



A NEWSLETTER FROM JENNY BHATT  
WRITER. LITERARY TRANSLATOR. BOOK CRITIC.  
WRITING INSTRUCTOR. DESI BOOKS FOUNDER.

## WE ARE ALL TRANSLATORS

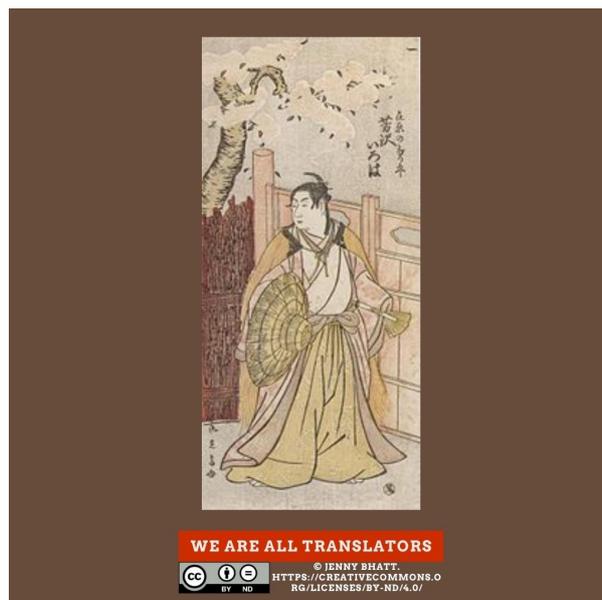
FOCUSING ON THE ART & CRAFT OF LITERARY  
TRANSLATION & THE TRANSLATING LIFE.

NOTE: Some email service providers clip these newsletters so please click on the "message clipped" link, if you see it, to read further. Thank you.

Dear Reader,

Ariwara no Narihira was a ninth century poet and Japanese courtier. He was (is?) considered a [genius](#) and was famous for more than his poetry. If we weren't so western-centric with our literary references, we'd call philandering lovers "Narihira" rather than "Don Juan."

Many of his poems, especially the love poems, have been translated through the centuries. And this [example](#) of how forty-three translators have approached a particular verse so differently is eye-opening.



Yes, every literary translator has their own preferences, given their ethno-linguistic background, literary leanings, and time period. That said, the wide-ranging meanings of this simple little verse across these forty-three translations shows just how tricky language can be. I can't say which of this has succeeded best in technical terms. We all will have our own standards too. For me, as this is a work of poetry, I want the translation to be vivid and emotional enough in the English. For example, I lean more toward the translations with the word "alone" in them because that word signifies so much in this context of a lover missing their beloved. Which translation do you prefer?

Here are some interesting links:

**[READ: The religion of the old women of Nishapur by Katherine Lemons and Setrag Manoukian \(The Immanent Frame\)](#)**

**READ: The parents creating new last names for their children by Katie Bishop  
(BBC).**

---

**SUBMIT: Words Without Borders Editorial Fellowship**

---

**ATTEND: PinT Book Club: Kokoschka's Doll by Afonso Cruz; Translated by  
Rahul Bery; Thursday, 19 May 2022 19.00 h (BST) Online via Zoom**

---

**ATTEND: Translating Comic Strips from North Africa Sunday 7 July, 13:00 –  
14:30 British Library Knowledge Centre, Eliot Room With Nariman Youssef and  
Sawad Hussain.**

---

Over to you. If you get a chance to look through the forty-three translations of that simple little verse above, which appealed the most to you and why? Please let me know via the social media links or in reply to this newsletter. I'll share it on.

Until next week.

Warmly,

[Jenny Bhatt](#)

---

Connect with me at the links below.



If you find this newsletter useful, please share it on.



[New reader? Click to subscribe](#)

---

All newsletter content is the copyright © of Jenny Bhatt. It is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#). Please ensure proper linkage and attribution (e.g. Bhatt, Jenny. "We Are All Translators," March 25, 2022) and do not transform, adapt, or remix. Thank you. If you have questions, please contact [here](#).

---

[Personal website](#) for my latest books, publications, news, events, workshops, and more. [Desi Books](#) for the latest news and views about South Asian literature from the world over.

[jenny@jennybhattwriter.com](mailto:jenny@jennybhattwriter.com)

You received this email because you signed up.

[If this is no longer useful to you, click here to unsubscribe.](#)



