The Political Economy of Ghostwriting

Graham Joncas

Introduction

Nearly every book you have read by a celebrity or politician has been written by someone else: the *ghostwriter*, whose name remains unknown (or else slyly inserted in the 'acknowledgements' section). At a moment's thought we *know* this; many people would be quite offended, after all, if they thought that Barack Obama truly sat down and wrote the several(!) books under his name. Likewise, for a CEO to actually take the time to write a business book would be "widely perceived as an act both desperate and pathetic"—in a word, "it would have made him [or her] a schmuck" (Hitt, 1997). Yet, nobody *thinks* about this—we cling to the reified notion of The Author even as it becomes more and more separate from that of the Writer. The present essay addresses ghostwriting in all its apparitions, from celebrity 'autobiographies' to its increasing presence in music and online dating. We will trace out its phantasms in ancient and contemporary philosophy, from Aristotle to hauntology, underscoring its implications for both theory and anti-theory. And lastly, we will argue that increasing 'spectrification' of society (and the emergent spectra and spectralities arising in its wake) places deeply into question the method of 'textual analysis' of capitalism.

1 "I care not who writes a nation's laws, as long as I can write its op-eds."

In the film *Ghostwriter*, Ewan McGregor explains the process to a client: "I interview you and turn your answers into prose." We might recall Molière's *bourgeois gentilhomme*, who realized with pride that he had been speaking prose all his life—but *writing* prose is another matter entirely, as any modern 'ink-stained wretch' will tell you. Writing is hard, yes, but no one seems to care: surveys show that most authors earn less than $1,000 per year (D'Agnese, 2014). The task of writing is an increasingly precarious one in light of the looming prospect of speech recognition technology phasing out the writer's role entirely (replaced by that of the editor), as well as the increasing prevalence of algorithmic journalism.

Furthermore, as of 2011 (the latest year for which data is available) the number of new books published in the US reached 292,014—the highest in the world, followed by 241,986 in China (as of 2012) and 149,800 in the UK (as of 2011). Adding up the latest data for each country yields a total of 2,200,000 (via; see also). These, moreover, are the best of the lot, the ones that managed to escape the 'slush pile'—every publisher and agent has one—of "unsolicited manuscripts, synopses and letters of enquiry lying in wait for someone to pick

them up and respond with glowing encouragement" (Crofts, 8). In short, it's virtually impossible for an unknown writer to make themselves heard, even in the unlikely situation that they have something interesting to say.

The process of ghostwriting is disarmingly simple. Often only two or three days of intensive interviewing are needed—one interview for the synopsis, several more for the full-length manuscript (Crofts, 104, 116): maybe 50 hours in total, 20 if they're especially concise. The ghostwriter Sally Collings gets by with 10 interviews, each an hour long, followed by about four months of writing (or up to a year for larger projects)—far less personal than one might expect (Mayyasi, 2013). In return, ghosts are able to make a steady living doing what they love. One of the more 'famous' ghostwriters, Andrew Crofts, quotes a passage from the narrator in *The Great Gatsby*: "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (in Crofts, 4). This, he says, "sums up the attraction of ghostwriting." One peculiar case is Janofsky (2013), who found himself ghostwriting blog posts for an Arabian sheikh in exile; he even wrote a series of reflections on Ramadan—despite being Jewish—that were published verbatim. Culture shock is a concrete problem, keeping ghostwriters on their toes: Crofts (2004: 114) recalls writing an autobiography for an African chief who was modest to the point of nearly obscuring his actual importance in his home country, "and indeed in the international business community." Another of his examples is ghostwriting for the Chinese billionaire Tan Sri Loy, who flew Crofts to China to meet his relatives: "there were extraordinary things about his background that he would have taken for granted and not mentioned if I hadn't seen them for myself" (ibid, 106).

"Ghosting a book for someone," says Crofts, "is like being paid to be educated by the best teachers in the world." The ghostwriter's position also lets them query their subjects in ways that would otherwise be obnoxious: it's part of the job to ask someone how much they earn, who they're sleeping with, why on earth they married who they married—and the client is obliged to answer (ibid, 15). This joint venture of Writer and Author is often win/win: even if someone enjoys researching, there's no guarantee of finding a publisher for their book after the months or even years required for its completion. Given that advances are at historic lows, and that in the absence of authorial cachet, work-for-hire and ghost gigs bring the highest advances (D'Agnese, 2014), the immediate appeal is clear. The process is even qualitatively easier than writing on one's own, since the ghostwriter needn't grapple with their own insecurities and daunting standards: ghostwriting an entire book may well be easier than writing several blog posts for oneself (Kihara, 2014). Another consideration is that it's easier to elicit readers' pathos through first person rather than third person narrative (Crofts, 9); evocative tropes such as dream sequences are awkward to write in a biography of someone else. For many struggling writers, the lack of a byline is a small price to pay.

The author's motivation is simple enough—namely, outsourcing. Many authors initially have a go at writing on their own, but find that the job involves far more work than anticipated; the opportunity cost is just too high. For a suc-

cessful expert (and/or celebrity, CEO, etc.), the main appeal of hiring a ghost is saving countless hours of niggling with a pen that could be far better spent contributing to their enterprise. Ghostwriters often even perform the author's email interviews and blog posts during the publicity run (Huff, 2013), letting the author focus on making contacts and enjoying the spotlight. In short, ghostwriting embodies the principle of comparative advantage. Ghosts are defined by the lack of opportunities on their part: their universe of possibilities is far smaller, and it is precisely this discrepancy in 'potentiality capital' (Guattari) that makes ghostwriting a worthwhile venture. The receipt of money from the author in turn opens up the ghostwriter's 'universe' more than they could have done alone, so that both parties gain from trade. It is easy to show numerically that, provided 'transaction costs' are sufficiently low, there will be mutual gains *even if the client is a better writer than the ghostwriter they hire*, due simply to their differing relative costs. In a list of common misconceptions about ghostwriting, Deckers (2012) comments:

> [People often] don't think they have a high-enough position to need a ghost writer. They don't think they're that important to 'deserve' it. They think their company needs to be bigger, or they need to have a more prestigious position. I saw this a lot when I was doing speechwriting for a Congressional candidate in 2004. It's not a matter of prestige, it's a matter of having the time to do it.

Counterintuitively, it becomes clear upon researching the subject that most professional ghostwriters *don't* write well. Articles on the subject are replete with gratuitous and absurd similes, purple prose, and even simple grammatical errors. Rather than a troupe of down-on-their-luck Joyces, Raphaels (or Hemingways, Dostoevskies...) without hands, and other poets *manqué*—many ghostwriters' main comparative (and competitive) advantage lies in unapologetically producing *dull* writing. "Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers" (T.S. Eliot). In fact, this is often a selling point—as one successful academic ghostwriter boasts (Dante, 2010):

> Over the years, I've refined ways of stretching papers. I can write a four-word sentence in 40 words. Just give me one phrase of quotable text, and I'll produce two pages of ponderous explanation. I can say in 10 pages what most normal people could say in a paragraph. [...] I think about how Dickens got paid per word and how, as a result, *Bleak House* is...well, let's be diplomatic and say exhaustive. Dickens is a role model for me.

