Hans Christian Andersen in South Asia
Translation and Reception of Andersen's Fairy Tales in Bengali and Urdu Literary Cultures

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It was on a visit to my maternal relatives in Gujrat, Pakistan, during the early 1990s that I was first introduced to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. My siblings and I often pestered our youngest aunt to tell us a story. She was enrolled in a bachelor's program at the time – the first woman to do so in a family of semi-literate carpenters and farmers – and the industrious student that she was, she would often tell us off so she could focus on her schoolwork. But one day she called the three of us and said she was going to tell us a story. "It's my favorite story," she said, and then went on to narrate Andersen's "The Red Shoes," which she had read in a course on "English literature." She would read a line in English and then translate it for us in Urdu since we did not know any English at the time. I can still recall the feeling of utter horror and shock when my aunt's narration reached the point where Karen asks the executioner to cut her feet off. More than three decades later, I can still recall the exact image of Karen's chopped off feet in red dancing shoes that I had imagined as a nine-year-old boy. This personal anecdote is but one example of Andersen's influence and the way his fairy tales have been read and disseminated in South Asia since the mid-nineteenth century.

Bengali Translations of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales

South Asian readers were first introduced to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales during the late 1850s when the Vernacular Literature Society in Calcutta started publishing Bengali translations of his fairy tales. The Society was established in 1851 by a group of colonial officials, Christian missionaries, and the Bengali *bhadralok* (literally, gentlemen or gentlefolk), a term used to represent a particular social class that emerged in the early nineteenth-century Bengal as a result of the colonial encounter. Members of this class were mostly upper-caste Hindu men who were familiar with both "Western" education and local Bengali cultural

traditions. The *bhadralok* were supposed to have refined social manners and a cultivated taste in art and literature.

Although there existed various literary societies in Bengal during the early nineteenth century, the Vernacular Literature Society was different in that it was set up specifically to publish "sound and useful Vernacular Domestic Literature" in order to counter the growing popularity of *Battala*, a genre of Bengali literature that the *bhadralok* deemed unsuitable for consumption. (Gupta, 2011, p. 153). Considered lowbrow literature, *Battala* was named after a locality in North Calcutta where certain section of Bengali entrepreneurs had set up small printing presses. It included cheap editions of traditional romantic stories, mythological tales, and erotic fantasies written in a prose that adhered to colloquial rather than the official version of the language being crafted and promulgated by the *bhadralok* in concert with the colonial administration.

As a colonial pedagogical project, the Society started by publishing a number of translations in Bengali, but its publications did not appeal to the Bengali readership (Gupta, 2011, p. 155). The popularity of *Battala*, however, kept growing as education spread and more and more people learned to read. To compete with *Battala*, the Society was forced to change its strategy and decided to publish low-priced translations of books that were already popular in Europe. To do so, the Society enlisted "the services, as translators, not merely of good Bengali scholars, but of men who can write in a style which will be read with pleasure by their fellow countrymen" (qtd. in Gupta, 2011, p. 155). Furthermore, the Society decided that these Bengali writers should not just translate popular European books but adapt them into Bengali to suit the tastes of local readers.

In an introductory note to the 1859 Bengali translation of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's French novel *Paul et Virginie*, Hodgson Pratt (1824–1907), one of the founders of the Vernacular Literature Society writes that when the Society was being set up, "there was much discussion as to whether the works selected for translation into Bengali should undergo any adaptation, or should be translated as literally as possible (Pratt, 1859, p. v). He then quotes an extract from one of his earlier letters saying that "mere *Translation* would not meet the great objects which this society intends to keep in view." (p. v). He tells the founding members of the society that "there is not only a difference of language between the people of India and of England. We must recognise the far greater difficulty of a difference of *ideas, associations and literature.*" (p. v). Given these linguistic and cultural differences, Pratt recom-

mends that "all works issued by the Committee will be carefully adapted with reference to actual condition of the native mind" (p. v).

With the objective of educating the native population in its own language but on colonially approved European materials, the Vernacular Literature Society started the Bengal Family Library, "the first-ever publishers' series in the Bengali language" (Gupta, 2011, p. 152). It was through this series that Hans Christian Andersen's tales were first introduced in India during the late 1850s in an effort to counter the popularity of *Battala.* According to the 1859 *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, the Vernacular Literature Society published 2,000 copies each of Bengali translations of Andersen's seven fairy tales between 1 June 1857 and 31 May 1858. These fairy tales were: "The Tinder Box," "Little Klaus and Big Klaus," "The Little Mermaid," "The Chinese Nightingale," "The Story of a Mother," "Four Winds," and "The Ugly Duckling" (Long, 1859, pp. 81–82). Before 31 May 1857, the Society had also published 2,000 copies each of Bengali translations of "Wild Swans" and "The Story of a Mother" (Long, 1859, pp. 81–82). All of Andersen's tales were translated by Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay, who became the assistant secretary of the Society in 1857. Although Mukhopadhyay kept the language of his translations accessible to compete with the lowbrow *Battala* literature, he did not use any nonstandard or lowbrow version of Bengali like the *Battala.* His was a version the Bengali *bhadralok* considered suitable for consumption by common readers, one that would, in due course, become the standard variety of Bengali.

