Freud in Hunan: Translating Shen Congwen’s ‘Xiaoxiao’

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Abstract
“Freud in Hunan: Translating Shen Congwen’s ‘Xiaoxiao’” is an analysis of Shen Congwen’s story about a young girl who takes care of a little boy who is to become her husband. The key to their relationship is of mother to child, both when the child is young, and when he is more grown up. This ambivalent relationship, of mother, then spouse, naturally conjures up the Freudian notion of an Oedipus Complex, though the emphasis is less sexual than maternal. That ambivalence is dispelled if the translator renders Xiaoxiao’s term of address for the charge who is to become her husband as “Younger Brother” or left in transliteration as “Didi”. No one would call a child or a husband “Little Brother” in English. The crux of the story is lost if an apt term of address cannot be found. The translation of the story waited for two years before the translator could think of a name in English that captured both the child in Xiaoxiao’s charge as well as the husband whom she marries. The name “Sonny” was ultimately chosen because it can serve as a term of address to both a child and a husband.

Biography
Eugene Eoyang, an author and retired professor from Indiana University and Lingnan University in Hong Kong, is the 2012 recipient of the IU Asian Alumni Association's Distinguished Asian Pacific American Alumni Award. Along with an illustrious teaching career, Dr. Eoyang is the author of "The Transparent Eye: Reflections on Translation, Chinese Literature, and Comparative Poetics" (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), "Coat of Many Colors: Reflections on Diversity by a Minority of One" (Beacon Press, 1995), "Borrowed Plumage: Polemical Essays on Translation" (Rodopi, 2003) and "Two-Way Mirrors: Cross-Cultural Studies on Glocalization" (Lexington Books, 2007). He also published an illustrated book written for his grandchildren, "The Smile of a Crocodile: Rhymes for Chloe (and Kyle)" (CreateSpace, 2007). His most recent work is "The Promise and Premise of Creativity: Why Comparative Literature Matters (Continuum, 2012).” Since 2012, Professor Eoyang has completed two projects: one, a booklet, entitled, Errors and Infelicities: A Workbook for Chinese Students of English, and another book, on higher education, titled, Lighting a Fire: What Higher Education Should Be – And Often Isn’t. Both have been submitted to publishers.