There are, of course, gradations in writers' ability, which Jarrold Jenkins (president of publishing services firm Jenkins Group Inc.) divides into four tiers (Mayyasi, 2013):

– Freelancers (the lowest tier), who typically earn $5,000 to $15,000 per book. Aspiring ghosts are recommended to check out sites such as 1) Elance.com, 2)

Odesk.com, 3) iWriter.com, 4) Freelance.com, and 5) iFreelance.com [Kihara, 2014].[1] Another suggestion is to seek out content marketing gigs mislabeled as 'copywriting' (Tharp, 2013).
- Writers with some book experience, who can get $15,000 to $30,000.
- Excellent ghostwriters who have often previously written a bestseller, who earn $30,000 to $50,000 per project.
- Elite ghostwriters with a track record of handling multi-million dollar memoirs, whose asking price ranges from $50,000 to over a million (plus a share of the royalties). Members of this upper tier often become famous in their own right (an example is William Novak, whose breakout deal was writing American car magnate Lee Iacocca's 1984 'autobiography' for $80,000). Elite ghostwriters' names may even appear on the cover, and publishers brag about having snagged them.

A problem peculiar to the industry, however, is building a portfolio in spite of one's projects remaining secret. Often Authors are sympathetic to their writers' situation and let them use sample passages; in lieu of a clip, testimonials are (fittingly enough) written by the ghostwriters themselves, which the author then signs off (Tharp, 2013). Clients come and go quickly—projects usually take four months to a year, with ghosts often working on multiple books at a time—creating a need to constantly market oneself, or else constantly start from scratch. Additionally, because ghosts are replaceable, one person undercharging for their services could hurt the whole industry, as others are expected to match or even beat their price (Deckers, 2014). Ghostwriters thus develop informal social networks over time catering to writers' different niches: one client may not be right for you, but better for someone you know, and writers gradually (if tacitly) sort themselves according to their aptitudes. "Once you know each other, you're like, 'Oh, hey. So-and-So needs somebody' or 'Do ya have something for So-and-So because I don't have any job connections right now...do you know of a client that would be perfect for this writer?"' (Tharp, 2013). Hitt (1997) illustrates this well:

> Jerry Jenkins is the best sports guy. Bill Zehme is good for entertainment figures. And there is even an unlikely world of bottom feeders. Cecil Murphey, a retired minister in Kentucky, has written the story of the entrepreneur who started the Chick-fil-A chain and the biography of the singer B. J. Thomas.

Elite ghostwriters, however, need not specialize, and are actively sought out for any project.

Even if one considers most ghostwritten books to be generic trash, they're still important for their *role* in the industry. Mayyasi (2013) notes aptly: "Even if the existence of multiple Justin Bieber memoirs does not feel like a service to the publishing world, it at least helps the bottom lines of the same publishers taking a chance on the next David Mitchell or Cormac McCarthy." Since securing the rights to a celebrity's memoirs is the closest thing to a guaranteed

success—publishers have been known to start bidding wars, driving up the advance for Angelina Jolie's memoir up to $50 million (versus $15 million for Bill Clinton's)—ghostwritten books act as a form of insurance to make up for the books that lose money (ibid.). As we can see in the chart above, memoirs are clearly the most common ghosting job; there is always a fairly steady stream of work in 'vanity publishing'[2] for the autobiographies of less-than-memorable people. (We will address business books in a later section.)

The ghostwriting industry is quite versatile, however, a quirky example being the market for cookbooks. Ghostwriter J.J. Goode has written a number of these, ranging from *Truly Mexican* (with Roberto Santibañez) to *Serious Barbecue* (with Adam Perry Lang) to his first job with Japanese 'Iron Chef' Morimoto. Goode 'co-wrote' *Morimoto* when he was 25, despite knowing close to nothing about cooking; the original writer had fallen through, the publisher only had three weeks to finish the massive 50,000-word project, and he was the only writer available on such short notice (Goode & Kasper, 2013). It soon became apparent that these chefs *need* ghostwriters: after years and years spent mastering their craft, the entire process is so natural to them that they don't know where to begin. ("Isn't it obvious when the chicken is done cooking?" asks one chef.) Perhaps most crucially, "there's nothing [chefs] hate more than measuring things," whether by putting basil in a measuring cup or inserting thermometers. The interviewing process has idiosyncrasies of its own (ibid.):

> The way you don't do it is what I did in the beginning, which was try to sit them down at a table and talk to them. These are people who haven't sat down in a chair since the early '90s. They are up on their feet all the time; they're cooking; they are dealing with disasters left and right. Cooks are arrested and oven doors are blown off and stoves are on fire. They don't want to sit down; it feels unnatural.
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> The best time to get them to open up—when they're at their most comfortable and when they're most happy—is when they're at the stove cooking. That's when the stories sort of bubble up. I work with a wonderful guy named Roberto Santibañez. When he's making a tamale, all of a sudden you're hearing about the tamale he made with his mom, the tamale his grandmother used to make from fresh sweet corn. So it really gets them thinking, it gets them happy, it gets them comfortable, it gets them talking.

The ghostwriter's task in this case is to crystallize chefs' jokes, anecdotes, and tricks of the trade—collected throughout a prolonged interview process, easily lasting up to a year—into headnotes, introductions, and directions. If all goes well, the final result will be not only a useful set of directions for culinary laypersons, but also a pleasure to read.

Andrew Crofts (2004: 135) considers ghosted fiction "the toughest market in the world," a possible contender being original screenplays (and, of course, more nebulous things like poetry). A frequent reason to publish a fictional work is that a more 'scandalous' memoir is vulnerable to litigation, so instead of writing

one's life story as 'fact' one chooses instead a *roman à clef*. What these would-be novelists don't realize about this route, Crofts laments, is that it "remov[es] half of its saleability" (ibid, 132). On the other hand, publishers have been known to buy the right to use celebrities' names on ghosted novels (as with *The Swan* by supermodel Naomi Campbell), just because it's easy money (Mayyasi, 2013). These celebrities are, in effect, leasing out their 'personal brand'.

Idiosyncratic difficulties of ghosted fiction include: 1) fictionalized true stories often don't fit into a single genre, and are thus difficult to market; 2) "you will almost certainly have to write the whole thing on spec before a publisher will make an offer" (Crofts, 134); and 3) whereas with non-fiction, writers are advised to finish the entire first draft before letting the client see it, fiction ought to be taken a chapter or two at a time in order to stay faithful to the author's 'vision' of the story (ibid, 135). Nevertheless, "Joel Hochman of Arbor Books estimates that 35% of his publishing services business is for fiction. [...] And, in fact, Arbor Books lists Oscar and Emmy nominated Hollywood producers as clients" (Mayyasi, 2013). One niche market in which ghost-fiction is quite well-established is children's fiction, where "children show an enormous loyalty to brands of books" (Crofts, 131).

This doesn't imply that just anyone can ghostwrite: the job requirements reach beyond talent and into the realm of personal composure and self-esteem. One author claims: "A ghostwriter is like a mother who gives her child up for adoption and then watches the child rise to world fame"—a silent martyr (Kihara, 2014). Tharp (2013) notes that "If you see your client getting awards and being lauded as a 'genius' for the work that you did, it can be really hard to keep your internal screaming from reaching your fingertips." Emley (2014) even recounts how one of his clients (for whom Emley had been writing, managing, and editing a blog) won a blogging award and was asked to give a presentation in New York, all-expenses paid. Such events make it clear that awards are not given 'for' accomplishments, but are a form of certificate confirming that someone's persona ('personal brand') can pull off a given feat without looking like a schmuck (unlike our CEO above). Ghosting is emotional labor just as much as cognitive labor. Moreover, the 'disembodied' state of writers tends only to sharpen social inequities, as the pseudonymous James Chartrand (2009), author behind the blog *Men with Pens*, autobiographically illustrates:

> My pay rate had hit a plateau...[so] I picked a [pen] name that sounded to me like it might convey a good business image. Like it might command respect. [...] There was no haggling. There were compliments, there was respect. Clients hired me quickly, and when they received their work, they liked it just as quickly. There were fewer requests for revisions — often none at all. [...]
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> Taking a man's name opened up a new world. It helped me earn double and triple the income of my true name, with the same work and service.
>
> No hassles. Higher acceptance. And gratifying respect for my talents and round-the-clock work ethic.

