

Connor Rodenbeck

Senior Seminar Final Paper

Perry

Ghostwriting: Authorship, Capitalism, and Poetry

**Introduction**

Ghostwriting is a concept and practice that swathes many different professions because it is a type of freelance work that can be lucrative to many working writers. Perhaps most notable, however, are the implications of ghostwriting on the literary industry. This is due to the fraught relationship between authorship and ghostwriting; indeed, there are issues of ethics and authorship found in how a hired ghostwriter embodies the voice of an author, performs the act of writing, yet receives little to no credit for the writing. There has been much discourse about how much power should be given to the author of the text and whether or not the hermeneutical process that readers undertake should contain more validity. Ghostwriting serves as an example of how a separation of the author from the text itself can birth new ways of writing; further, ghostwriting's position within a neoliberal economy illustrates how literature and publishing cannot be extricated from capitalism. The problem with perpetuating authorship as a concept with such slipperiness is that unethical writing practices, enforced and even encouraged by capitalistic agendas, can be sustained within the literary community. Ghostwriting is a complex example of these concepts at large.

The goal of this paper is to spotlight ghostwriting's particular ethical issues with authorship. I will begin with a broader discussion of authorship, noting two theories from Michael Foucault and Roland Barthes that advocate for a large separation of author and text,

disregarding authorial intention and focusing on the language's capabilities of making meaning from the side of the readers. This supports the exigence of ghostwriting as a literary profession, making it acceptable for an author to not actually write a text. I will move into a brief discussion of one of the more famous examples of literary ghostwriting, H.P. Lovecraft's "Under the Pyramids", written for Harry Houdini. Next, I will discuss ghostwriting's position in a neoliberal economy and delve into the ethics behind stand-in labor and the paradoxes connected to the estrangement and re-emergence of authentic authorial presentations of "self." Lastly, I will discuss how poetry subverts and challenges the authorial slipperiness that cultivates ghostwriting; indeed, poems are rarely ghostwritten because of their low marketability within an extremely capitalist economy, but they perhaps illustrate a more ethical engagement with literature and the affordances of language.

### **Authorial Slipperiness and Ghostwriting**

Ghostwriting as a profession and phenomenon cannot be fully explored without a discussion of authorship. The amount of autonomy afforded to an author over their text has been debated by many scholars. I will delve into two highly notable theorists arguing for a poststructuralist perception of authorship.

Roland Barthes' essay argues for a seemingly radical separation of author from the language comprising a text, believing that authorial intention and ownership are irrelevant.<sup>1</sup> He fully acknowledges the classic idea that an author nurses a text, "which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father

---

<sup>1</sup>Roland Barthes, "The Death of an Author," In *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 142-48.

to his child”<sup>2</sup> (Barthes, 145). He suggests that this is an antiquated perspective, however, and elucidates the notion that modern text and readers rely heavily on the present. This is all to say that the Classical Criticism approach to authorship and writing latches too much of what can be considered authorial “mess”, a contextual element of the author’s hovering presence that convolutes the language itself. Using Barthes’ logic, a text is too much defined by the personality of the author, how they’re perceived, and their lives. Classical Criticism allows for a art to be contaminated by external authorial context: indeed, art “is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh’s his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice” (Barthes, 143) rather than how a text is actually read by the objective reader. Language is given precedent, and for good reason; close reading, a vital act in the process of interpretation, requires zooming in on the text and relinquishing the control that the author so often projects onto it. Linguistically, the author is defined by the language, “just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*” (Barthes, 147).<sup>3</sup>

Despite a dense, complicated writing style, Barthes’ ideas are fairly simple, if not difficult to actually achieve. He argues for a more widely engaged openness to reading because assigning an author to a text “is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (Barthes, 147). I myself can acknowledge that the desire for a closed text disrupts the hermeneutical process of making-meaning on the reader’s end. In eliminating the author’s influence on a text’s reception, a text can be read and re-written by readers who can decipher the language in a less structured manner because “the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost” (Barthes,

---

<sup>2</sup> Throughout Barthes’ text, he engenders the author as male, using “he/him/his” pronouns. While not particularly vital for the purposes of this paper, it is worth noting that when I discuss authorship, I am not placing a gender on those who write.

