We can discuss the topic of professionalization from two aspects. First, literary and artistic creation can never be separated from its context, whether it is cultural, political, or economic – in contemporary times, especially in the operation of the capitalist system.

For example, here in the US, some agents would sign a two-book deal for a rookie writer and a publisher. It's a win-win situation. For the writer, if the first book doesn't get critical acclaim or sell well, they at least have a second chance to prove themselves. For publishers, if the author's first book is a hit, it's a profit, because they already have a second book signed at a low price.

It's a mature industrial system, and writers are a part of it. In smaller countries like Taiwan, the publishing industry has not yet matured. Many newcomers rely on literary awards for their chance to become famous. Most writers have full-time jobs to provide a living, or grants provided by the government. Only people who are out of their minds choose to be full-time writers. I'm one of them.

An interesting phenomenon is that when fewer and fewer people buy books, for some unknown reason, more and more people want to become writers. Writing classes sell out quickly, and teaching people how to write or write grant applications has become a lucrative business. Whether the situation in the States or Taiwan, I believe that Muse will not like either, so it is rarely found by people. But let's go back to the question: How have I approached the specter of professionalization in my writing?

One of my writer friends said the writer needs Muse's kiss very much. Every day he went to the agreed place to wait, but he has always stood up. But if one day Muse comes and you just aren't there, she'll turn away angrily and never come back. She can stand you up a hundred times, but you only stand her up once and you're done. So, a writer must go to the meeting place with Muse every day and just wait. I agree with him because that has been my experience.

I'm a novelist. When you break into the realm of the long story, it's not just a fight, it's not even a "battle" to describe it, it's a war, draining every drop of blood and sweat to the end. Novel writing will require you to dedicate all your resources, all your mental and physical energies, your time and life, your emotional experiences, memories, thoughts, and the last bit of your willpower. It penetrates the darkest caverns of your unconscious mind, revealing traumas you don't even dare to look at yourself.

People usually fantasize that writing is a romantic profession, drinking wine and writing with inspiration. But the truth is, the novelist is more like a gardener, as an ancient poem says, hoeing the weeds at noon, sweating the weeds down the soil.

Whoever writes a long story has to be tough. You can't just be a drunken jerk fighting in the street, you have to be a warrior, able to endure a long fight that never ends, and you have to survive day in and day out.
out in extreme despair and self-doubt.

Haruki Murakami said that writing novels is a kind of heavy labor, and the famous Taiwanese novelist Luo Yijun said that writing novels is an extreme sport. It requires training, practicing, coaching, and competing. Contest deadlines force you to push your limits and squeeze your work out, even if it turns out badly and you lose the contest, after all, winning the first draft, and the whole process of suffering.

That place of "extreme despair, suffering, and self-doubt" is where Muse and I made an appointment to meet. I went there day in and day out, exhausted and devastated, but I never saw her. At that time, “To be or not to be”, is no longer a question, you just keep taking the tough next step, or die on the spot. I can't miss the appointment with Muse. If you insist on going there every day, and move on with exhaustion and despair, suddenly you will realize for a moment that Muse is actually by your side, walking for a long time, even whispering in your ear. It's all so blissful; you don't realize that until Muse leaves a kiss on your lips before leaving, you suddenly wake up and feel as if time has stopped.

For those graceful moments, I have to become an athlete, become a tougher man, become a warrior, and then, in the end, I become a writer. Thank you.