

Elodie DELMARES

WRITE A NOVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Writing a story from A to Z is a very big project. It may even seem insurmountable to you, if your idea is complex, or if you have a lot of things to talk about, knowledge to transmit, feelings and experiences to share, or if the images, the scenes, jostle in your head.

Maybe your story is a fiction entirely from your imagination, maybe it's inspired by real events, maybe it's YOUR story but you want to romanticize it and enrich it, or on the contrary want to make a faithful biography of it?

Does the methodology remain unclear to you? Rest assured: whatever the nature or form of the story you want to tell, there are "common denominators", fundamentals applied by many writers. Once you know these steps, ideas will flow through your mind, one after another.

In this book, I will explain to you how to develop your idea step by step. But before that, I will allow myself a few small warnings and advice.

Before that, it seems to me that I should introduce myself and explain what makes me legitimate to give you all the advice that will follow. This legitimacy comes mainly from several aspects of my experience, and which compensate for the fact that I am not really, for the moment in any case, a "prolific" author:

1/ I've been writing stories since I was 10 years old. An accident having affected my speech, I compensated by written expression throughout the duration of my studies. But above all, before I managed to finish a novel, I started a small string of them, which I didn't finish. Looking back, I understood why I didn't

finish them and why I blocked. I learned to work around the problem.

2/ Like many, I was confronted with the fear of the blank page and the lack of inspiration. This, too, I have learned to circumvent, in various ways. This aspect will be developed in the book.

3/ The first completed novel (*Orphéus' Malédiction*) was selected in the final of a literary competition in 2005 (the *Prix du Quai des Orfèvres*, in this case, which rewards an unedited detective novel submitted anonymously to a jury mainly made up of police officers, but also of journalists and writers). This experience shows, it seems to me, that I was able to understand and apply the fundamentals necessary to complete a novel and attract the attention of specialized readers and professionals. This book was then published (in 2007) by the "*Ateliers de Presse*" edition house, under my married name at the time, before I took it up in self-publishing. I'll explain why at the end of the book, in the chapter dealing with editing.

4/ Writing a novel sometimes involves certain research and knowledge, whether psychological, scientific, historical. All of this research, added to the work on the frame and the construction, constitutes 80% of the work, the remaining 20% being represented by writing. If everyone has their own style, there are on the contrary certain common denominators in the construction phase, whether one writes contemporary or historical. This is what I develop in the book.

This point clarified, I wish you an excellent reading.

PREAMBLE

BECOMING AN AUTHOR OF NOVELS, NEWS... A “SIMPLE” PROFESSION... IN APPEARANCE

1/ Parallel between a film director and an author

Close-up of the eyes, a wick falling, the procession of the row of trees during a journey by carriage or train, before discovering, before the eyes of the spectator caught up in the story, the final scene.

You must place yourself in the perspective of the director, the one who orchestrates the whole film, even if you do not have the ambition to see your novel adapted to the cinema. All your writing, your scenes, your sets, the costumes, the attitude of your character etc. must be constructed in such a way as to draw your reader (your viewer) into your story.

When you write a novel and you set yourself the task of “filming” its story, you are everything at the same time. The author is all: the actors, the costume designer, the make-up artist, the script and, above all, the director.

However, when a director decides to embark on a film project, he brings together all kinds of artists with specialized skills. Indeed, cameraman, sound engineer, lighting engineer, actors, screenwriters, costume designers, decorators, etc... constitute the sphere of the director. It is an infinitely complex profession.

A director is therefore a conductor, a director. In a press

conference in Montreal, the french actress Isabelle Adjani revealed that in her opinion Jean-Paul Rappeneau was the best director she had ever met. Because he put himself in the place of each of the specialists, including the actors.

This is what makes an author, even if the scenes are only written down, and not immortalized by an image. The author places himself as a cameraman, decides on the shots, the costumes, the expression of the actors. He decides the intonations, the order of the scenes , the moment when he will place the fall. The author also organizes the structure of his work, in flash back, linear or diapason. He gauges where he is going to cut the scenes. In the same way, he chooses soundtracks with which he will capture his reader. So don't be surprised that I take as an example films or series as much as novels, because, for both, **success depends on writing.**

2/ Writing and identity of the writer... Or how to give his pen a particular imprint?

Each writer has got his own natural style. The phrasing, the “common denominators” between the various writings. A sort of canvas that he applies to each work...

