



Susan L. Greenberg. *A Poetics of Editing*. Cham : Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xv, 265 p., ill. ISBN 978-3-319-92246-1. \$49.99.

Whereas the author has received considered attention, the editor, it could be said, has not yet fully arrived. Indeed, the profession and practice of editing remain somewhat hazily defined. This elusiveness is due to numerous factors, such as lingering romantic views of authorship and creative inspiration, the subtle ways editing works behind the scenes to ensure and improve communication, and the lack of a comprehensive theory that encompasses all time periods and genres.

The goal of Susan L. Greenberg's *A Poetics of Editing* is to place editing squarely under the spotlight and uncover this 'hidden art.' Built on years of Greenberg's personal experience overlaid with a scholarly perspective, it proposes a framework for joining together the practice and theory of editing that can cut across media forms and time periods.

The book consists of three main parts, which can be briefly sketched as description, history, and theory. In part I, the aim is to make editing visible by providing a description and working definition: in short, "a decision-making process [...] to help deliver meaning" (14). Three main actions accompany this process: selecting, shaping, and linking (a trio that sits nicely alongside Michael Bhaskar's theory of publishing), with the process itself being part of a triangular relationship between editor, author, and text. Greenberg then tests this definition through comparisons with other forms of mediation—such as translation—and argues that only through such forms of comparison can a robust concept of editing be formed. Part II is the most book historical, tracing the emergence of the editor as a professional role and, moving into the present era, looking into the current challenges presented in digital contexts, in which authenticity is (again) lauded and mediation is often thought of as a synonym for interference.

Part III moves on to theory, firstly presenting a comparative analysis of different frameworks before moving on to theory in action. Last to be reflected upon is a poetics of editing, which describes both the concrete process of editing as well as the more conceptual way editing as a practice moves between binary states: open, closed; subjective; objective.



Throughout, the role of imagination in the editing arts is stressed. The editor, Greenberg argues, is tasked with envisioning the text from the point-of-view of both the author and the reader, and as “seeing a text as if it is not yet finished” (14). A major contribution of the book is the proposition of an ‘ideal editor’ to stand alongside, and in relationship to, the author and reader.

There is much to be found in this wide-ranging work, which takes into its consideration, inter alia, philosophy, rhetoric, literary theory, book history, and neuroscience to reflect on its subject, and, more broadly, on how meaning is constructed. Greenberg delves quickly but deeply into these varying perspectives and disciplines, layering her argument in a multiframe approach. At times a challenging read, if only because of how much it takes on, *A Poetics of Editing* offers new insights into the under-represented field of editing and points to new and exciting roads of investigation for future scholars.

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