The replies to Chartrand's post further illuminate sexism in the industry, though few women go as far as "James" did. Yet, it would be a cheap shot to portray ghostwriting as inherently precarious and alienating. Ghostwriting creates brand new ethical categories: "'Transparency' means other people can see what you're doing. 'Authenticity' means you're being truthful about what you say," says Deckers (2009). Considered from the individual writer's perspective, it's a job like any other, and its main curiosity lies in dissolving the 'white mythology' that has come to surround authorship. One ghostwriter recalls reading in the *Washington Post* a piece on the woman she wrote for (in Hitt, 1997):

> 'Every morning,' [the Author] says, 'I have to have No. 2 pencils, very sharp. My housekeeper sharpens them. And I get a stack of legal pads and I write and write until I am exhausted.' I read this and I am thinking, I wore [out] the seat of three big flannel mommy nightgowns sitting at my computer in an Upper West Side apartment with kids screaming and a basset hound howling, while she's telling reporters about her pencils and foolscap. Talk about tacky.

Crofts by contrast is much more jaded, noting that even when books actually do appear in his name, none of his friends or relatives get particularly excited (Crofts, 18). More importantly, he points out the ubiquity of ghostwriting throughout society, albeit under other names. "If I was a car designer," he points out, "and I had created a completely new design for the Ford motor company, I would not be affronted to see Henry Ford's name, rather than my own, emblazoned on the front and back of the car" (2004: 19). After a particularly good (or awful) speech, nobody expects politicians to thank (or publicly chastise) their speechwriters, and it would be very surreal if they did. A fair portion of political and even economic commentary revolves around taking experts exactly at their word—and most likely reading the speeches far more closely than the people who delivered them.

As should be expected, there are many cases where soliciting a ghost is seen as unethical. Ghostwriters' unwritten code of ethics purportedly lists academics, journalists, researchers, and students as roles where ghostwriting becomes plagiarism and can damage the reputations of both author and writer (Deckers, 2014). Another, more sinister case is scientific articles written by pharmaceutical companies performing clinical trials (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012: 16), which scientists are paid from $3,000 to $5,000 to submit in their name (McGarity & Wagner, 2008, cited in ibid.). "One analysis found that articles on 33 of 44 industry-initiated clinical trials exhibited evidence of ghostwriting" (Götzsche et al. 2007, cited in ibid.). While such accusations are typically the province of Leftist cranks, there are legitimate court cases documenting this (Ross et al., 2008, cited in ibid.):

> Litigation revealed that Merck employees wrote 20 articles about Vioxx. Of those, 16 listed an external scientist as the primary author, despite the fact Merck personnel had drafted the articles, complete with analysis, before the outside academics became involved.

A study by the Project on Government Oversight 2011 found evidence for ghost-authorship in medical journal articles on "Avandia, Fen-Phen, menopausal hormone therapy, Neurontin, Paxil, Tylenol, Vagus nerve stimulator, Vioxx, Zoloft, and Zyprexa" (ibid.). In response Stern & Lemmens (2011) cite the case *Hazel-Atlas Glass v. Hartford-Empire Co.* (1944), advocating that scientific ghostwriting be judged as fraud on the basis of not satisfying the following criteria for authorship:

1. Substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
2. Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
3. Final approval of the version to be published

A technological solution to reinforce legal judgments could involve the use of stylometric models to gauge the consistency of 'an' author's syntax and style over time—perhaps even creating a repository of syntaxes with a role analogous to the TurnItIn plagiarism-checker for undergraduates. (Linguists would surely not object to the opportunity to integrate 'big data' into their field.)

Stern & Lemmens identify the following reasons for a lack of strong response so far: 1) the ironic fact that guest authorship of any kind often gives credibility in a legal setting, "establish[ing] an expert witness's authority, even when the validity of the research in the article is the very issue under dispute"; 2) much of medical journals' revenue comes from advertising and from "selling reprints (including of ghostwritten articles)"; 3) it is part of the nature of ghostwriting to seek out authors with a prestigious 'personal brand', sowing seeds for scandal that academic institutions want to avoid; and 4) "ghost and guest authorship may not be far removed from other common publication practices in academic medicine," in which:

> laboratory directors, departmental chairs, and supervisors often claim authorship on publications because of those institutional roles rather than by standard authorship criteria. Some clinician-investigators even insist on co-authorship when providing access to patients or samples. Pursuing sanctions for ghostwritten articles may open a Pandora's box, leading to scrutiny of other authorship practices in academia, or to anxiety-laden efforts to justify those practices. [ibid.]

The issue is a very serious one, but one about which little more can be said without dealing with the *content* of these reports, which the present author is ill-equipped to do. Nevertheless, in the next section we'll find that it is only after delving into the ghostly 'underworld' where these rules are abandoned—only by venturing layer by layer into the inferno, that we may emerge into purgatory, and thence go further to shed light upon the prevalence of ghostwriting throughout modern society.

2 Ghost Stories

> *"The writer Umberto Eco belongs to that small class of scholars who are encyclopedic, insightful, and nondull. He is the owner of a large personal library (containing thirty thousand books), and separates visitors into two categories: those who react with "Wow! Signore, professore dottore Eco, what a library you have! How many of these books have you read?" and the others – a very small minority – who get the point that a private library is not an ego-boosting appendage but a research tool. Read books are far less valuable than unread ones. The library should contain as much of what you do not know as your financial means, mortgage rates and the currently tight real-estate market allows you to put there. You will accumulate more knowledge and more books as you grow older, and the growing number of unread books on the shelves will look at you menacingly. Indeed, the more you know, the larger the rows of unread books. Let us call this collection of unread books an* antilibrary*."*
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> ~Taleb - *The Black Swan*, p. 1

It is curious how the philosophers of antiquity placed so little import on originality compared to contemporary academia. This may be a matter of institutions—there was "no Dean's office that Descartes could be sent to for repeating Anselm's Ontological Proof in his *Meditations*, no PhD committee/auditing agency stopping Al-Kindi from ctrl+c/ctrl+v-ing *everything* he read in Aristotle" (Sarepta, 2011). The unlikelihood that Pythagoras is himself responsible for his eponymous theorem is well-known, and the only surviving works of Aristotle are lecture notes cribbed by students. Moreover, "Aristotle's lectures on mysticism were never written down," and his "famed Dialogues (written like Plato's dialogues) have not survived antiquity" (ibid.). Thousands of books have burned throughout history: the ancient library of Alexandria contained 500,000 scrolls, reduced to ash in the year 48 BC; in 213 AD all the books of ancient China not dealing with war, agriculture, medicine, or divination were burned by the emperor Qín Shǐ Huáng (famous for his tomb filled with terracotta soldiers) and his successor, Prime Minister Lǐ Sī; and, closer to home, the estimated 16 million volumes contained in Poland's libraries were bombed to oblivion during WWII.