<sup>3</sup> Barthes goes into a fairly deep discussion of linguistics as part of his support for his argument. The discussion of linguistics is both on the peripheral of the argument at hand and may add some confusion, but his point about the enunciation and the act of declaring is salient to the point that an author doesn’t actually hold that much weight.

148). If the reader is the embodiment of open reading practices, then they should be prioritized. Famously quoted, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes, 148), illustrates the radicalization of separating authors from text. Barthes’ argument of the death of an author quite literally allows for a practice like ghostwriting to occur. The ideology of separating the author from the text supports the emergence of ghostwriting as a literary gig job because it establishes the absence of obligation to give credit. If the text is what is most important, it is reasonable to believe that it doesn't really matter who wrote it.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, if the author is ostensibly less important than the language itself, the ethical slipperiness of ghostwriting is muddled.

Barthes’ argument seems too radical to be fully realized, but Michel Foucault expands upon his peer’s theory. Foucault understands authorship as a fluid concept within Western culture. Foucault suggests that one must not simply acknowledge the space left by the disappearance of an author from the context of the writing, but to “watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers.”<sup>5</sup> Foucault underscores the importance of the author’s name in coloring perceptions and receptions from the audience, creating a status that defines a discourse, “assuring a classificatory function.”<sup>6</sup> Ghostwriting is usually made possible by authors with literary notoriety; that is, authors with a reputation are the ones who require the utilization of ghostwriters. As aforementioned in my discussion of Barthes, there is an authorial noise that is a result of an author’s personal context and their name contributes to this. However, without the

---

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the aforementioned authorial context cannot truly be extricated from a text, even with the presence of ghostwriting. This is a literary job that doesn’t erase an author, but supports the ideology that a text should be prioritized no matter what hand is doing the writing; an author like James Patterson or Tom Clancy have a fan base and urgency to produce books, effectively creating the job for ghostwriters.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998) 209.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, “What Is an Author,” p. 210.

context of a name, ghostwriting may not even be possible. Foucault's theories don't go as far to say that an author and their context are completely irrelevant to the text's reception; instead, he posits a sacrifice of authorial individuality in the reading of a text to ensure the liberation of language. This means that there is still acknowledgment of an author's name, their established discourses, and their place and reputation within the literary community, but also necessary separation from the text. Foucault believes that through societal evolution, the function of the author will disappear and the text will work within different constraints; he ultimately visualizes a future defined by an indifference of authorial touch on the text, because, as he puts it, "what difference does it make who is speaking?"<sup>7</sup> This rationality is exactly what justifies ghostwriting within the literary landscape. A ghostwriter is the person who does the actual work of the writing, but the name of the author they work for are the ones who garner the credit for it. But, if authorship prevents the most effective interpretation of a text, it seems reasonable to advocate for the abandonment of classical authorship. The question of morality behind practices like ghostwriting is raised within the slipperiness of authorship that is developed by theorists like Barthes and Foucault.

In considering Barthes and Foucault's discussion of authorship and its relationship to ghostwriting, it is perhaps best to find anchorage within an example of ghostwriting in literature. "Under the Pyramids,"<sup>8</sup> a short story ghostwritten by H.P. Lovecraft for Harry Houdini, is a fictionalized account of an escape artist's experience of being kidnapped and left alone underneath the Great Sphinx of Giza. Underground, he discovers a large cavern full of mummies led by pharaohs who are leaving offerings to a large five-headed, tentacled beast. He escapes but

---

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, "What Is an Author," p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Sometimes this story is also referred to as "Imprisoned with Pharaohs."

dismisses the events as hallucinations or dreams due to the stress from the kidnapping.<sup>9</sup> This story was ghostwritten by Lovecraft for Houdini for the magazine *Weird Tales* for a sum of money. Houdini provided the idea and Lovecraft expanded on it with his own writing flare.<sup>10</sup> Like other horror writers, Lovecraft was interested in how tradition and folklore could be twisted into stories that encapsulate and hyperbolize social anxieties. Using historical material and consistent themes of travel, Lovecraft imbued fantastical, cosmic, and folkloric elements that made his writing easily identifiable.<sup>11</sup> For example, Lovecraft wrote for Houdini, “Accursed is the sight, be it in dream or not, that revealed to me the supreme horror—the Unknown God of the Dead, which licks its colossal chops in the unsuspected abyss, fed hideous morsels by soulless absurdities that should not exist.”<sup>12</sup> While written under Houdini’s name, this precisely-developed, well-tuned writing style is distinct to Lovecraft’s horror. This example illustrates what ghostwriting looks like more realistically outside of the conceptual frameworks that are birthed from theories of authorship, but an even deeper discussion of ghostwriting’s relationship to the literary economy is necessary to have a holistic understanding of ghostwriting’s implications.