Translations of Andersen's tales quickly became popular among Bengali readers. In an introductory note to the second edition of his translation of পুত্রশোকাতুরা দুঃখিনী মাতা (Putrasokatura Dukhini Mata; "A Sad Mother Grieving Her Son"), Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay writes that the 2,000 copies of the story published only eight months ago have all been bought up by enthusiastic readers. The Vernacular Literature Society made considerable efforts to promote translations of Andersen's tales to local Bengali readers, particularly women. The Society employed hawkers to peddle these books "in various directions, where but for that agency, they would probably never have been known" (Long, 1859, p. LVI). The education of Indian women remained a constant colonial concern throughout the nineteenth century and the Society employed a dedicated "female hawker […] through whose means our publications are sold in the families of gentlemen, and it is a very encouraging fact that her sales are larger than those of any other of our hawkers" (Long, 1859, p. LVI). In his 1859 "Report on the Native Press in Bengal" included in the *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, James Long (1814–1887), an influential missionary at the time, observed that

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"some of the books of the Vernacular Literature Committee have proved very interesting to Bengali Females, such as the translations of 'Elizabeth or the Exiles of Siberia,' 'Paul and Virginia,' Hans Andersen's Tales" (p. ix). More and more Bengali women were learning to read, and Long was concerned that in the absence of "good books" like Andersen's "moral tales," they would end up reading "bad ones" (Long, 1859, p. ix).

The Bengali translations of Hans Christian Andersen's tales were done using English versions of these stories, and of all the English translations available at the time, it was Clara de Chatelain's translations that Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay used. Most nineteenth-century English translators of Andersen did not know any Danish and worked with German versions of his stories. Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen argues that Chatelain must have used a German translation in addition to drawing upon earlier English translations (2004, p. 128). The English translations of Andersen's stories can, therefore, be understood as an instance of relay translation – "the translation of a translated text […] into a third language" – from Danish to German and from German to English (St André, 1998, p. 230). Since the Bengali versions of Andersen's stories are translations of English versions, which are themselves relay translations, the Bengali translations may be understood as a complicated or extreme case of relay translation. Since Chatelain's English translations are quite close to Andersen's Danish originals, Pedersen surmises that she may have also used "Andersen's original text, or possibly a Danish informant" (2004, p. 128). Pedersen observes that while Chatelain remains "fairly faithful" to Andersen's original texts, "she renders many titles so freely as to provide a different focus for the story" (p. 128). One of the stories whose title Chatelain changed is "Paradisets Have," usually translated into English as "The Garden of Paradise." Chatelain titled her translation "The Four Winds," and Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay's Bengali translation of this story is titled বায়ু চতুষ্টয়ের আখ্যায়িকা (Bayucatustayer Akhyayika, "The Tale of the Four Winds"). The title "Four Winds" also appears in 1859 *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, as mentioned earlier.

Urdu Translation of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales

While the Vernacular Literature Society made significant efforts to publish and promote Bengali translations of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, Urdu literati in colonial India remained largely uninterested in his works during the nineteenth century. Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay's Bengali translations of Andersen's fairy tales published in 1857–1858 remain easily accessible even today, but no nineteenth-century Urdu translations of his works

have been found. The nineteenth-century Urdu literati's indifference towards Andersen's fairy tales is particularly striking given that these tales share certain characteristics (such as the adventure chronotope and the use of fantastical and supernatural elements) with the Urdu genre of *dāstān*, which had enjoyed the continued patronage of Mughal emperors. One possible explanation for the lack of interest in Andersen's fairy tales could be that after the deposition of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775–1862) in the aftermath of the 1857 Indian Rebellion, the *dāstān* genre fell out of favor among Urdu writers. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Urdu-speaking intelligentsia became increasingly interested in producing reformist and didactic works in the realist tradition promoted by the British colonial administration.

