A Writer's Advice by Emilia Muller

After the publication of my latest book, I found myself in all sorts of discussions that piqued my interest or encouraged me to think even more about what it means to be a writer today.

Writers just starting out have written to me asking if I have any valuable advice that might bring them closer to being published.

With eight books already published (nine, if I count the bilingual edition of 'Adventures of tourists'), you might consider me an experienced writer. But I don't see myself that way. I still have a lot to learn, and when you're not a big name (or even a medium-sized one), you sometimes have to make sure you climb in through the window when the door is slammed in your face.

These days, a writer doesn't just write (perhaps only those who are well-known and make a living from their writing). Thus, now, a writer has to do marketing, PR, copywriting, and much more. All of this takes up a lot of time and drains your energy (a heads-up for introverts).

When I make it big (as a writer), I'd like to just worry about choosing the cover and making the edits suggested by the editors. To know that I just have to write and I'll be published, without having to spend time convincing publishers that my work is worth publishing.

Here are some things I gathered to offer advice to those contemplating becoming a writer.

- Create social media accounts—Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc.—so potential readers and publishers can find you more easily.
- If you've published at least one book, create an author account on Goodreads—readers can rate your work, recommend your book to friends, and you can connect with reader groups, read books that inspire you, and reach other readers and authors.
- Do you have a manuscript? Send it. But before you do, make sure your work fits the publisher's portfolio; otherwise, you'll be wasting your time and theirs. Pay close attention to the submission guidelines.
- Author's CV – While not all publishers require a writer's CV, it's a good idea to include one. Start with your most recently published book, or if you've published in magazines, blogs, etc.
- Pitch – A pitch is a kind of presentation of your work that needs to convince the editor.
- Timing – This factor is just as important as the ones above. If you send your proposal on days when they're off (weekends, public holidays), chances are your email will get lost in

the spam folder. So remember not to send the email on weekends, public holidays, or two weeks before and after book fairs, when publishing house staff are working intensely or recovering from events.

- Email addresses – publishers usually have a dedicated email address for submitting manuscripts. If you can find the email addresses of the editors who handle your literary genre, your chances improve.
- When should you follow up? Publishers usually have a standard policy: if you don't hear back within X months, your manuscript has been tacitly rejected. Make a note of the date you submitted your manuscript, and if the case, follow up with an email.
- Can you resubmit the manuscript? Sure, but only if you've made relevant changes.
- Reread it! Nothing is perfect, and that includes your manuscript. Make sure to take another look at it after taking a break of at least two months.
- Ask for help! It's hard to ask for help, I know. It means putting yourself in a vulnerable position. If you have friends who write, ask for their opinion. Take a creative writing class. Reach out to a writer whose work you admire, but please keep in mind that they're people too, and you can't expect them to give you an immediate response.
- Build your shield! Being a writer (or any kind of artist) means facing moments of disappointment—when your work is rejected or criticized, when you finally publish and expect to sell thousands of books, but you only managed to sell two copies, or when you hold book launches and only three people show up. Keep believing in your talent!
- Be reasonable! Yes, you can't be objective about your own writing, but don't go thinking you're the next ..... (fill in the name of your favorite and/or well-known writer).
- Take a breath. Take it one step at a time, and don't forget that as soon as you finish a manuscript (whether it's your first or your tenth), you start the merry-go-round from scratch in search of a publisher to publish it.
- Get better! To be a good writer, you need to read a lot (not necessarily books in the same genre as what you write) and write a lot. This combination is the most important exercise. You can't do one without the other. It's like having two dumbbells but deciding to use only one for one hand only. The difference will be noticeable in your arms.

Take everything above as guidelines, not certainties. In closing, I can only wish you lots of patience, self-compassion, and resilience.

What’s been helping me lately? Remembering the movie ‘Mr. Aznavour’ and the singer's reaction to those who harshly criticized him, dismissing his talent or his chance to be known—“From today on, I’ll write a song every day, I’ll work harder and harder, and I’ll prove that I’m good!”