim's link to childhood, especially Scrooge's own also challenging youth, Tim illustrates his ability to assist Scrooge's moral reawakening within the novella without openly terrifying him.

Interestingly, *Carol* directly links Tiny Tim and little Fan, and this connection is one reason why seeing Tiny Tim pushes Scrooge towards reclamation. For example, their very names mark their smallness. Fan is designated as "little Fan," and Tim's nickname, Tiny Tim, similarly emphasizes his diminutiveness (Dickens 67, emphasis added). Other characters often describe aspects of Tim such as his crutch, his body, and his voice as "little" (86, 87, 91). Both characters are also sickly and fated to early deaths. Also, Tiny Tim affects Scrooge's transformation through his own connection to Scrooge's past child self and the delicate, childish nature of little Fan. While the text does not link Tim to Scrooge's past directly, Scrooge automatically feels kinship or, at least, concern for the child. Like child Scrooge, Tim also spends time alone despite his large and loving family. His father admits "he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much" (87). His time alone, though, culminates into his goodness in that he thinks of ways he might encourage others through his disability. After Scrooge witnesses Tim with his family during his time with

the Ghost of Christmas Present, he asks the spirit, "with an interest he had never felt before," if Tiny Tim will live, and the spirit responds that if the future remains unaltered "the child will die" (89). At this point in the novella, the Ghost of Christmas Past has already revealed to Scrooge his own past self as a child: a "solitary child, neglected by his friends," as well as the delicate, now deceased Fan (64). Scrooge displays this newfound "interest" in Tim because of his connection to the disabled child, as well as his memory of Fan—also a delicate child. For example, upon witnessing himself as a child "Scrooge sat down . . . and wept to see his poor forgotten self" who, despite his loneliness, found happiness through imagination and a love for literature (65). Both the young Scrooge and Tim express childhood resilience to make the best of unfortunate situations. Thus, Scrooge seems to harbor a connection between himself and Tim brought about by a nostalgia for his former childhood. Also, as mentioned above, Scrooge's loss of little Fan was a probable pivotal moment in his loss of childlike innocence and happiness. The possible loss of Tim draws attention to Scrooge's loss of little Fan, who seems to have much in common with the disabled child still alive and in need of help if he hopes to survive. Like Fan and child Scrooge, Tim rallies through his hardships with childhood innocence and goodness. Not only does Tim connect Scrooge to his own childhood, but he also represents a missing component in his life—familial attachment with an innocent, happy child. Tim, though unknowingly, becomes a gothic child through his connection to Scrooge's past and his ability to help Scrooge's transformation.

CHAPTER V - WANT AND IGNORANCE

Like the Ghost of Christmas Past and Tiny Tim, the physical appearance of Want and Ignorance points to their gothicness. The narrator describes them as "[y]ellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish" (Dickens 99). The children, though pronounced a boy and girl, seem more animal-like and feral than innocent or helpful. For example, they are described as "wolfish," like a feared animal or predator, and "scowling," as if dangerous or evil. The children are "yellow," suggesting an undesirable foreignness. The children appear to have regressed back into animals or, at least, into foreign entities at odds with the Victorian culture of England. John Leech's original illustration of the scene confirms the narrator's description: the children's clothes are in tatters, and the children are malnourished and barefooted. The boy, Ignorance, cowers next to Want with his arms folded into his chest as if sheltering himself from the cold neglect of the world and even from Scrooge. Want appears to look over at him as if acknowledging his forlorn state but unable to offer assistance as she wraps her own body in a tattered blanket or shawl. Scrooge, though, has one of his own arms extended towards the children. His palm faces upward, and his forefinger extends towards them. Scrooge's action suggests a desire to aid the children or a state of disbelief as he points towards them and asks the spirit how and why the children appear as such. It seems as though Scrooge wants to approach the children but is appalled by their forlorn state. He stands several paces from them as if afraid to come near the children, who seem more like creatures than humans. In fact, the narrator describes the children as monstrous apparitions full of horror: "no perversion of humanity . . . has monsters half so horrible and dread" (101). The children are so horrendous that Scrooge and, by extension, society fear to look upon them.