There is another peculiar aspect concerning translation and reception of Andersen's tales in Urdu. Like the Vernacular Literature Society, Calcutta, literary societies in other parts of the world also published translations of Western literature including Andersen's fairy tales in an effort to develop and enrich their languages. For example, in Ukraine, Mykhailo Starytsky (1840–1904), a prominent writer and one of the founders of a clandestine literary society, published Ukrainian translations of Andersen's fairy tales in 1873 (Kapustian & Bilal, 2025, p. 288). Starytsky used translations of Andersen's tales to introduce new words in the Ukrainian language to show that it was not a just dialect of Russian and that it had the potential to handle sophisticated works of literature (Kapustian & Bilal, 2025, p. 290). In China, during the early twentieth century, the Literary Research Society (established in 1920) translated Andersen's fairy tales not only to enrich the Chinese language but also to integrate foreign literary traditions into their own (Li & Ya'nan, 2025). Similarly, in early twentieth-century Korea, writers of nationalist, socialist, and religious persuasions used translations of Andersen's fairy tales as vehicles to promote their own political agendas (Choi, 2025). No such thing happened in the case of Urdu.

Andersen's fairy tales were most probably introduced to Urdu readers during the second half of the twentieth century. One of the earliest available Urdu translations of Andersen's fairy tales was published by Kitāb Manzil, Lahore, Pakistan in 1956. Translated into Urdu by Riaz Javed, it was titled *Anḍersen Kī Kahānīyañ* (Andersen's Tales) and contained thirteen of Andersen's tales along with a short, well-written biographical sketch titled "Juftsāz Kā Betā" (The Shoemaker's Son). Towards the end of the biographical sketch, Javed notes that he consulted various English versions of Andersen's tales for his translations. Like

Bengali translations, Javed's Urdu translations of Andersen's fairy tales are also example of relay translations.

In India, several Delhi-based publishers brought out Urdu translations of Andersen's fairy tales. Azhar Afsar's translations of Andersen's five tales titled *Anḍersen Kī Kahānīyañ* (Andersen's Tales) was published in 1984 by Taraqī-e Urdu Bureau in 1984. The Bureau had also published Harcharan Chawla's translation of "The Little Mermaid" as a single volume titled *Nanhī Jal Parī* in 1980. Another translation of "The Little Mermaid" by Syed Hamid Husain was published with the same title *Nanhī Jal Parī* in 1997 by Maktabah Payām-e T'alīm, Delhi. A standalone translation of "The Emperor's New Clothes" titled *Bādshāh Ke Kapṛe* by Musheer Fatima was published by Idārāh-e T'alīm-o Taraqī. Although the publication does not mention any publishing date, there is a handwritten date of 13 September 1973 on one of the pages of the story.

Like Javed, it is quite likely that most of Andersen's Urdu translators worked from English translations of his fairy tales. However, there are a few exceptions in this regard. For example, Harcharan Chawla who lived in Oslo from 1974 until his death in 2001 translated "The Little Mermaid" from the Norwegian version of the fairy tale. Based on the high level of mutual intelligibility between Danish and Norwegian languages, we can assume that Chawla worked from a version quite close to Andersen's original. Nasar Malik, who moved to Copenhagen in the early 1970s, translated six of Andersen's fairy tales directly from Danish for a collection titled *Stories by Hans Christian Andersen*, which was published by the Royal Library, Copenhagen, on Andersen's bicentennial birth anniversary in 2005. Malik, along with his wife Huma Nasar, has also published translations of five more fairy tales on his website *Urdu Hamasr*, one of the few online Urdu magazines published from within Denmark.

Hans Christian Andersen and the Hermeneutic Model of Translation

Scholars of Hans Christian Andersen have mostly looked at translations of his fairy tales in terms of their fidelity to the Danish originals. A translation that stays close to the original is considered good or faithful while a translation that takes liberties and strays away from the original is often regarded inadequate or poor. For example, in his detailed study of Andersen's English translations, Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen argues that "in the case of a great writer like Andersen, no translation is adequate" because of the "impossibility of simul-taneously conveying the information content of the original economically and artistically

without the loss of either meaning or artistic excellence" (2004, p. 17). This understanding of translation as a process of reproduction of a source text's form, meaning, or effect is not limited to Andersen studies. Lawrence Venuti calls this model of translation "instrumentalism" and argues that it has "dominated translation theory and commentary for more than two millennia" (2019, p. 1). Instrumentalism "conceives of translation as the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text, an invariant form, meaning, or effect," and continues to dominate how translation is understood "in academic institutions and in publishing, in scholarly monographs and in literary journalism, in the most rarefied theoretical discourses and in the most commonly used clichés and proverbs about translation" (p. 1). According to Venuti, an instrumentalist way of thinking "grossly over-simplifies translation practice, fostering an illusionism of immediate access to the source" (p. 5). Although this instrumentalist way of understanding translation has dominated translation theory and practice for more than two millennia, Venuti argues that it is inadequate to understand the complexities the process of translation entails. Even the most "faithful" translation of a text cannot be understood as "providing direct or unmediated access to its source text" (p. 3).