Endless tears of blood have been shed for these incalculable losses; yet, still we persist in viewing the 'corpus' of each ancient thinker as a unified whole. This notion of 'totality' is a thoroughly modern one; to it, Sarepta contrasts the oral tradition of knowledge, in which Greek schoolchildren had to memorize Homer verbatim, and where medieval thinkers like Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, al-Fārābī, Meister Eckhardt, Ochkam, and Anselm only achieved fame through their students' books (compiled from lecture notes and 'office hours'). The role of the scribe was hardly insignificant as well: Plotinus was blind by the time he composed his *Enneads*, and so required help (ibid.), and even an autobiography as vivacious as that of Benvenuto Cellini was only possible by co-opting a fourteen-year-old servant-girl as amanuensis.[3] Bertrand Russell likewise employed a stenographer, once dictating an entire book in one sitting when the muse happened to strike. Mentions of such assistance are occasionally (if at all) relegated to a note in the 'Acknowledgements', as Hitt (1997) notes:

> Puzzling out the acknowledgments of big books is an esoteric pleasure for those who know how. For example, readers of Joan Rivers's new book may find her literary style redolent of Bill Cosby's, especially after noting that she too gives warm thanks to "Ralph Schoenstein for his literary help."
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> On another aisle is the best-selling author Tim Allen, who thanks David Rensin: "Together we sought truth, enlightenment and the quantum punch line. He was good company." The professional redneck Jeff Foxworthy puts it more elegantly: "I don't possess adequate words to thank David Rensin for the talent and effort he brought to this project. Without him, you would be reading a pamphlet, not a book."

And while effusive thanks to one's spouse has been a mainstay in acknowledgements sections for the past century or so, the true degree of 'help' performed by (male) authors' wives is lost to history. A prominent example in the field of economics is Alfred Marshall's textbook *Principles of Economics*, where his wife Mary Paley Marshall was an unofficial collaborator; at least in this case she was on the byline of their co-authored 1879 tome, *The Economics of Industry*. (Milton Friedman's wife Rose is a more recent example.) One need only think of George Eliot and George Sand to realize the obstacles for women in publishing books, and the lengths to which talented women will go to overcome them.

The lines separating writing, ghostwriting, and plagiarism were not always as immutable as they appear today. The once-formidable obstacle of geographical distance, and the consequent cross-cultural and linguistic barriers that resulted from it, made it imperative—even 'ethical'—to perform what we now consider plagiarism (Sarepta, 2011). Such practices led to strategic redundancy, which should not be confused with the circlejerking tendencies of todays' academics, who often devote half their book to criticizing other people's ideas without providing any of their own. In these latter, we get argument's *form* (or some close permutation of it) rather than just its content or (more likely) a straw-man version drawn up in order to bolster one's fragile, tenured ego. Yet, historically the main import of this was that it provides a form of insurance against devastating events such as massive book-burnings. Someone who wants to study ancient Greek philosophy in depth would do well to learn Sanskrit, and professional historians could doubtless point to innumerable other examples. Much like each cell contains enough DNA to replicate the entire organism it comes from, we may treat this as a bibliographic tendency law *à la* 'survival of the fittest' that may go a long way in accounting for which books have survived and which have not.

On top of this, Sarepta conjectures that ghostwriting may provide a more cogent explanation for polymaths like Da Vinci or Leibniz than quasi-mystical appeals to 'genius'. Perhaps intellectual division of labour was always the case, and somewhere along the line scholars forgot to take sages' 'personal brands' with a grain of salt. This point of view (if historically accurate) would go a long way in explaining why so many students fail to satisfy the extensive requirements of contemporary academia. As programs such as "No Child Left Behind"

progressively render the value of a high school diploma worthless, and students find themselves compelled to inflate their CVs, a recent article's title says it all: "Master's degrees are as common now as bachelor's degrees were in the '60s." This isn't to discount the fact that the world is growing increasingly complex, even posthuman, bringing about a need for greater skills, but the main point is that students and workers are required to do more and be more, while the education system remains much the same as it was in the 17th century. This, we will see, opens up a niche for 'ghost scholars', where all of these themes converge.

Dave Tomar, later to author a book (in his own name) entitled *The Shadow Scholar: How I Made a Living Helping College Kids Cheat*, first came to public consciousness in an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education under the pseudonym Ed Dante (Berrett, 2012):

> I've written toward a master's degree in cognitive psychology, a Ph.D. in sociology, and a handful of postgraduate credits in international diplomacy. I've worked on bachelor's degrees in hospitality, business administration, and accounting. I've written for courses in history, cinema, labor relations, pharmacology, theology, sports management, maritime security, airline services, sustainability, municipal budgeting, marketing, philosophy, ethics, Eastern religion, postmodern architecture, anthropology, literature, and public administration. I've attended three dozen online universities. I've completed 12 graduate theses of 50 pages or more. All for someone else. [Dante, 2010]

'Dante' made a living at an online content mill that "generates tens of thousands of dollars a month by creating original essays based on specific instructions provided by cheating students" (ibid.). For his efforts his income averaged around $66,000 annually—higher, he points out, than that of most educators. "There was a clear economic demand for it," said Tomar in a later interview, "To them it was a financial transaction utterly consistent with everything else about college" (Berrett, 2012). He describes his schedule as working on about 20 assignments at a time, with cyclical surges in demand near end-of-semester due dates, during which time he cranks out 20 to 40 pages per day, sometimes even 4 or 5 pages an hour. He estimates his yearly output at 5,000 pages, none in his name. His article is full of cynical denunciations of academia: "I live well on the desperation, misery, and incompetence that your educational system has created" (Dante, 2010). And more concretely: "[Students] need help learning and, separately, they need help passing their courses." The website for the content mill ACAD Writing uses precisely this division in its sales rhetoric[4] (italics my own):

> In the subject of **business administration**, universities often require an empirical component in the master's thesis or dissertation. Countless students consequently cooperate with a company. We gladly also provide support in such work: our authors can prepare the theoretical component, for example, or – upon provision of the according information – also the empirical component. Within this, the work of academic ghostwriters is not limited to merely getting empirical results down on paper.

> We also gladly support our customers in the recording of data and statistical analyses. [...] Particularly *ghostwriting for the final thesis allows students to save time, which they can instead use to gain practical experience within the company, for example. Furthermore, our ghostwriters' manuscripts are also particularly suitable for self study*: professionally prepared work can form an important basis for personal learning success.

The rhetoric is largely the same for other disciplines, *mutatis mutandis*. The Philosophy section of the site, for example, emphasizes the benefits of focusing on a core field and relegating less important tasks to others. With the use of study drugs increasingly on the rise, the main appeal of ghost scholarship is that at least the downside risks (expulsion) are *known*, while medical side effects aren't.

Dante cites a statistic from the *New York Times* that 61% of undergraduates admit to cheating on assignments and exams. Of the clients he receives, three types stand out: English-as-second-language students (the sad result of a system focusing on "evaluation rather than education"), hopelessly deficient students (whose ineptitude and near-illiteracy he skewers repeatedly), and lazy rich kids (his favorite customers, he grumbles, because they have "an unlimited supply of money and no shortage of instructions"). On the latter two groups he comments incisively (Dante, 2010):

> While the deficient student will generally not know how to ask for what he wants until he doesn't get it, the lazy rich student will know exactly what he wants. He is poised for a life of paying others and telling them what to do. Indeed, he is acquiring all the skills he needs to stay on top.

As for grouping students by major, he claims that nursing students are one of the most prevalent—"I've even written pharmaceutical-treatment courses, for patients who I hope were hypothetical" (Dante, 2010)—though his customer base extends even to students of theology and ethics, as well as future educators, on whom the irony is presumably lost. Anything not involving math is fair game for him, though as we've seen in the case of ACAD Writing this is not a hard-and-fast rule across the industry. Dante was, in fact, the fellow we quoted above who bragged: "I can say in 10 pages what most normal people could say in a paragraph." His research habits are also surprisingly (and methodically) crude: "I haven't been to a library once since I started doing this job. Amazon is quite generous about free samples" (ibid.).

