



A NEWSLETTER FROM JENNY BHATT  
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## WE ARE ALL TRANSLATORS

FOCUSING ON THE ART & CRAFT OF LITERARY  
TRANSLATION & THE TRANSLATING LIFE.  
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/WEAREALLTRANSLATORS](https://bit.ly/wearealltranslators)

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Dear Reader,

Hello, hello. Slight change in the header there. I'm not great about putting myself out there but, after twenty-five editions of this newsletter, I figured it's alright to show a smile.

After last week's newsletter about [reading like a translator](#), I got some emails and messages about reviewing translations. In fact, there was quite a lot of social media chatter about a particular review that came out over the weekend at *The Guardian*. So I had been working on a resource list for how to read like a translator and decided to turn it into one for [reading AND reviewing translations](#). It will be an ongoing archive as I find new resources. You'll notice that the current set of links is rather western-centric. I need to bring in more from other parts of the world.

### Reading & Reviewing Translations: A Resource List



If you wanted to pick just one essay to begin with, I'd go with Lawrence Venuti's 2004 essay at [Words Without Borders](#). It addresses some of the usual clichés we find in reviews of translations and suggests better alternatives. In particular, he advises on how we should read for language, be open to linguistic variations, pay close attention to cultural references, and always read the introductory essay where a translator explains their approach. By the way, someone really needs to publish an anthology of such essays because there are some terrific ones that are masterclasses in the art and craft of translation.

Mostly, as I've often said to my book reviewers over at [#DesiBooksReview](#), we need to approach a translated text as one that exists in its own right, separate from

(though, yes, connected to) the original text. The translator is also a writer who, while staying close to the original, also has their own style and approach that they tailor to the receiving culture of their interpretation. Let me leave you with this from Venuti's essay because I come across this underlying, implicit bias so often in reviews of translations where the reviewer is looking for a translated text to magically provide them with the same or similar experience to reading the original text. And that, to me, is a fundamentally false premise to begin with.

*"... what most readers implicitly know: a translation can never be identical to the foreign text or communicate it in some direct, untroubled manner, not even if the translator maintains a high degree of linguistic accuracy. But we may be less willing to accept a corollary: a translation is fundamentally incapable of providing its reader with an experience that equals or closely approximates the one that a native reader has with To provide this sort of experience, a translator would have to endow us with a lifelong immersion in the foreign language and literature. Only then can we read the translation with anything resembling the informed sensibility that a native reader brings to the original. Although translators are undoubtedly creative, they can't make over their readers by giving them foreign identities. the foreign text."*

Feel free to hit reply to let me know your thoughts on all or any of the above. Or you can share on social media and tag me (links below.) For those of you in the US, have a lovely long weekend.

Best,

[Jenny Bhatt](#)

My upcoming translation, [The Shehnai Virtuoso](#), was given a lovely thumbs-up by [Kirkus](#) and [Publishers Weekly](#). If you're interested in interviewing me for a US publication, please let me know? A fun, casual, two-way conversation about some of the topics we're exploring through these newsletters? Just hit reply.

NOTE: All the books mentioned or featured in this newsletter are listed at the Bookshop below. I earn a tiny affiliate fee if you buy a book from the list. It goes towards funding this otherwise free newsletter. Thank you.

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## Some interesting links

[LISTEN: Lost in translation: Our ode to the art of translating; Jennifer Croft, Emily Wilson, and Denise Kripper on The Colin McEnroe Show \(WNPR\)](#)

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[READ: The dream of a ridiculous man: A young Dostoevsky's 'incomparable' translation of Balzac by Oliver Ready \(Times Literary Supplement; paywalled\)](#)

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[READ: A brief Twitter thread I wrote on reviewing/reading translations](#)

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[ATTEND: July 3rd, 5 PM IST | Musical conversation conversation with Yashasvi Arunkumar, Vighnesh Hampapura, and other translators 'Ek Gaana, Kayi Zubaan \(Ashoka Center for Translation\)](#)

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[WATCH: Translation Politics: Ajay Navaria, and Laura Brueck in Conversation with Vijeta Kumar \(Faculty of English, Cambridge University\)](#)

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