

Zsófia Nádor is undoubtedly a person worth interviewing: energetic, charismatic, friendly, and has many sides, both professionally and personally. Besides being an editor and a freelance translator, Zsófi has widespread academic, research, teaching, and even voluntary and mentoring experience.

Her working languages are Italian and English, however she admits that Italian has always been closer to her heart. Most likely she is best known for her Stefano Benni translations: an author that has never been translated into Hungarian before.

Today I am asking her about the beginnings, Stefano Benni, and will ask her to share her suggestions to the next generation of translators.

1. Why did you choose this career path? Could you tell me about your professional development?

My highest aspiration as a teenager was to become a writer, so I chose the direction of my studies accordingly. Later however, when I felt discouraged by the overwhelmingly sophisticated university environment, I decided to go to Italy and volunteer. I have always considered myself to be bad at languages, and this seemed an excellent opportunity to improve my skills. By then the idea of becoming a translator has popped up in my head from time to time.

Despite my delusion at university I have always felt I the need to use my creativity in writing, which led me to start a literary translation course at university. I have also been a member of a self-formed group of students who have been making translations of short stories from an Italian writer called Benati. Criticising, editing, and being criticised and edited by the others was a valuable experience as a beginner and had many long term benefits.

Writing my thesis about Umberto Eco encouraged me to conduct various researches in Italy, which made me realise that there are a handful of texts which have not been translated into Hungarian, but would be worth doing so. In the meantime I started working as a part time editor at Scholar Publishing Company, and have suggested a few Umberto Eco texts to the company to translate. However, the copyright holder of Eco's writings was at Európa

Publishing at that time. Yet, this could not discourage me: I have contacted the director, Imre Barna directly myself, and eventually succeeded.

This is how I got the very first job of mine as a translator: it was a specialised translation of one of Umberto Eco's books. Since the text was scientific, translating those 600 pages required lots of research, in fact it took me 1,5 years to finish the book.

Later on I proposed one of Stefano Benni's novels (*Achille piè veloce*) for translation to Scolar, the second book I translated.

So, basically first I have entered the book publishing industry as an editor, and translation just came along.

2. Do you have a 'translation profile'? What kind of texts do you translate most?

I consider myself primarily a literary translator, specialising in polite literature. I don't really translate poetry. During university I did some specialised translations, excerpts from periodicals, documentaries...However, I have not translated that much, 8-9 books approximately: novels from Stefano Benni and Alessandro Baricco, the translation of an English novel...

3. Which translation of yours did you like the most? Any translation you did not like at all?

This is a difficult question to answer. There was a lot to modify and edit on the aforementioned Umberto Eco translation, obviously due to the fact that I was a beginner. Fortunately since then I have become much more experienced and haven't felt that my translations left a lot to be desired.

I was not that keen on documentary translations, due to their excessive repetitiveness and redundancy. Undoubtedly my favorite was *Achille piè veloce*, and books of Benni in general. In fact, it is the style of Stefano Benni and Nathan Filer that I could identify with the most.

4. Why did you start translating Stefano Benni? Were there any particular reasons of picking him?

One of my friends drew my attention to him, so I systematically started reading his books. This friend of mine also mentioned the fact that quite interestingly Benni has not yet been translated into Hungarian. Even during my stay in Italy I was confident that this would be one of my key projects when returning to Hungary: to find a publisher and translate

Benni's books. In fact I managed to convince Scolar that his books were worth publishing. At the same time, there have been a few criteria to bear in mind when choosing the particular books to translate. One of these was the issue date of the original book. We were convinced that the book should not be older than 15 years, otherwise it would have been unsellable on the Hungarian market. Another important factor to consider was cultural specificity. Some of Benni's books are largely culture specific, therefore would have been too difficult to digest for Hungarian readers. These two points have narrowed down the range of books we could select from. I felt a special connection with *Achille piè veloce* for a number of reasons, which has definitely made the decision easier.

5. Do you think one can be successful in this business without a specialised university degree, just like in your case? What would you suggest to fresh graduates to start their career?

Well, even if someone does not have a degree in translation, it is of vital importance to get first hand experience. But on the other hand, as a beginner you can't let yourself work for months without compensation...an internship would definitely be good for a start. Yet starting a career and getting experience is a bit of a vicious circle. You can't have a job because you have no experience, but you can't get experience unless you have a job. So how are you supposed to start?

It is worth mentioning however that nowadays freshgrads have the possibility to exploit the potential benefits of the internet by publishing translations online and getting feedback. Furthermore, several publishers conduct mentor programs, try to take part in these if you can. Publishers find attractive those young translators who propose authors and books for translation. Focus on lesser known writers, hidden talents whom editors and publishers may not be familiar with. When proposing a book to a publisher, pay close attention to the given company profile as well.

Thank you Zsófi!