To justify his life choices, Tomar strains to link his position to more widespread 'cultural malaise', such as how "institutions like Wall Street can crash the economy without consequence" (Berrett, 2012). Surprising as it is that someone as 'educated' as this can have such facile views about the economy, it provides a sharp reminder how the task of a ghostwriter is to work *within* clichés, pushing their boundaries only as much as it takes not to be banal. "They can anger the reader," says Crofts (2004: 117), "but they mustn't bore them."

Nevertheless, Tomar is not alone in diagnosing an increasing 'spectrification' of society. A marginal theme in continental theory that rose in popularity during the mid-2000s is known as *hauntology*, meant to mirror 'ontology'. (In French, where the term was first coined, the words sound identical.) The idea arose from the work of Jacques Derrida, known in academic circles as Deconstruction. The following excerpt (from Buse & Scott, 1999) succinctly sums up its spirit without being impenetrable:

> The ghost as a cipher of iteration is particularly suggestive. At the beginning of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida talks about the way in which the anticipated return of the ghost may be mobilized on behalf of a deconstruction of all historicisms that are grounded in a rigid sense of chronology. 'Haunting is historical, to be sure', he writes, 'but it is not dated, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of the calendar.' The question of the revenant neatly encapsulates deconstructive concerns about the impossibility of conceptually solidifying the past. Ghosts arrive from the past and appear in the present. However, the ghost cannot be properly said to belong to the past, even if the apparition represents someone who has been dead for many centuries, for the simple reason that a ghost is clearly not the same thing as the person who shares its proper name. Does then the 'historical' person who is identified with the ghost properly belong to the present? Surely not, as the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality. The temporality to which the ghost is subject is therefore paradoxical, as at once they 'return' and make their apparitional debut. Derrida has been pleased to term this dual movement of return and inauguration a 'hauntology', a coinage that suggests a spectrally deferred non-origin within grounding metaphysical terms such as history and identity.

Adherents to hauntology draw from ideas such as Marc Augé's notion of 'non-place' (from a 1992 book, translated to English in 1995), coupling it with 'non-time'—Derrida's own development of hauntology takes much of its inspiration from Hamlet's line "The time is out of joint."[5] The whole notion is intriguing, and one can see from the outset that this could spark a great deal of creative new insights. Of all places, it seems to have taken root in cultural theory, describing pop culture in our postmodern era, whose condition Rob Horning (2011) describes as follows:

> Nothing successfully connotes the zeitgeist; everything invokes a desire to one-up with a better reference or a new meme or *detournement* of the contemporary. We are too knowing and skeptical to accept anything as unproblematically representative of the now.

On top of this, internet culture brings about the 'loss of loss itself' as every online action is recorded in servers worldwide. Fair enough. Yet, its most well-known proponent, Mark Fisher, extends its purview to explain neoliberal capitalism

as that which "foist[s] non-space/time on us, along with a subjectivity without depth that must flaunt its requisite flexibility by shuffling the deck of floating signifiers" (ibid.). His chief method of analysis, as performed in his new book, is literary criticism of materials including David Peace, John Le Carré, Christopher Nolan, Joy Division, and the electronic artist Burial. Now, I'm going to put all my cards on the table here. To borrow a line from Sraffa (1932: 45), burying oneself in one of the most complex philosophical systems yet devised in order to do literary theory is building up a terrific steam-hammer in order to crack a nut.[6] Rather than engaging in what any normal person would consider meaningful *analysis* of capitalism, philosophers of this ilk act as if a Theory of Everything can be built on the basis of anecdotal evidence gleaned from riding the subway or working in a cubicle. Even by philosophical standards, the 'theory' leaves much to be desired: in this particular apparition of hauntology, 'non-place' overwhelmingly means 'bad' (because capitalism is bad, as we all surely know) and 'place' is of course 'good', whereas in Augé's own work there is no such moral tinge. Therefore, faced with the task of cleaning up these Augéan stables, let us briefly divert the flow of our narrative, veering into our path the alphas (and omegas) of the music industry, as well as the more sensitive subject matter at the forefront of online dating.

Most people's familiarity with ghostwriting is due to the music industry, where 'artist' and 'performer' are seldom synonymous. Further, an overview of musical ghostwriters remarks jadedly: "as any booze-lubricated industry type will tell you, don't think [ghostwriting] doesn't go on with underground dance producers, either" (Fact Mag, 2014). Tolerance varies across genres, of course: in pop and R&B music, crediting an elite ghostwriter will often "help rather than hinder the marketing push" (ibid.), whereas 'scandals' such as that surrounding T. Nash show that rap has far different ideals. Ghost-composing remains in high demand, however, since it's only a sin if you get caught:

> I have here an email from a 'Professional Ghost Production Studio' offering the following: "Full tracks/songs/remixes/edits/music (house genres and sub genres: house, techno, tech-house, deep-house, minimal and many more). Confidentiality is 100 per cent assured, from €200 to €350 per track/remix". [Gomori, 2012]

Intriguingly, musical ghostwriting offers perhaps the best opportunity for quantitative study. As Gomori points out, some ghosts receive full royalties on their tracks, as if they had been released under the ghost's own name—meaning that their names will be included in the records of performance rights organizations, such as PPL and PRS in the UK. However, this doesn't apply to ghosts working 'on spec', i.e. paid a flat fee at the outset. Nonetheless, the results may well be surprising (Gomori, 2012):

> What isn't common knowledge, though, is that some of the biggest names in house and techno – and further afield in electronic music – have tracks entirely ghostwritten for them by other producers, with absolutely no

> input of their own whatsoever. I'd heard tales of some of the biggest names in trance having production teams behind them for years, but I naively thought that the underground house and tech scene was far too authentic, genuine, credible and brimming with passion and integrity for it to be prevalent there. How wrong I was.

More exotic is the use of ghostwriters being hired to write profiles on dating sites such as Tinder, Match.com, eHarmony, and Christian Mingle, crafting them "based on 'attractive archetypes' like 'nerd chic', 'hipster cool' and 'bad boy"' (O'Neil, 2014). One company, Personal Dating Assistants, "offers packages ranging from $380 US per month (the 'Weekend Casanova') to $1520 US per month (the 'International Playboy')" [ibid.]. Another site, Virtual Dating Assistants, "charges $147 for a basic profile, while $600-$700 a month will buy you date selection and correspondence" (Jacobs, 2011)—far cheaper than hiring a matchmaker, whose costs range from $5,000 to $50,000 (ibid.). A 29-year old creative writing graduate comments on her first ghosting gig, for a "30-year-old man from Hollywood who worked in film and liked the outdoors" (ibid.):

> "*Everyone* from Hollywood works in film and likes the outdoors. The point is to make him sound different to everyone else."
>
> People fall down on their profiles, she says, because they do not describe what they are actually like. "It's OK to like the outdoors, it's just boring to say 'I like the outdoors'. Better to say: 'I like to throw down my backpack as I reach the summit and look around the vista.' It's a better description of what it's like to be with you."

It's a valid point: many people are charming enough in person, but just have no way to express this in a medium with its own codes of etiquette, status, and 'authenticity' that may diverge strongly from those of everyday meatspace. It is also fair, given the track record of subcultures like PUA, to draw comparisons with films like *Her*, whose protagonist works for BeautifulHandwrittenLetters.com, composing sentimental messages to clients' loved ones based on the photographs and information provided to him by clients. "[N]ow women have a whole new anxiety," sneers one commenter.