Instead of understanding translation as the reproduction of a source-text invariant in the target language, Venuti proposes a hermeneutic model that "conceives of translation as an interpretive act that inevitably varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture" (p. 1). According to Venuti, "any text is only ever available through some sort of mediation," which is to say that a particular interpretation is always inscribed in any and every translated text (p. 3). In relay translations, as is the case with most of Andersen's translations, there are multiple sets of various inter-pretations already inscribed in what would be a "source-text" for translators like Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay or Javed or Syed Hamid Husain. German translators inscribed their interpre-tations in their translations, which were then used by English translators who inscribed their own interpretations in English versions of Andersen's tales, which were subsequently used by Bengali and Urdu translators. These translations can, then, be understood as palimpsests of interpretations.

According to Venuti's hermeneutic model, a translator "turns a source text into a translation by applying interpretants," which fall into two categories: formal and thematic (2019, p. 2). Formal interpretants may include "a concept of equivalence or a concept of style," whereas thematic interpretants may involve "interpretations of the source text pre-

sented elsewhere in commentary or an ideology in the sense of an ensemble of values, beliefs, and representations affiliated with particular social groups" (p. 2). It is because translators employ a complex assemblage of both formal and thematic interpretants to convert a source text into a translation that no translation can provide unmediated access to its source text. A source text, for Venuti, "sustains meanings, values, and functions specific to its originary language and culture" and after getting translated it becomes "another text that comes to sustain meanings, values, and functions specific to a different language and culture" (p. 3). The receiving culture's beliefs, values, and representations out of which a translator draw interpretants are always arranged hierarchically in terms of prestige and authority (p. 2). These resources, Venuti argues, "are not assigned the same value and prestige: some are dominant while others are marginal with various gradations between these poles" (Venuti, 2018, p. xiv). For example, the standard dialect of a target language will always be considered a dominant resource compared to non-standard or regional dialects, which are regarded as marginal resources.

Domesticating (Conforming) Effects, Foreignizing (Non-Conforming) Effects

Choosing which linguistic and cultural resources to draw one's interpretants from has ethical and political ramifications according to Venuti. A translator's choice to draw their interpretants from "marginal resources and ideologies carries the potential to challenge the dominant, as well as the cultural and social hierarchies that structure the receiving situation" (Venuti, 2018, p. xiv). Such a translation that draws on marginal resources and ideologies in the receiving situation creates a desirable ethical effect, which Venuti terms "foreignizing" (p. xiv). On the other hand, a translation that draws interpretants from linguistic and cultural resources dominant in the receiving situation not only validates these resources and ideologies, but also "maintains the status quo, reaffirming linguistic standards, literary canons, and authoritative interpretations" to create an unethical effect for which Venuti uses the terms "domesticating" (p. xiv).

While Venuti's distinction between a foreignizing translation that "departs from institutionalized knowledge and practices by stimulating new kinds of thinking and writing" and a domesticating translation that not only "validates dominant resources and ideologies" but also "fosters among readers who esteem such resources and ideologies a cultural narcissism that is sheer self-satisfaction" is clear, the way he uses the terms foreignizing and domesticating needs elaboration and clarification (p. xiv). Venuti argues that "all translation,

regardless of genre or text type, including translation that seeks to register linguistic and cultural differences, is an interpretation that fundamentally domesticates the source text" (p. xii). Put simply, a translation domesticates a source text and can lead to either a domesticating or a foreignizing effect depending on its relationship with dominant and marginal linguistic and cultural resources in the receiving situation. While a translation cannot escape the inevitability of domesticating a source text, it can still choose to create either domesticating or foreignizing effect.

Another point to keep in mind with regard to domesticating and foreignizing translations is the way the usage of these terms has evolved among translation scholars ever since the publication of Venuti's book *The Translator's Invisibility* in 1995. Although Venuti had presented these terms with regard to a translation's relationship with dominant or marginal linguistic and cultural resources, later scholars understood domestication as "adaptation of the cultural context or of culture-specific terms" in the receiving situation and foreignizing as an attempt to preserve "the original cultural context, in terms of settings, names, etc." (Paloposki, 2012, p. 40). But for Venuti, "foreignizing translation cannot be reduced to literalism, or close adherence to the source text" (2018, p. xv). Adhering strictly to a source text can "result in awkward, unidiomatic writing […] which cannot serve the ethical effects of foreignizing translation" (p. xv). It is not that a translation that creates a domesticating effect is fluent and a translation that creates a foreignizing effect is clunky or awkward in the receiving situation, for "fluency is not itself domesticating" (p. xv). A fluent translation can be domesticating insofar as it employs "fluent strategies that are narrowly restricted to the current standard dialect of the translating language" (p. xv). But if a translation adopts a fluent strategy "that admits non-standard linguistic items like regional and social dialects, slang and obscenity, archaism and jargon, loanwords and neologism" in a manner that interrogates, challenges, or subverts the dominance of the standard dialect, it will be considered a foreignizing translation (p. xv).

