

Editing as a Discipline



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Self-editing

Let us picture a scene from our daily lives:

You have invited guests for dinner, for which you have been preparing a menu of delight. If you are a planner like I am, everything is set at least two days prior to your date as far as the necessary groceries -including meal-accompanying drinks, fruit (or dessert) and coffee (or tea) to be enjoyed with the servings of fruit or dessert. The appetizer, the soup and the entree together with its side-dish are cooked, waiting for their starting call on the burners of your stove, inside the oven, or anywhere you find to keep them warm enough to be palatable. You look at all your prepared dishes and feel proud: Each detail is intact and looks good in their best possible outfits. Your guests can now arrive. And they do. One at a time, or every invitee all at once.

Pleasantries are exchanged, maybe cocktails are consumed, music is played, etc. Then comes the time to sit down to eat. You now realize that you have not spent much thought or time in planning a seating strategy nor how to serve the various dishes. Guests are left to just stand there. Around the dining table. Waiting for your directions. You have none. Nor do you have space on the table to strategically position those diligently beautified servers. Having given up on any potential organization chart at this point, you ask your guests to help themselves with a seat. Any seat. Anywhere. After all, the food you had prepared cannot and should not go to waste, right? Your guests, polite enough, have done the semi-impossible. Everyone is seated somehow. But, . . . wait . . . where to place those appetite-whetting dishes now? Those adorned serving trays? Let alone to serve anything from them. There is barely room on the table for elbows!

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Do you see what I am seeing in this imagined picture? I am sure that you do. Hence, the importance of self-editing . . . of seeing in its actuality what we have written down for a readership, regardless of the number of the readers. One fact remains: They are our endeared guests. For, we have invited them.

To present details of our writing as we have painstakingly put it together, but moreover, to enable our presentation fluidity – a no-detour-flaw (read *conciseness*) that is visually (read *grammar, spelling, punctuation*), mentally and emotionally appealing (read *cohesive*) as well as desirable to the palate (read *clarity*) constitute that which we owe to ourselves first.

Inviting guests over for a dinner gathering when only the planned dishes are complete will take us only so far . . .

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