With authenticity's demise in the spheres of dating and beyond, quality must be sought in a new aesthetic *register*. Just as Jackson Pollock—who made hundreds of paintings and threw out all but those he liked best—pared down the artistic process to solely the final act of *artistic appraisal* (of taking pride in one's finished work), so aspiring paramours must appraise potential objects of affection by their *choice* of persona, their taste in expressive tropes. And so we see an inflationary tendency as courtship becomes increasingly mediated by clichés, ghostwriting becomes all the more necessary for successfully navigating them. So on indefinitely: spectrification to the nth power. The same diagnosis may well apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other avenues where ghostwriting has found a niche. But more important are the emergent properties this entails: Jackson

Pollock's paintings have been shown via modern technology to contain a fractal structure. The human brain, argue the study's authors, contains a faculty that provokes a positive neurophysiological response to fractals, and it is only by Pollock's distortion of the artistic *process* itself that it noticeably unfolds. It may well be the case that the increasing prevalence of ghostwriting will open up new 'spectralities' in social codes, new asemic hauntings setting temporalities old and new out of joint.[7] Our final section will argue that this is indeed the case for ghostwriting in the business sphere, which we will argue places philosophy's 'textual' treatments of capitalism deeply into question.

3 "We are a way for capital to know itself."

We have avoided the topic of ghostwritten business books so far, but the genre is prevalent as well as distinctive enough to deserve a lengthy treatment. For most of us, the idea of business book brings to mind vacuous prose, nauseating clichés, and banal life advice. Yet, these are only a small part of the genre. Alan Webber, a former leading staff editor at the *Harvard Business Review*—perhaps *the* most prestigious publication in business—proffers an enlightening confession (Kiechel, 2010: 244):

> The dirty little secret of the *Harvard Business Review* is that most of the great articles that we published when I was the editor weren't exactly written by people whose names were on the byline. And that's not to say they weren't the author. But they didn't write them. If you go talk to the professors at the Harvard Business School and you ask them to write an article, you very quickly discover they can't write a lick. In order to get a very advanced degree, you have to be taught how not to write very, very well. Now, what they can do is talk. And so, what we would do would be to sit down with these really smart professors and put a tape recorded in from of them. And they would talk. And we would transcribe the tape. And then we'd clean it up and we'd give it back to them. And they'd say, 'But of course, that's what I said. That's what I wrote.'

"*In order to get a very advanced degree, you have to be taught how* ***not*** *to write very, very well.*" An odd statement, but a deeply profound one. Heterodox economists (e.g. institutionalists) often wonder aloud why economists insist on using roundabout models of firm behaviour when they could just *ask* businesspeople directly. A focus on ghostwriting allows an interesting reply to this in terms of the *material* aspects of writing, in particular its opportunity cost: why would a Fortune 500 CEO spend their valuable time filling out surveys by some academic, when they could just delegate the job to an underling? More profoundly, we wish to argue that the most meaningful aspects of business are those that *resist discursive expression*. It is actually quite reassuring, and a credit to businesspeople's intelligence, that most of the tripe associated with business writing is actually written by people who know nothing about business.

As for authors' motivation, another passage of Kiechel's (ibid, 242-3) is worth quoting at length:

> In the late 1990s, during my service with Harvard Business publishing, authors of *HBR* articles would occasionally confide in me about the value of being published there. Gushed a solo-practitioner consultant then charging $20,000 and up, "You can get a year's worth of business, maybe two, on the strength of one article." Another, a partner at a strategy firm and the author of both articles and best-selling books based on them, had even more detailed calculations: "You get nothing for the article" (The *Review* then paid a $100 honorarium per article while retaining all rights to reprint and resell it.) "You might get a little money for the book advance." (Figures like $15,000 were common.) "If the book takes off, you may begin to see some money worth paying attention to from speaking fees." (He was then doing about a hundred appearances a year, typically for $25,000 an outing.) "Of course, where you make the real money is from the consulting projects you land from the article."

A prominent ghostwriting mogul narrates his run-in with an $80 million dollar lean manufacturing company that commissioned a book at a steep fee of $120,000. It was well worth the cost, said the client: "they hold seminars and give the book to everyone there. And if they get two clients as a result... He called it 'their brochure"' (Mayyasi, 2013). Crofts elaborates (2004: 36):

> Any expert who has access to a captive marketplace, like training companies or public speakers, has a ready-made market for books. If a few hundred people turn up to a seminar, paying several hundred or even several thousand pounds for the privilege, they are going to think nothing of shelling out a few more pounds for a book by the person they have come to listen to.

One could also take recourse to 'editorial services' firms like Wordworks Inc., whose list of authors includes Tom Peters (best known for *In Search of Excellence*), Richard Pascale (whose breakout book was *The Art of Japanese Management*), various Harvard professors, and Senator John Kerry. The company reports having produced over seventy trade books, collectively occupying 'more than 500 weeks' on the *New York Times* and *BusinessWeek* best-seller lists, and numbering over five million copies in print (Kiechel, 244). We've come far enough now that the one major question left to be asked is: *Why?* Writing is hard, yes, but why is it so hard that experts decline to put down their own ideas? Earlier we explained this through the idea of comparative advantage which, while undeniable, is far too abstract to provide any sort of satisfaction. Moreover, it does not account for the fact that successful ghosts like William Novak or Andrew Crofts choose to stay in the industry when they could easily retire.

Consider: I know that when I read a book, I will be a different person once I read it than I am now; I can't know how its content will change the way I think, since otherwise it would be redundant.[8] The reader is thus faced with

a leap of faith—or, to use another metaphor, a speculation on the 'market' of ideas. Genres, 'authors', and clichés effectively serve as a means of hedging one's bets. These are all the more true when *writing* a book. Being a quote-unquote 'writer' even involves a distinct stance in relation to life (in philosophical terms: a *phenomenology* of its own), as Borges points out:

> A writer—and, I believe, generally all persons—must think that whatever happens to him or her is a resource. All things have been given to us for a purpose, and an artist must feel this more intensely. All that happens to us, including our humiliations, our misfortunes, our embarrassments, all is given to us as raw material, as clay, so that we may shape our art.

Hiring a ghostwriter is not a one-time act of outsourcing, but ramifies into capitalists' use of experience(s). The flip side of Borges' claim implies an overwhelming tendency for the writer (or the 'artist' more generally) to care about data and events only insofar as they can be written about. Art is a continually latent justification for whatever is to happen—the more abstract the art (music, architecture), the more this is so. Perpetually treating experience as yet-to-be-written involves second-, third-, and fourth-order 'stacking' of (meta-)cognition, placing a premium on depth (often to the point of a nihilist *mise-en-abyme*) and 'totality' (learning more about the world by...reading more philosophy). By contrast, the capitalist (or non-artist more generally) has a simpler solution: it's "not unheard of," says Rodgers (2010), "for a client to work with two or three ghostwriters over the course of a project." This can occur serially—one ghost to another—or simultaneously:

> I soon found that I would not deal directly with the famous personage because the labor of the 'author' had been compartmentalized and farmed out. The manuscript I read on the plane had been drafted by a former newspaperman, that is, a ghostwriter. Then I learned that the 'ideas' in the book had come from yet a third person, that is, a ghost-thinker. I took a break at the shore one afternoon, reflected on the vast zagging distance between me and the celebrity author—and realized that I was, to be honest, a ghost-ghost-ghostwriter. [Hitt, 1997]

Second- and third-order ghostwriters deal with the authorial 'voice' as a common currency, which is expected to remain consistent and seamless. This is not always the case: "When I read books that have been ghostwritten," notes a perceptive reader, "I can sometimes hear the 'split' between the two voices, which can be disconcerting" (Huff, 2013). The authorial voice is reduced from autopoiesis—of staking one's territory in the topography of language, of sounding one's barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world—to merely a meta-trope.