Want and Ignorance are the only characters in Dickens's novella described as monsters—a gothic trope. Georgieva argues that the gothic child can often take on typical gothic elements through villainy, monstrosity, or mystery, which appears to be the case here. On the other hand, the children are also victimized: where "graceful youth should have filled their features out," instead, "a stale and shriveled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds" (Dickens 99, 101). Like the aged but childlike Ghost of Christmas Past, Want and Ignorance represent another binary of youth and old age, though their childish features do not come and go but have been worn away by an aged hand. These children seem forsaken by their elders: "hand, like that of age." Interestingly, Scrooge is also described as old, though not childlike. In the first pages of the novella, the narrator dubs him "old Scrooge," and in Leech's illustration of him in the presence of Want and Ignorance, Scrooge's posture seems bent with old age (41). Considering that the novella uses Scrooge to represent the blindness of society towards the plight of the poor, the description of him as old and the children's ruined features suggests that Scrooge, as well as society, figuratively had a hand in their ruin. This point is further suggested through the literal destruction caused by the aged hand in the description above. The old hand that hurts the children did not just pinch and twist but "pulled them into shreds." The hand becomes the wolfish animal used to describe the children as it literally tears at the appearances of the forlorn characters. In fact, perhaps the "old hand" that has ruined the children is Scrooge's own old hand that reaches towards the pair in Leech's illustration. While the children are described as victims of society, their dreadful state also appears vicious as they encourage Scrooge to remain at a distance from them. The state of the characters suggests that the children are not just

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victims, but could also easily become aggressors. Through this possibility of attack, the novella suggests that society has created monsters and now must deal with possibly monstrous attacks. The children, though, while terrifying, mask their possible violent aggression by being children—seemingly innocent beings. The gothic child characters appear menacing and monstrous but also evoke sympathy through their appearance of childlike helplessness.

Like the novella's other gothic child characters, Want and Ignorance help transform Scrooge. Also, like young Scrooge and Fan, they exhibit no acknowledgement of their roles in Scrooge's reclamation. The Ghost of Christmas Present, also a spirit but not a child character, actually reveals the children from beneath his robe and describes them as possessions of humankind: "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased" (Dickens 101). Society has refused to acknowledge that it has effectively created ignorance and want. The children illustrate a hidden truth within society: the upper classes are ignorant of the poor who want for more. In fact, society must recognize their repression of this truth and "erase" impending "Doom" by assisting the poor in their needs. Again, the gothic often reveals repressed truths depicted in terrifying or grotesque forms. The Ghost of Christmas Present literally hides the children beneath his robes as issues of Scrooge's present society are hidden in his subconscious. Through her analysis of these child characters, Langbauer argues that authors depict suffering children "to reproach a world which sanctions it" and in order for them to act as scapegoats of the terrors humanity should and must face (89). She acknowledges that, though Want and Ignorance obviously look like

children, Scrooge appears almost unable to accept that they are, in fact, children. However, Langbauer also finds that—despite the personification of want and ignorance in child form—Scrooge is forced to feel compassion and pity for them (92-93). Langbauer understands the personification of want and ignorance as the reader's own ignorance and blindness to children, an "inability even to see them except as some shadow" of the self (93). The children become a metaphor within the novella of society's inability, or lack of desire, to care for the helpless. Representing the downtrodden as impoverished and emaciated children serves to encourage in the reader a sense of duty towards the less fortunate. The element of the gothic child becomes important because its manifestation as a helpless child seems to evoke more sympathy from both Scrooge and the reader, thereby creating a more resounding impact.

Similarly, Scrooge understands Want and Ignorance as his own indifference towards the needs of others, which the spirit reminds him of by remarking on a comment Scrooge uttered earlier in the novella: "[a]re there no prisons . . . [a]re there no workhouses" (Dickens 101). Through the viewing of the children, Scrooge wants for them "refuge or resource," but the spirit quickly reminds Scrooge of his own previously expressed disdain for those in need (101). Like Langbauer, Saltmarsh understands Want and Ignorance as the "articulation between childhood and society" because they are susceptible to societal issues but also exhibit "powerlessness to intervene in . . . political and economic circumstances" (9). In short, the children represent a repressed knowledge of the inability of the poor to care for their own wants without aid from the richer members of society. The pair's existence in the novella, even as a metaphor, supports Scrooge's transformation by revealing these repressed societal understandings and by

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making him feel guilt for his previous attitude towards the less fortunate. Again, repression represented through often metaphorical forms constitutes an element of the gothic. Unlike typical gothic tropes, though, Want and Ignorance do not necessarily cause Scrooge to be entirely afraid or even attempt to threaten him. However, the narrator does inform the reader that, upon witnessing the children, Scrooge himself "started back, appalled," but his shock soon subsides into a morbid curiosity and even guilty understanding (Dickens 101).