The way Venuti theorizes domestication as an assimilative process that decontextualizes a source text from its original language and culture and recontextualizes it in the target language and culture and domesticating and foreignizing as political and ethical effects has led to considerable confusion and misinterpretation as we can see from the discourse surrounding these terms. Venuti has admitted as much and in the 2018 edition of *The Translator's Invisibility*, he cautions to "be wary of the literature that has accumulated on this book" (p. xix).

In order to clarify the distinction between domestication and domesticating effect, I propose that we use the terms "conforming" in place of domesticating effect and "non-conforming" in place of foreignizing effect. All translation domesticates the source text; a translation that validates or subscribes to the dominant linguistic resources and cultural ideologies creates a conforming effect while a translation that subverts or challenges the dominant resources and ideologies creates a non-conforming effect.

In the following sections, I look at the kind of interpretants Andersen's Bengali and Urdu translators employed in their translations and the kind of effects they produce.

Interpretants in Bengali Translations

In accordance with the objectives of the Vernacular Literature Society, Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay's translation strategy was, of course, adaptation of the English version of Andersen's stories to suit the reading tastes of his Bengali audience. In his translations, Mukhopadhyay uses interpretants drawn from dominant linguistic and cultural sources in the receiving culture. During the mid-nineteenth century when Mukhopadhyay was translating Andersen's fairy tales, the receiving culture, that of the *bhadralok* in colonial Bengal, was itself in a state of great flux. The Bengali *bhadralok* were in the process of negotiating a new identity, a process that was informed by both their own cultural preferences as well as political expediencies of the colonial government. An example of this complex process of cultural and political negotiation can be found in Mukhopadhyay's translation of Andersen's fairy tale, "The Story of a Mother," which is about a mother grieving over her sick child. She has not slept in several days and when an old man knocks at her door, she invites him in and asks him to look over her sick child while she takes a short nap. She tells the old man that she wants to save her child and that God should not take him away from her. The narrator then reveals that the old man is Death himself. The sentence in Andersen's original reads, "Og den gamle Mand, det var Døden selv, han nikkede saa underligt, det kunde lige saa godt betyde ja, som nei" (Andersen, 1848/2024). Chatelain translates it as "The old man – who was no other than Death – nodded his head so oddly, that it might just as well have stood for yes or no" (Chatelain, 1867, p. 393). In Mukhopadhyay's version, this sentence becomes "The old man who has come is none other than Yamraj himself" (Mukhopadhyay, 1858, pp. 2–3). Andersen's "Døden" becomes "Death" in Chatelain's English version, but Mukho-padhyay does not translate it as মৃত্যু (death) Instead, he translates it as Yamraj, the Hindu god of death.

We can understand Mukhopadhyay's translation of "Death" as the Hindu god of death, Yamraj, as an instance of adaptation in which a foreign text is appropriated to suit the beliefs of target-language readers. However, such an understanding would suffer from oversimplification and overlook the complexities of the process of adaptation. In the Hindu iconography, Yamraj (also known as Yama, Dharmaraja, and Kala) is not depicted as an old man. Instead, he is almost always shown as a relatively strong, young man with four arms riding a buffalo. Even if one were to argue that Yamraj disguises himself as an old man when he goes to the woman's house since it is a fictional tale and, therefore, anything is possible, the Yamraj of the story is inconsistent with the Yamraj of Hindu mythology. In the Hindu mythological traditions, Yamraj is not just the god of death but also of justice. Vettam Mani writes in the Puranic Encyclopedia that "when the life span of each living being allotted by Brahma is at an end, Yama sends his agents and takes the soul to Yamapuri (the city of Yama)" (Mani, 1975, p. 367). In Yamapuri, Yamraj evaluates the worldly deeds of every soul and sends the good souls to Vaikuntha, the celestial abode of Vishnu, a place free of anxiety and full of harmony. The sinful souls are sent to Naraka, Yamraj's own abode, where he administers severe but temporary punishment to souls for their sinful deeds. After the punishment, the souls are reincarnated and sent back to earth.