In broaching the concept of comparative advantage in our first section, we thought it best to avoid the sticky business of dealing with relative quantities. The latter is precisely why it was not until Ricardo that economic theory could begin to be formalized, and why the idea is so poorly understood by

non-economists—comparative advantage is a second-order differential relation, a relative quantity of relative quantities. In lieu of mathematics, then, we introduced Guattari's concept of 'potentiality capital' as shorthand for the 'universe of possibilities' (roughly, probability space) of each party to the ghostwriting contract. In introductory statistics courses these 'spaces' are often represented by set notation, as found in Venn diagrams. Now we get to the crucial point: whereas an individual person is confined to expanding the bounds of his own circle of possibilities, the task of the ghostwriter is to jump from one to the other—a transcendental hopscotch. Michael D'Orso, a very successful ghostwriter (who prefers the term 'collaborator' now that his name is on the cover), says "you can't be more alive than when you're climbing into other lives in other worlds" (in Morris, 2010). So while the rest of us, by learning new things, honing our abilities, or just making money, increase our potentiality capital, the ghostwriter is in a unique position where their potentiality capital remains unchanged, and it is their *virtuality capital* that increases as they hop from world to world.[9]

Conversely, the businessperson hiring a ghostwriter does not only outsource a menial task, but an *entire orientation* to the world, and to worldhood. Unlike Borges, they outsource the compulsion to view experience as a *resource*; they thus outsource the need to view time linearly, and cumulatively. Artists often glibly speculate that narrative is a fundamental human need, but if that is the case then our Brooks Brothers-clad chair(wo)man of the board has been severed from it [Norton-Taylor, 1955]:

> Adaptation is one explanation of how a lot of executives stay alive. As the fish in the Silurian rivers began to develop swim bladders in order to live in shoal waters, so American executives have developed certain compensating features. The process can be observed particularly in the big cities where conditions are the most trying. Executives have developed an insensitivity to noise, an uncanny time sense (needed in commuting), and an attunement to the city's terrifying rhythms. Instead of trying to escape the phenomenon of modern life they fling themselves at it.

Following Bourdieu's terminology, they are left with a form of capital which as yet has no name—one devoid of virtuality, an asemic capital lacking any fungibility in the discursive sphere. This *null-capital* is a legible erasure, a 'present absence', whose "ghostly traces belong...to the world of the uncanny, making audiences question the very concept of the 'real"' (Boesky, 2013).[10] Hedge fund managers make use of esoteric techniques such as spectral analysis (Cooper, 1972), decomposing time series into multiple sinusoidal waves of differing amplitudes and frequencies—waves, cycles, orbits, corresponding to nothing. We move from the domain of linear time to the domain of frequencies; algorithmic traders hold séances in machinic hieroglyphs, summoning ghostly harmonies from the abstract lines of price data. And just as a sleepless Marcel Proust would sit in bed and stare at train schedules until epic rural dramas would spring to light (De Botton, 1997: 44-5),[11] so today's management consultants stare endlessly at balance sheets, with their soulless T-charts of debits and credits, creating ghost stories

irreducible to narrative. In this netherworld bewitched with bodiless money and organizations without organs, to treat these knowledges exclusively as texts is a Procrustean exercise, paring away all nuances except those of the holy Book. The CEO works not with texts, but anti-texts in the language of ghosts. For these we must visit not a library, but an anti-library. There may well be nothing outside the text, but if this is the case then the statements of economics, finance, and accounting proceed from—and according to—a hole in nothingness itself.

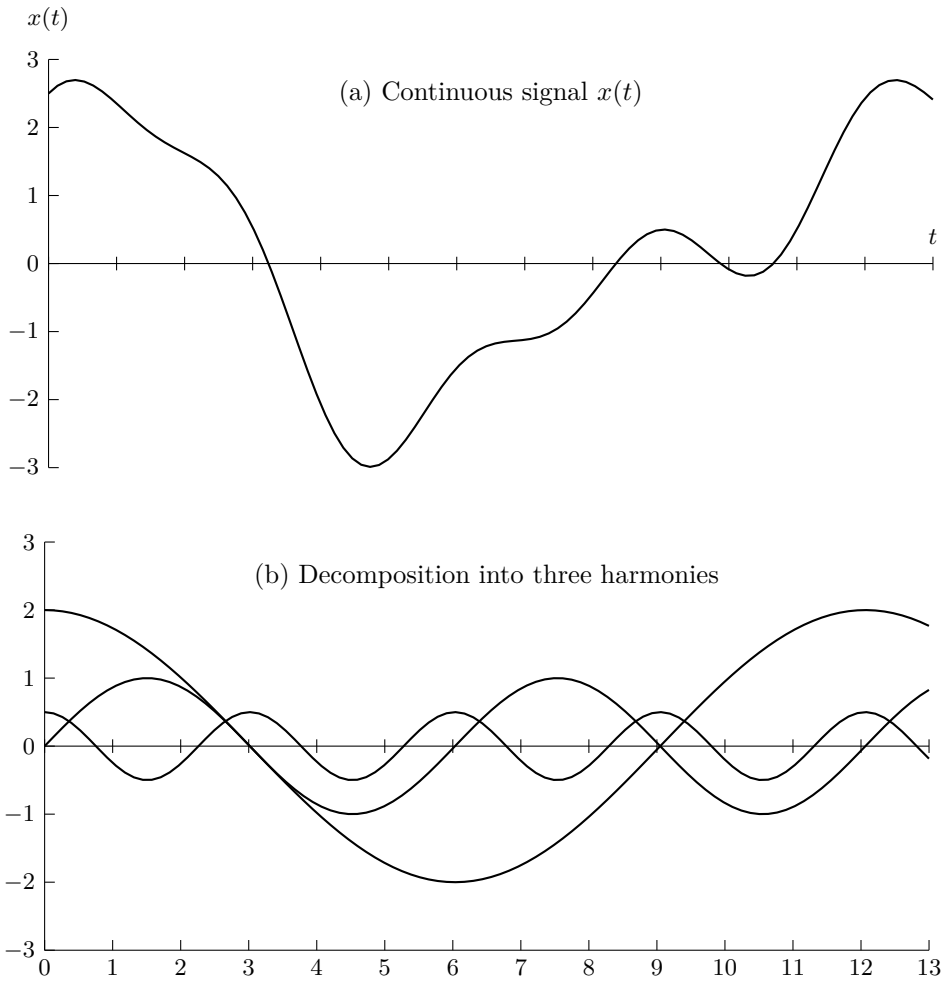

Fig. 1: Spectral analysis of economic time series (Cooper, 1970:5)

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Notes

[1]Anyone considering ghostwriting as an occupation should be warned that requests (on sites like Elance and Odesk) for a 'free sample article' are "almost always a scam" (Tharp, 2013). As well: "Even if you're working with your friend, don't work without a contract" (ibid.). Legal details are important to pay attention to, since unscrupulous 'derivative rights' in a contract could potentially prevent a ghostwriter from ever writing about their specialty again. As for getting into the business, Mayyasi (2013) gives the following advice:

> [S]urvey books similar to the one you want to do. If a co-author isn't credited on the cover, check the acknowledgments to see if anyone is thanked "for helping me bring this story to life," or something like that. If you're looking to be a ghostwriter, do the same. Find the name of the writer's agent with the "Who Represents" feature on www.PublishersMarketplace.com.