---

<sup>9</sup> This is a brief summary of the text as the plot of the actual story is less important for the purposes of this paper; indeed, the actual process and concept of ghostwriting that occurred for Houdini is what proves salient for this paper. H.P. Lovecraft for Harry Houdini, “Under the Pyramids”, [hplovecraft.com](http://hplovecraft.com), 2010, <https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/up.aspx>, N.P.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the story of this, look at “Imprisoned with the Pharaohs”, [hplhs.org](http://hplhs.org), accessed March 19, 2021, <https://www.hplhs.org/dartiwp.php>

<sup>11</sup> For more on Lovecraft’s techniques and values as a writer, see Timothy H. Evans, “A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the Uses of Tradition in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft” *Journal of Folklore Research* no. 1 (2005): 99-135, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3814792>.

<sup>12</sup> H.P. Lovecraft for Harry Houdini, “Under the Pyramids”, [hplovecraft.com](http://hplovecraft.com), 2010, <https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/up.aspx>, N.P.

## Ghostwriting as a Gig Job

While H.P. Lovecraft certainly had the reputation and notoriety, most ghostwriting ventures contemporaneously fall to less-established writers. Ghostwriting is a type of freelance work that is done as a secondary source of income for many aspiring writers; for creators who haven't yet gained a reputation for their own creative work, ghostwriting provides a tempting and incentivized opportunity to utilize their skills of writing. The market for creative writing is, unsurprisingly, extremely competitive, so an opportunity to freelance write as a means of income is enticing. However, this type of freelance work does not attribute credit to the workers, presenting ethical issues. This can be partially explained by the neoliberalism that permeates the economy, and thus, literary markets. Michel Anteby and Nicholas Occhiuto define ghostwriting as a form of "stand-in labor", which is when a freelance worker does work to produce and sell a sense of self that is someone else's.<sup>13</sup> This type of work is a product of post structural neoliberal ideologies of self-branding. An author is required to think about their marketability and branding in order to reach a lucrative return on the dissemination of their creative work. When ghostwriters are brought into the mix, they are not only using their writing skills to transform an author's ideas into an actual text, but also to maintain and even develop an author's brand and perceived "authentic self." This labor of developing someone else's authenticity can prove costly to ghostwriters; indeed, "stand-in workers might prove particularly sensitive to not being able to showcase their contributions to others..." and further, "their future labor-market prospects could be restricted by lack of public recognition."<sup>14</sup> A ghostwriter experiences an estrangement from recognition, a cost that can outweigh the gain in many cases. This estrangement from credit for

---

<sup>13</sup>Michel Anteby et al. "Stand-in Labor and the Rising Economy of Self," *Social Forces*, vol. 98, issue 3 (2019): 1288, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3814792>.

<sup>14</sup>Anteby et al., "Stand-in Labor and the Rising Economy of Self," 1292.

the actual work on behalf of an author seems to warrant some form of ethical retribution, but the constraints of capitalism on the gig economy that ghostwriters exist in prevent any effective prosecution of these seemingly corrupt practices.<sup>15</sup>

Despite being an ethically convoluted situation, there are those who believe that creative stand-in work can actually benefit the larger economy and society. Creative social actors like freelancers, entrepreneurs, and artists are argued to enlighten upon a shift towards a re-embedding of the social in the economy. That is, creative self-entrepreneurial endeavors can work towards a coalescence of a social “aest-ethical” ideology and a neoliberal economy that can promote positive political change in the aftermath of financial crises.<sup>16</sup> Gig workers, who are usually inherently social, entrepreneurial, and creative, are being argued to be a step towards a convergence of the social and economic industries. It is a vision that “represents an ideal progression from fragmentation to coalition”<sup>17</sup>; in a neoliberal structure, there is a need to re-integrate society and the economy in productive ways, which can ostensibly be done most effectively by creatives who are resilient and sociable. This places stand-in workers like ghostwriters, who are freelancers, in a place of unexpected power within the literary community. If literary gig work can blend individual entrepreneurial work and a politicized collective consciousness that can be conducive to positive change, then there appears to be ample