How do you find what will set you apart from other authors?

If you read authors like Mary Higgins Clark, Michael Connelly , or even Charles Dickens, you will see that they each have their own way of introducing the subject, of creating an atmosphere...

And each of them writes for a particular audience. Charles Dickens is more for women. Other writers appeal more to men. To my great surprise, as a female author, I discovered that my novels appealed more to men... the somewhat muscular side of the confrontations, or the virile atmospheres of the detective stories,

perhaps? Be that as it may, the readership I am addressing is all people who love history and action, sometimes with distant centuries as their cradle, or pivotal periods in our history.

Each author has his mission.

Some authors like to confuse their reader, leading them to ask themselves many questions, to have an active reading, that is to say to imagine themselves, as a detective, alongside the narrator. The reader “takes part” in the journey, he himself imagines the appearance of the characters, whom the author has taken care not to describe too precisely. Other authors take their readers by the hand and lead them into the twists and turns of the story, leaving them only a spectator role, who cannot rely on any clue concerning the real adversary of the hero, which adversary remains long unsuspected.

Some authors tell the story, others have their characters tell it. Each actor in the story takes the floor, at a given moment of the narration, and presents his own point of view.

Some writers produce contemporary novels, where everyone could take part, stories that we could all live. Situations we might face. Others make discover History (of England or elsewhere), art, architecture, from a new angle.

Also, before you start writing your story, I advise you:

- ➔ To define the objective pursued (apart from that of completing and editing it): to discover landscapes, another culture, another form of art...
- ➔ To determine the approach that suits you best: telling or “having your characters tell”? Engage your reader or simply deliver a fun and entertaining story?
- ➔ To do abundant research on the artists who have written or

painted, or composed around this theme, in order to refer to it, if you wish, in your scenario.

3/ Writing and the identity of the writer: the choice of literary genre

As an author, you can decide to remain purely contemporary or to travel, through the ages, or through landscapes. Mireille Calmel, french author of historical novels, draws on the medieval french period. For a long time, his muse was Eleanor of Aquitaine. It seems that it opens up to other characters, more fictitious, but always remaining in the Middle Ages.

Some will specialize in the description of the human soul in its greatest darkness (Jean-Christophe Grangé). Others will offer resolutely humanist and angelic protagonists (Anne Golon). We will see novelists rooted in thrillers, psychological thrillers, romanticism, or pure historical narrative.

How to find your “personal touch”?

Some like to share their love of wild and solitary landscapes, others like to explore time and centuries, going, for some, even to make their character(s) pass through several different centuries, which enriches their journey and puts them faced with comical or very perilous situations.

Still others, very punchy in certain universes (scientific, artistic, police) base their plot on the subtleties of the trades which are related to their favorite subject. By reading the works of Guillaume Musso, one discovers a plethora of references to literary art, but also to other forms of art, such as painting, cinema, poetry, photography. In “*Au bonheur des Dames*”, Émile Zola nourishes us with colors, tactile sensations, rivers of fabrics and lace, sensual sensations to make us discover the world of supermarkets, fashion

and art of living. Douglas Kennedy is specialized on often tortured psychology, and Eric Emmanuel Schmidt on ambiguous and complex situations.

Be that as it may, writing for the sake of writing would be a totally insufficient motivation. On the other hand, deepening your knowledge and sharing it, transmitting your enthusiasm for a particular field is much more motivating and inspiring, both for those who write and for those who read. If you are passionate, your writing will be exciting. Whether certain aspects of your novel are technical or not, you will have to write about what interests you in order to stay motivated. And motivation, it takes to keep this marathon that is writing a novel.

You will not be unanimous, because what excites you interests only a part of the population, even a minority. But by affirming and taking responsibility for what you love, you will build an audience.

Writing to explore a new language

Some say that a good writer recognizes himself in particular and above all in the fact that we recognize him by reading his lines, without even having to check his name on the cover page.

It seems to me that this definition is simplistic and reductive: if some people like to rediscover the style of the writer in each novel, others appreciate seeing him evolve and being surprised by him, rediscovering him in a context other than that described by the novel that made him known. Some like to write “contemporary”, others like to approach, without trying to imitate, a fairly old language, and adapt their style according to the culture or education received by their characters. Some time ago, while going to see the play “*Marie of the hens, governess at George Sand*”, I was amazed to see the evolution that the author inflicts