[2]Of vanity publishers, Crofts (2004: 146) notes:

> For anyone who has not come across them, these are firms who will publish books for authors if the author is willing to pay all the costs. This in itself is a perfectly respectable thing to do, but less scrupulous operators will lure that author into the deal with flattery. They will tell him or her that they are certain the book will find a market and earn back far more money than the few thousand they are being asked to lay out for its printing and production.

[3]In his introduction to Cellini's autobiography (1929: v), Harry Morgan Ayres puts this charmingly:

> In the year 1558 a Florentine craftsman, who, like his century was fifty-eight years old, sat down to write of what he had seen of cities and of men, and the brave part he had played among them. So ought a man to do, said he; provided he has already lived his life and had something 'virtuous'; something, that is, smacked of excellence, to his credit. But having written a few pages he felt his resolve melt. In truth he had but little grammar; his language was the rapid, picturesque, 'bizarre' vernacular of the Florentine shops. His periods swelled, escaped; he lost his way among them. Tiresome business, this niggling with a pen. A chisel cuts cleaner; gold, bronze, marble even, yield to a man's will better than this foolish ink. It is worse than playing the flute. Back to the shop, Benvenuto.

> And once there was among the well-loved tools, materials wherewith a man might carve his fame, Benvenuto's eye lights upon young Michele, fourteen and too puny to be good for much. So forthwith he refashions the first pages of his book, thrusts the quill into Michele's thin hand, and, as he hammers merrily away, he talks as merrily, and the young scribe comes toiling after. Off and on for eight years he talks, bringing his story down to his sixty-third year. There he left off, not for any lack of crowding memories. He was sixty-six and setting his house in order. His faithful servant-mistress had just married. His adopted son was giving him trouble. And he had got an idea of writing somewhat of his art, technical tractates, by way of homage to a great man. Therefore the Life of Benvenuto Cellini, as written by himself, came to an end. The life of Benvenuto as very vigorously *lived* by himself came also to an end in 1571.

[4]The section on economics (see link above) contains some revealing errata.:

> Among the classic microeconomic topics covered by our ghostwriters count consumer choice, production theory and price theory. Conversely, macroeconomics is specifically concerned with the overall economic goods, monetary, labour and securities markets. All our ghostwriters have the ability to present the complex theories in a formally correct and comprehensible format. They are entirely familiar with theories such as the national economy [this is a theory?], neoclassicism, Keysianism [sic], neoliberalism [!] and monetarism. Our authors are also experienced in using the theories with regard to empirical studies. This includes accurately analysing the current business and [?] financial crises, for example.

Elsewhere in the section, copious use is made of pedantic and vacuous economic metaphors. Then again, it may be unwise to take these too much at face value, since they're most likely ghostwritten themselves!

[5]While hauntology's rhetoric might evoke that of François Laruelle's Non-Philosophy, the latter is quite different. As Trevor Owen Jones writes (2014: 28-9):

> [T]he Non-Library is against the Limit as absolute because in it is a priori non-topologically removed from the Library and its Iconoclasm, the Twilight of the Archive. The logic of finitude is the Non-Archive set against Derrida's 'Archive,' but also his 'evil' anti-Archive—a countervalence, or double ephemerality: an ephemerality with itself but ephemeral with its own temporality. One could say, "well this is strictly impossible," but what is underscored is that the Non-Library is most definitely not a hauntology.

[6]Fisher's book *Capitalist Realism*—which I actually read, and fail to see the reasons for its 'critical acclaim' beyond the bad faith of adjunct humanities professors—takes as its thesis that any political system beyond liberal capitalist democracy has become unthinkable. In other words, he attempts to show that philosophers' lack of imagination (reinforced by a refusal to dirty their hands in empirical data) is somehow inherent in the nature of society.

[7]The philosophical implications of emergent spectralities are vast. Smith (1995: 177, n. 5) excerpts Laruelle:

> With regard to overnames, which we touched on in the previous chapter in connection to renown and anasemic haunting, François Laruelle writes, speaking of phonic coincidence in 'words' used by Derrida that "the signifying chain

> with its effects is not superadded to an other practice of difference taken from an other regional knowledge: it is de-doubled, re-doubled, re-inscribed, at once repeated and exceeded in that which remains to it of negativity. This gesture of reinscription is the affirmation of 'différance', its liberation towards chance and the absolute necessity of the play which exceeds the signifier and produces it," in his 'Le texte quatrieme: l'événement textuel comme simulacre', in L'arc, 54, 39. My translation.

[8] A tip of the hat goes to @isomorphisms' post here.

[9] Though imperfect, this is meant to be analogous to Élie Ayache's use of Pierre Menard to illustrate the difference between possibility and contingency. While the client's position (and ours) is a Bayesian one, updating priors in response to new data, that of the ghostwriter is becoming-Menardist. This can likewise be construed as (perhaps) a contribution to Ayache's goal to "generalize the idea of the writing of contingent claims" (2014: 222) through a focus on books and "the sphere of thought at large." He adds the following insightful note (ibid, 217-8):

> Now the other side of something being written is that this something will then be exchanged. It is not a coincidence if writing enables us to collect the contingent claim in one undivided formula and if, on the other hand, it lends itself to the exchange. It is the same matter (the material sheet) on which the formula is written which is subsequently exchanged. This notion might even act as the definition of writing: something that collects the difference of the contingent claim on one side and for this reason admits of a price (i.e., is exchanged) on the other side.

I hope that the present essay allows some further insight into Ayache's cryptic claim: "The book is the arché-arché-market."

[10] I borrow this rhetoric from the recollections of Amy Boesky (2013)—author of multiple books in the *Sweet Valley High* series while in grad school—who notes her surprise when a professor once suddenly started talking about ghostwriting in a lecture, which she recounts as follows:

> Shakespeare's plays are filled with 'ghost writers'—'legible erasures' that forecast debates about their authorship. How much of these plays did Shakespeare write himself? What was co-written, or added by an actor or a compositor or a later editor? Anxieties about this, my professor argued, are linked to the ghosts and ghostwriters that haunt the tragedies. Figures connected in turn to other in-between states, like madness, uncertainty, and illegibility. 'Present absences', these ghostly traces belong, as she saw it, to the world of the uncanny, making audiences question the very concept of the 'real'.

[11] Allen de Botton writes (1997: 44-5):

> "His friend, Maurice Duplay tells us that what Marcel [Proust] most liked reading when he couldn't get to sleep was a train timetable. The document was not consulted for practical advice; the departure time of the St-Lazare train was of no immediate importance to a man who found no reason to leave Paris in the last eight years of his life. Rather, this timetable was read and enjoyed, as though it were a gripping novel about country life, because the mere names of provincial train stations provided Proust's imagination with

enough material to elaborate entire worlds: to picture domestic dramas in rural villages, shenanigans in local government, and life out in the fields.

Proust argued that enjoyment of such wayward reading matter was typical of a writer, someone who could be counted on to develop enthusiasms for things that were apparently out of line with great art, a person for whom:

> a terrible musical production in a provincial theatre or a ball which people of taste find ridiculous will either evoke memories or else be linked to an order of reveries and preoccupations far more than some admirable performance at the opera, or an ultra-smart soirée at the Faubourg Saint-Germaine. The names of Northern railway stations in a timetable where he would like to imagine himself stepping from the train on an autumn evening when the trees are already bare and smelling strongly in the keen air; an insipid publication for people of taste, full of names that he has not heard since childhood, may have far greater value for him than five volumes of philosophy, and lead people of taste to say that for a man of talent, he has very stupid tastes.

Or at least, unconventional tastes."