Again, these children have been painted as victims of society's negligence as represented through Scrooge, who is obviously capable of helping others, as well as through the abandonment of religion. Georgieva recognizes gothic children as victims who are "manipulated by supernatural powers" and "usually linked to authorial usage of religious and political leitmotifs" (170). Want and Ignorance are not only forsaken by society but also by Christianity: where "angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacingly" (Dickens 101). Where angels, an allusion to religion, might have aided the children, they instead abandon them. Meanwhile, devils lurk and glare menacingly as if prepared to pull the children further into devastation. The supernatural Ghost of Christmas Present harbors the children. This spirit constantly emits an aura of positivity and good-will throughout his time in the novella. He even works to improve the Christmas dinners of the poor while with Scrooge. However, in Leech's illustration, the spirit's body remains angled away from Want and Ignorance, thus highlighting his own neglect as their keeper. This spirit of Christmas—a religious holiday—has turned from the children, like the angels. This neglect from the Christian world, though, serves a higher purpose. The neglected state of Want and Ignorance at once demonstrates an

appeal towards society through their bodies withered from aged hands and the abandonment of Christianity. The metaphor does not just serve to convince Scrooge and the readers to turn from greed and help the underprivileged, but also stresses the importance of religious faith to avoid devastation. In the beginning of the novella, Scrooge refuses to celebrate Christmas, but, by the text's conclusion, he openly embraces the holiday and even goes to church. The novella's goal for Scrooge's transformation includes a return to his past morality and an embracing of his religious faith. Again, the gothic child characters utilize gothic elements to influence Scrooge's journey and also enhance that journey by revealing Scrooge's repressed self and encouraging a religious transformation through their monstrous and demon-like appearances.

These child characters reveal another way in which Scrooge can transform— through the aid of the downtrodden. As gothic child characters, the mere existence of Want and Ignorance within the plot assists the novella in one of its less obvious goals: to not only assist Scrooge in his reclamation, but enlighten him, and hopefully the reader, of societal problems. Thus, they aid in the transformation of Scrooge from a man harboring a sense of greediness and entitlement to a man who understands the plight of the poverty-stricken and is even philanthropic towards the less fortunate members of society. The gothic children again take on elements of the gothic—monstrosity, perversion, and blurred binaries—to assist Scrooge, and even the reader, towards a realization of a societal duty to the poor and the necessity of religious faith in order to avoid ruin. Without the gothic elements employed through the characters of Want and Ignorance, as well as their victimization as children, the same impact may not have been possible.

CHAPTER VI - ADULT SCROOGE, THE GOTHIC CHILD,

AND THE VICTORIAN CHILD

Through his transformation encouraged by the gothic child characters, Scrooge acts differently at the novella's conclusion than at its start. For example, Scrooge employs his abilities—financial stability and newfound good humor—to "transform" the downtrodden around him, especially through his paternal relationship with Tiny Tim, "who did NOT die" (Dickens 123). Scrooge raises his clerk's salary, gives money to charity, and even forms a familial attachment with his nephew, Fan's son. However, this regression to Scrooge's more positive and moral understandings of the world—revealed to him from his once repressed past—suggests that Scrooge is also returning to a more childlike self. The term "regression" has negative connotations, but, in Scrooge's case, a regression to a childlike self serves as an antidote to his cruel and indifferent ways. This possibly negative act of regression actually serves a positive purpose because it counterbalances Scrooge's cruelty with childlike innocence. He must regress in order to move forward.

At the conclusion of *Carol*, Scrooge behaves like a child. Scrooge confesses that he does not know anything and is "quite a baby" but also admits, "I'd rather be a baby" (Dickens 119). Scrooge accepts his return to a childlike understanding of the world when he realizes he does not know the day of the month. He relishes in this fact as if being a baby—an innocent and ignorant being untarnished by the world—represents the best kind of person he can be. While he seems content with his now innocent, yet ignorant self, Scrooge does attempt to describe his newfound identity: "I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to

everybody" (118). Scrooge acts childish in his flustered and giddy state but also describes himself as a mixture of many ages, personas, and understandings. Interestingly, this passage links him to the Ghost of Christmas Past's fluctuating body. While Scrooge's body does not actually mutate, his perceptions of himself do. He feels "happy as an angel" and exclaims "merry Christmas," consequently embracing the festive holiday and his Christian faith—like the spirits and Tim. He is as "merry as a school-boy," thus channeling the positive nature represented by his inner youth. Yet, he also considers himself "giddy as a drunken man," so not a child entirely but childlike in his nature and sense of self. Again, linked to the Ghost of Christmas Past by being at once a school-boy and drunken man, he seems to have entered into a second childhood where he can be as innocent and resilient as he was in his youth.