Yamraj, in Hindu traditions, is not answerable to any other deity and does not need anyone's permission to dispense justice. However, the Yamraj in the Bengali version of Andersen's story is subordinate to what Chatelain translates as "an all-merciful God," which in Andersen's Danish original is "vor Herre" (literally, our Lord) – an epithet used to refer to Jesus Christ or God in Christianity (Chatelain, 1867, p. 393; Andersen, 1848/2024). Death (Døden) is answerable to an all-merciful God (vor Herre) without whose permission he cannot uproot any flowers representing human lives in Andersen's story. The idea of death being answerable to an all-merciful God is consistent with monotheistic, Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in which there is an angel of death called Azrael. However, in the pantheistic traditions of Hinduism, there is no single "all-merciful God," and the supreme divinity is understood as the trinity of gods Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). As a lexical signifier, "Yamraj" is embedded in the Hindu mythological traditions, but in Mukhopadhyay's version it remains unable to mobilize fully the semantic reserve associated with the Hindu religion and culture. The pressure being exerted by "an all-merciful God" of Christianity prevents "Yamraj" to become fully the

Yamraj of Hinduism. The Yamraj in the Bengali translation, then, is a compromise between the Hinduism of the Bengali *bhadralok* and the Christianity of the British colonizers.

We can, therefore, argue that Yamraj as a formal as well as a thematic interpretant creates, on the one hand, a conforming effect, and, on the other, showcases the complex process of negotiation and contestation out of which a Bengali *bhadralok* identity, rooted in local language and religion but inflected with a colonial-Christian sense of morality, emerged during the mid-nineteenth century. Inflected by Christianity, Yamraj can be understood in terms of the colonial construction of Hinduism as a religion modelled after Christianity. To respond to Christian missionaries who regarded Hinduism as a set of primitive and superstitious beliefs, members of the Hindu intelligentsia sought to cast away certain features of Hinduism and tried to make it "correspond more rigorously to the Judeo-Christian conceptions of a single, all-powerful deity" (Viswanathan, 2022, p. 27).

Interpretants in Urdu Translations

If interpretants in Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay's Bengali translations of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales created a conforming effect while showcasing the process of colonial negotiation, Urdu translations of his tales also produce a conforming effect in order to make the tales suitable for their predominantly Muslim readers. Consider a short excerpt from Riaz Javed's translation of Andersen's famous fairy tale, "The Little Mermaid" in which a mermaid wants to gain an immortal soul. She falls in love with a prince and wants to marry him because she has been told that doing so will ensure that she gains an immortal soul. Towards the end of the tale, the prince marries the princess of a neighboring country and the next morning the little mermaid is turned into spume. Javed's translation of the tale's ending reads:

> Ab jahāz par sab bedār ho chuke the aor pehle kī taraḥ vo chehal pehal nah thī. Us ne shehzāde ko apnī pīarī dulhan ke sāth khaṛe dekha. Aīsa m'lūm hota tha keh unhoñ ne us kī judaī ko mehsūs kīa he. Vo jahāz se niche jhāg uṛāte hu'e panī meñ yuñ nazareñ jama'e the keh jese unheñ m'lūm ho keh jal parī samandar meñ kūd ga'ī he. An dekhe jal parī ne dulhā kī peshānī per āḳhrī bosah sabt kīa aor muskurātī hu'ī hava kī betīoñ ke hamrah us gulābī badal se bhī ūpar uth ga'ī jo nehayat iṭmīnān se jahāz ke upar ter rahe the.
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> "Tīn so sāl b'd ham ḳhudā'ī badshahat meñ parvāz kar jae'ñ ge." (Javed, 1956, p. 97)[1]

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[1] This and the following translations from the Urdu are mine. In English this passage reads:
"By now, everyone on the ship had woken up, but it was no longer as lively as before. She saw the prince standing there with her beautiful bride. It seemed as if they had felt her absence. They stared at the frothing water as if they knew that the

Even though Javed uses an English translation of Andersen's tale, we can see a considerable level of "semantic correspondence and a stylistic approximation" between his Urdu translation and Andersen's original text in Danish. That in Javed's version the little mermaid kisses the prince on his forehead before rising up to the clouds, whereas in the original Danish, she kisses the bride and not the prince, is an exception in this regard. Moreover, Javed's translation achieves what Venuti calls "fluency" whereby "the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects […] the essential meaning of the foreign text" (Venuti, 2018, p. 1). The fluency in Javed's translation may make us assume that it provides us with unmediated access to Andersen's original tale in Danish. However, that is not the case because translation not only "decontextualizes the source text by detaching it from the multidimensional contexts of production and reception in its original language and culture" but also "recontextualizes the source text by constructing another, comparable set of contexts in the translating language and culture" (Venuti, 2018, p. xii) This process of simultaneous decontextualization–recontextualization takes place through interpretants, which he draws primarily from dominant linguistic and cultural sources such as the standard dialect of Urdu as we can see from the excerpt above. One may argue that, for most Urdu readers unfamiliar with Biblical ideas, the expression "ḵhuda'ī badshahat" does not convey the same sense that "God's Kingdom" does to someone who is familiar with this concept for there is no concept of God's Kingdom in dominant Islamic traditions. But even then, the expression does not disrupt the fluency of Javed's translation in any serious manner and cannot be regarded as an expression sourced from marginal linguistic or cultural resources.

