



*Bi-weekly Newsletter of the  
Department of Foreign Languages & Literature*

國立清華大學外國語文學系 系週刊 第 06 期



Photo from the December 21 Christmas Ball held jointly by DCE, CHSS, IEEM, and DFLL

Dec. 25, 2009

**【 *From the Editor* 】**

We see this issue dated December 25, the day Christmas—the birth of Jesus Christ—is celebrated in many countries. Yet we frequently pass by images of a man in a red suit—Santa Claus. Who is Santa Claus and how is he related to the day?

The first clue to Santa Claus is that he is sometimes referred to as St. Nick, that is, Saint Nicholas. Santa is Italian for Saint, and if we take off the first syllable Ni- we are left with something sounding a lot like Claus. St. Nicholas

was a real person who lived about 1500 years ago in early Christian times. He became the Archbishop of Myra, in what is now the country of Syria. He came from a wealthy family but was charitable to the poor and those in need, yet he



strove to conceal his good deeds. He is known as a wonderworker for the many miracles associated with him: more than once did Nicholas save those drowning in the sea, and to others provide release from captivity and imprisonment. He died between 345 and 351 and is beloved in many lands among many peoples.

In much of Europe the feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on December 6, and on this day children receive small gifts, such as fruit or sweets, often given by a man dressed as a bishop. It was in the USA in the 1800s that this image began to change. One important piece was the publication in 1823 and subsequent popularity of the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" said to have been written by Clement Moore. Most people know it from its beginning line "Twas the night before Christmas." In this poem we hear the following descriptions:

When what to my wondering eyes should appear  
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer. ...

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.

It is here that we see St. Nick being transferred to December 25. Other depictions of a man in a red suit began to appear after that, but it was in 1931, when Coca-Cola first used a Santa Claus image as part of its Christmas ad campaign, that the form of Santa Claus so familiar today began to be developed.



So the next time you see a Santa Claus image and are reminded of a funny old man sliding down a chimney, remember the source was a real person who helped others in need secretly, often delivering to them what they needed in the dark of night so as to remain anonymous. (images from [www.stnicholascenter.org](http://www.stnicholascenter.org))

## 【*Feature Article*】



Oo-la-la, who is the ninja in the picture? Students who are taking the American Literature course this semester may already know the answer. Yes, he's our Professor Aaron Winter! Professor Winter received

both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California at Irvine; later he came to Taiwan and joined the FLLD faculty. He focuses on the study of 19th-Century American Literature and the genre of satire. Furthermore, he's still working on expanding his doctoral thesis titled "Laughing Dove", laughing for satire and dove for anti-war. (See [laughingdove.net](http://laughingdove.net)) When we asked Professor Winter what he thinks of the lovely FLLD students, he said we are fantastic, smart and well-prepared; all except our *earnest* Algernon, Ken Li-Hsieh. "He may be handsome, but he's an insufferable villain." Now laugh, kids; this is an example of satire!

## 【*Academic Speeches and Conference Presentations*】

### ■ The Third Conference on Contemporary Chinese Discourse Studies

Professor: Sai-hua Kuo 郭賽華

Date: December 18-20, 2009

Place: Hangzhou, China

Paper presented: Media & Society: Analyzing News on the Elderly in Taiwanese Newspapers (媒體與社會：台灣報紙中老人新聞之分析)

■ **Numerous Factors May Modulate Semantic Judgement:  
Evidence from functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and  
Diffusion Tensor Imaging**

Speaker: Dr. Fanpei Gloria Yang 楊梵亭

Time: Wednesday, December 30, 2009 at 3:00

Place: C412, HSS Building

※ *FLLD Biweekly Team: Manager—Chun-Hung Wu, Executive Editor: Kai-Xin Xiao  
Editor: Dr. Johanna Katchen*