Twitter Thread by Naomi Davis



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I want to talk about the editorial support you should expect from an agent who says they work editorially, &what you should not expect, too. (As always these are my opinions; others will think differently; you can take any opinion you encounter or burn it in a trash can.) #Thread

Most agent offer calls come with a discussion about editorial support and expectations on both sides. If an agent says they work editorially, both of you can talk about what you hope this will look like. This may include:

Rounds of overall revision to plot/character/structure/setting, or tightening to a genre guideline, based on an "edit letter."
Line edits/sidebar comments by your agent. I always stress these are suggestions to achieve a goal. How author arrives at that goal is up to to them, but

I should make it clear to you what the goal of the point is: heighten emotional moment, untangle complicated scene, drive a relationship, clarify stakes, etc. I may suggest HOW and you can use my suggestion or come up w/your own solution. As long as the goal is attained.

But I'll always be honest if the changes came up short, too. It's a conversation, a development, open-door for challenge.
I DO put foot down abt blatant "rookie mistakes." Or major arc problems,sensitivity issues. I don't do this to be obstinate;but you should stay flexible too.

If I think see any problems, you deserve to know that before it goes out the door. THIS is the benefit of an agent who works editorially: I promise to tell you if something needs work and help you resolve those barriers.
We may do 1 round edits. 3 rev & 4 edits. 1 rev & 2 edits.

Every book is different.
And if I like your book but do NOT have any vision for fixing problems I find, I am doing you a favor by NOT offering rep, so you can seek an agent who sees how to make it shine and soar against all it's competition.

Personally, I like to make my sidebar comments conversational. A mix of positive & needs improvement. If I don't tell you what you do WELL, how will you know what the readers really connect w/ in your writing & want more of? So I "lol" & "omg" & "drool" in my comments sometimes.

(In addition to many more detailed/serious comments about what an author does well and weakly and how I think they might draw those out more or change those habits)

Now, what is an editorial agent NOT?
I am not the person you send your 1st/2nd draft to. My editing rounds are all fine tuning, tweaking, polishing, or taking advantage of opportunity to amp up stakes tension emotion etc. I am not going to teach you how to write.

(Another key point: an editor, at a publishing house, is not someone to send early draft to either, if you are subbing directly. Their editorial job is kinda like mine x a billion fine details/continuity/reader expectation points,plus SO MUCH MORE back end that is not "editing.")

(So much more, srsly. Click ❤ on this to show your love to the publishing staff who make all the gears turn, and the publicity, design, sales, associates, interns and assistants etc at all publishing houses and agencies without whom we would all be The One Ring (LOSSST get it?))

An editorial agent should also not A: insult you or refuse to disseminate a point, or B: kiss your ass & tell you it's great when it's not. We should always be honest and open for discussion/explanation/debate. We shouldn't make unrealistic promises. We should keep those we make.

You don't have to take every suggestion given. Likewise, we don't have to take every suggestion you give, re: comp titles, positioning, pitch, etc. It should be a conversation with respect. We are business partners with you even where creativity & all its emotions are involved.

But. You don't HAVE to choose an editorial agent. If you strike a chord with a non-editorial agent & all flags look green, great!!! But that agent should ALWAYS give you time to decide, to give other agents opportunity to offer, and NEVER pressure you or sub you w/o contract.

Anywho this thread is brought to you by my need to distract myself because my brain is swamped with Giant Adulting Things, and writing and agenting are way more fun than all this stress. Take my opinion to heart or leave it but I hope it unpacks the role of an editorial agent. ■

Oh and I'm sure many other editorial agents have a totally different process. This is just me, and gives you a glimpse at one style of editorial support you can seek or avoid depending on how you feel about the agent relationship and the sub process.