



## Sentiment and Vision in Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol and The Cricket on the Hearth

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2007-12-31

This essay explores the ways in which sentimentality is manifested through the visible, and through associative functions of the eye, in two of Dickens's Christmas books of the 1840s. I situate the relationship between vision and sentiment within discourses from eighteenth-century moral philosophy, as Adam Smith's figure of the "Impartial Spectator" (of central importance to the development of ideas around sympathy) is constructed mainly through the visual. I focus on two of the Christmas Books as they offer an interesting local study to test these ideas, coming at a critical juncture within the development of Dickens's own writing style, and also at an important historical moment within an investigation into Victorian sentimentality. Within Dickens's writing, sentimentality is typically associated with the exaggerated emotional portrayal of pathetic scenes (particularly the deaths of children), designed to elicit emotional responses from the reader. However, behind the hyperbole rests a concern with the self's need to take social, ethical and moral care of others, and the role of literature and art in tutoring the reader's emotional response, with the eye playing a crucial role in this act. I further explore the way in which Dickens's interest in blindness both reinforces, and points to certain disturbances, in his sentimental vision.

[存档文本](#)