While Scrooge has benefited from his interaction with the "gothic children," there is no further need for the gothic by the end of *Carol*. For example, Scrooge no longer lives in a world shrouded in darkness, like the typical gothic setting. Instead, he opens his window to see not fog or mist, but a "clear, bright, jovial, [and] stirring" day with "Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; [and] merry bells" (Dickens 119). Scrooge may in fact channel his inner child through his playfulness and positive nature, but his transformation seems to have expelled the gothic elements from the novella. In fact, he "had no further intercourse with Spirits" (125). Once Scrooge has made a complete alteration into one who "was better than his word" and "knew how to keep Christmas well," he no longer needed the gothic setting or spirits within the novella (123, 125). Even Tiny Tim grows healthier and lives, thus no longer demonstrating qualities of the gothic child. Dickens, however, does not make clear whether or not Tim's disability

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is "healed," but the disability is not mentioned again within the text. Scrooge no longer represents a miser or a bent old man trudging immorally within the gothic world of Victorian London, but has barred the parts of his life that suggested wretchedness and even wickedness. Scrooge, then, appears to have fully reclaimed his repressed sense of morality and no longer needs aid from the gothic or the gothic child. Scrooge does embrace childlike qualities, though, and attempts to aid those in need, much like the gothic child.

The gothic child characters within *Carol* manifests tamed gothic elements in order to reclaim the repressed moral and good nature of Scrooge's past self. Even though they themselves represent an element of the gothic, their existence within this particular novella gives them the ability to embody and manipulate gothic tropes in order to effect change. In fact, the spirits themselves most obviously express this ability and either act as one of the gothic children, such as the Ghost of Christmas Past, or hold the gothic children in his own power, as the Ghost of Christmas Present does over Want and Ignorance. Either way, the gothic elements revealed by the gothic child characters are manipulated to reach the novella's end goal. Also, while many critics such as Elliot L. Gilbert highlight "the scrooge problem," the idea that Scrooge's miraculous change is improbable and that he will regress following the merriment of the holiday season, these gothic children present a different understanding of his "change." In other words, Scrooge's change is dramatic but not improbable because the significance of the gothic child accounts for this incredible transformation. As others have noted, Scrooge does not become a new person but regresses to who he was before he became consumed with greed. The elements of the gothic child, though, must be evident in order to help him

through this regression as each of them reveal his past self or inner repressions through the manipulation of gothic elements. In other words, the aim of Dickens's novella could not have been achieved without the success of these gothic children, suggesting their overall importance within gothic literature in general. These gothic child characters, then, do not merely represent an overlooked element of gothic literature but serve an important functionality within the text—to spur characters towards reclamation through the revelation of repressed knowledge and past selves.

Unlike the innocent interpretation of the Victorian child, the gothic child presents readers of *Carol* with a sometimes monstrous characterization of children transformed through a relationship with elements of the gothic. This fusion of innocence and gothicness allows the gothic child to manipulate and even weaken the otherwise terrifying elements usually found in a narrative of the genre. The children, though, do not merely lessen the effects of the trope but use it in pursuit of Scrooge's reclamation. In *Carol*, the goal is to transform the main character, Scrooge, from a miser to a compassionate Victorian citizen. Whether or not Scrooge actually transforms or regresses to an earlier state of morality becomes an important point as the gothic child characters alter his personality towards a past sense of self evident in Scrooge's former memories. The gothic trope intends to reveal the past to its characters and readers, but the gothic child employs this goal to actually transform Scrooge. In fact, the gothic depiction of childhood within the novella suggests that it is childhood itself that is repressed. Interestingly, children are often presented as creepy, especially in modern horror tales, because children are connected to the gothic through repression. One of the overarching characteristics of the gothic is the revelation of a repressed past. Childhood also

represents a repression. In other words, adults must repress childhood because childish tendencies are not socially accepted. Childhood, then, appears as gothic because it fundamentally is gothic through repression.

Interestingly, a brief recollection of other gothic children in Victorian gothic texts suggests that this desire to assist a main character towards reclamation is unique to Dickens's text. Of course, other child characters permeate Victorian literature but do not necessarily spur a change in the characters. Dickens, then, seems to be doing something different in his text as he employs the child character towards a greater good—the moral restoration of Scrooge. On the other hand, sickly, angelic children do permeate Victorian texts. In fact, reading these deathbed children as gothic may lend to the understanding of their purposefulness within Victorian texts. More importantly, however, once the gothic child has met its goal within the novella, the gothic elements are no longer needed. Adult Scrooge now looks upon a happy and bright world and must no longer face the spirits who needed to guide him towards a moral reawakening. He becomes innocent, like a baby or a Victorian child, but not gothic. In the end, the child should be innocent but may exhibit elements of the gothic when necessary. The innocent and gothic child only exists within the text when striving towards its goals, further suggesting its employment within the novella to reclaim the innate goodness of the main character and even inspire readers towards this transformation.

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