Compared to Javed's, Syed Hamid Husain's translation is considerably more fluent. Here is Syed Hamid Husain's translation of the same passage:

> Jahāz par ab sab jāg uṭhe the aor ḵhushiāñ manā rahe the. Jal parī ne shehzāde ko apnī ḵhubsūrat dulhan ke sāth dekha lekīn shehzāde kī nazareñ nanhī jal parī ko talāsh kar rahī thīñ. Kabhī kabhī vo afsos ke sāth samanada meñ jhāg bhare panī ko deḵhtā jese vo jāntā ho keh nanhī jal parī ne samandar meñ chalāng lagā dī he. Nanhī jal parī sab kī āñkhoñ se aojhal thī lekīn vo aor us ke sāth kī havā kī maḵhlūq shehzāde ko ḵhush dekh kar muskurā rahe the.

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mermaid has dived into the sea. Unseen, the mermaid planted a kiss on the groom's forehead for the last time. Smiling, she rose together with the Daughters of the Air and went beyond the pink clouds that floated leisurely above the ship. 'We'll fly into the God's Kingdom after three hundred years.'"

Hava'ī maḵẖlūq meñ se aek ne kahā, Agar ham koshish kareñ to tīn so sāl se pehle bhī jannat kī maḵẖlūq meñ shāmil ho sakte heñ. (Husain, 1997, pp. 29–30)[2]

As we can see in the excerpt above, the line mentioning God's Kingdom is completely omitted in Syed Hamid Husain's translation. This omission can be understood in terms of a thematic interpretant whereby a translator incorporates values and beliefs of the receiving culture in their translation. The Urdu language is usually associated with Muslims in South Asia and the omission of God's Kingdom in Syed Hamid Husain's translation makes it fluent for his predominantly Muslim readers. It is not just this one instance where he removes a Christian religious reference. Consider the first sentence of the tale in which Andersen describes the depth of the sea in terms of the height of church towers:

Langt ude i Havet er Vandet saa blaat, som Bladene paa den deiligste Kornblomst og saa klart, som det reneste Glas, men det er meget dybt, dybere end noget Ankertoug naaer, mange Kirketaarne maatte stilles ovenpaa hinanden, for at række fra Bunden op over Vandet. (Andersen, 1837/2024)[3]

Syed Hamid Husain translates it as follows:

Samandar ke bīchoñ bīch jahāñ pāni itnā nīlā dikhā'ī detā thā jītnā bārish ke b'ad āsmān, ītnā shaffāf jītnā ke sab se ziyādah qīmatī bilor aor ītnā gehā ke tale upar sattar manāre rakh deñ to bhī āḵẖrī manāre kā kalas samandar ke bāhir dikhā' ī nah de […]. (1997, p. 1)[4]

Syed Hamid Husain replaces the church towers with "manāre" (minarets), which in Islamic architecture are towers generally built within mosques. In Javed's version, we find a slightly different word "mīnār" (tower), but he specifies that these are towers of a church: "agar

[2] In English, this passage reads:
"Everyone on the ship was now awake and they were enjoying themselves. The mermaid looked at the prince along with his beautiful bride, but the prince's eyes were looking for the little mermaid. Every now and then, he looked regretfully at the foaming water of the sea, as if he knew that the little mermaid had jumped into it. The little mermaid was hidden from everyone's sight and she along with airy creatures looked at the prince smilingly.
One of the air creatures said, if we try, we can be included among heavenly beings before three hundred years."
[3] In English, this passage would read as:
"Far out at the sea, the water is as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower and as clear as the cleanest glass, but it is very deep, deeper than any anchor cable can reach, and you would have to stack several church towers on top of one another from the bottom up to reach the surface of the water."
[4] In English, this sentence would read as:
"In the middle of the sea, where the water appears as blue as the sky after rainfall, as clear as the most precious crystal, and so deep that even if seventy minarets were stacked atop one another, the top of the last minaret would still not be visible above the surface of the sea […]."

kalīsā ke lāt'adād mīnāroñ ko aek dūsre ke upar rakhā jae" (if an unlimited number of church towers are stacked atop one another) (1997, p. 1).

When the prince's ship gets wrecked, the little mermaid saves him from drowning. The next morning when she wakes up, she sees a church or a monastery ("en Kirke eller et Kloster") in front of her on the mainland. In Syed Hamid Husain's version, the church becomes an "'ibādat k̲h̲ānah," a place of worship with no religious specificity (p. 22). Another example of the receiving culture's dominant values and beliefs being incorporated into Syed Hamid Husain's translation is that he does not mention the mermaid kissing the prince when she rescues him. In his translation, all mentions of kissing have been removed except one where the little mermaid kisses the prince's hand: "nanhī jal parī ne shehzāde ke hāth chūm kr yaqīn dilāyā" (p. 24). In light of this, it can be argued that both Syed Hamid Husain's and Javed's translations of "The Little Mermaid" produce a conforming effect since they both draw their interpretants from dominant linguistic and cultural resources in Urdu, although the conforming effect produced by Syed Hamid Husain's translation is more than Javed's.

Unlike Javed and Syed Hamid Husain who relied on English versions of "The Little Mermaid," Nasar Malik translated Andersen's tale directly from Danish. However, just like Javed and Syed Hamid Husain, Malik draws his interpretants from dominant linguistic and cultural resources. Below is Malik's version of the ending of "The Little Mermaid:"

> Nanhī jal parī ne naz̤ar āe bag̲her dulhan ke māthe ko ko chūmā aor shehzādeh ko muhabbat
> bharī nazroñ se use dek̲hā aor phir ye kehtī hu'ī hava kī rūhoñ ke sāth āsmānoñ kī jānib parvāz
> kar ga'ī.
>   "Tīn so sāl ba'd
>   Ham isī tara̤h
>   Jannat meñ dāk̲hil hoñ ge." (Malik, n.d.)[5]

Interestingly, Malik removes the last paragraph of the tale where the Daughters of the Air describe how they enter children's rooms without them knowing. Similar is the case with Harcharan Chawla's translation of the tale for which he relied on a Norwegian version of

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[5] In English, this passage reads:
"Unseen, the little mermaid kissed the bride's forehead, looked at the prince with eyes full of love, and as she flew towards the sky along with airy spirits, she said,
'After three hundred years
Exactly like this
We will enter heaven.'"

"The Little Mermaid." Given the similarities between written Danish and Norwegian, it can be argued that Chawla worked from a text, which was quite close to the original text. In his translation, the tale ends thus:

> Nanhī jal parī ne baṛī āhistagī se shehzādeh kī peshānī ko chūmā aor aek bār phir baṛī
> chāhat bharī nazroñ se use deḵẖā aor ye kehtī hu'ī hava kī betīoñ ke pīche uṛ ga'ī.
> "Tīn so sāl ba'd
> Ham isī taraḥ
> Bahisht kī badshāt meñ dāḵẖil hoñ ge." (Chawla, 1984, p. 48)[6]

Although in Malik's and Chawla's translations, the last paragraph of the "The Little Mermaid" has been removed, we can see that they, like Javed and Syed Hamid Husain, draw their interpretants from dominant linguistic and cultural resources in Urdu. Their translations are fluent, do not incorporate any marginal linguistic or cultural resources, produce a conforming effect, and, therefore, cannot be understood in terms of what Venuti calls "resistancy," a translation strategy that challenges and questions the dominant linguistic and cultural resources in the receiving culture.

In conclusion, this article looks at the translation and reception of Andersen's fairy tales in Bengali and Urdu literary cultures during the 19th and 20th centuries. Analyzing these translations through Venuti's hermeneutic model demonstrates that both Bengali and Urdu translators drew interpretants from dominant linguistic and cultural resources in their respective receiving cultures. While interpretants in both Bengali and Urdu translations produced domesticating or conforming effects, the nature of these conforming effects differs significantly. Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay's interpretants in his Bengali translations are embedded in the process of colonial negotiation while interpretants in Urdu translations done by Riaz Javed, Syed Hamid Husain, and Nasar Malik domesticate Andersen's fairy tales to conform to the literary tastes of a predominantly Muslim reading public. On a theoretical level, the article clarifies the distinction between Venuti's terms "domestication" and "domesticating effect" by proposing "conforming" as a term to be used in place of

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[6] In English, this passage reads,
"The little mermaid kissed the prince on the forehead ever so gently and looked at him once more with eyes full of longing, and she as she flew behind the Daughters of the Air, she said,
'After three hundred years
We will, just like this,
Enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

domesticating effect. If a translation validates dominant ideologies in a receiving culture, it produces a conforming effect whereas a translation that challenges dominant ideologies in a receiving culture through the use of marginal linguistic resources produces a non-conforming effect.

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