---

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that not all ghostwriters experience this intense estrangement from recognition. Many authors advocate for the ghostwritten work, allowing the ghostwriter’s name to be attached to the work; some books even have both the author’s name and the ghostwriter’s labelled as co-writers. While I don’t have a first-hand account of the level of estrangement these ghostwriters feel, it is sensible to assume that they are less concerned about the ethical dilemmas described above.

<sup>16</sup> Alessandro Gandini et al. “Collaborating, Competing, Co-working, Coalescing: Artists, Freelancers and Social Entrepreneurs as the ‘New Subjects’ of the Creative Economy,” in *Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries*, ed. Gandini Alessandro and Graham James (London: University of Westminster Press, 2017) 15-32.

<sup>17</sup>Gandini et al., “Collaborating, Competing, Co-working, Coalescing...”, 28.



justification to ignore the ethical malpractices that subsume ghostwriting. For proponents of this theory, this kind of work is a “necessary step to found a political economy of creative work that moves beyond the—still necessary—critique of exploitation and precariousness and develops an intellectual and critical approach...”<sup>18</sup> This social-economic coalescence might be a profit of freelance work, but ghostwriting provides too much estrangement from recognition and creative freedom to have a noticeable social impact. With so much focus on an author’s public self, the lack of credit for the work elucidates a disjunction between the collective work that this perspective on the creative economy advocates for.

To return to authorship and its relationship to the neoliberal goal of branding authenticity, ghostwriting presents a paradoxical dynamic of stand-in labor. For ghostwriters, the recognition estrangement they experience cultivates a need for coping. There are several different ways of coping explored by scholars. First, a ghostwriter may find comfort and solace in the task of impersonating another author’s voice, as if inhabiting them the same way an actor does with a fictional character. Second, a ghostwriter may embody the subject’s voice and present the social self in a manipulated manner<sup>19</sup>; that is, a ghostwriter may subtly use the writing as a way to reach different audiences, promote different agendas, or add their own specific touches in order to “better” the writing and authorial image as they see fit. Ghostwriting simultaneously encourages the disappearance and reappearance of authorship, a process where the author profits off of the labor of the ghostwriter through the increased development of an authentic self. This is an ironic process because impersonation is made necessary to this call for authenticity. Indeed, the neoliberal “economy of self might therefore create a context in which the imperative to project

---

<sup>18</sup>Gandini et al., “Collaborating, Competing, Co-working, Coalescing...”, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Anteby et al. “Stand-in Labor and the Rising Economy of Self,” *Social Forces*, vol. 98, issue 3 (2019): 1287-1306, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3814792>.

authentic selves and the adulteration of selves are highly intertwined.”<sup>20</sup> This economy desires the presentation of authentic selves and perpetuates the need for stand-in laborers to perform on behalf of the author; the only reason ghostwriting continues to occur is because of the tight constraints capitalism puts on creative freelancers, prohibiting aspiring writers from having the freedom to only focus on the creation and presentation of their writing and their manifestations of selfhood. Ghostwriting continues to function as a prime example of how stand-in labor is necessary for the adulteration of authorial selves, revealing a fragile frayed-edge of neoliberalism. Perhaps a colloquialized practice of attributing credit to authorship, the simple act of allowing a ghostwriter to become a co-writer, might dissolve the need for a continued development of an authentic self within freelance writing. Looking at poetry, a genre of literature that is largely unadulterated, may provide insight to the benefits of foregoing authorial slipperiness, which would inevitably allow for the re-emergence of authentic authorship that is necessary to eliminate the ethical concerns I discuss.

### **Poetry and Ghostwriting**

As previously discussed, ghostwriting and other stand-in labors are sustained within genres of literature that have a slippery relationship to authorship. Genre fiction, the kind of cult horror that Lovecraft’s writings fall under, and personal memoirs<sup>21</sup>, the subject of ghostwriting that the Anteby study did their research with, are types of prose literature that ghostwriting is predominantly attached to. One area of literature that I found ghostwriting particularly absent

---

<sup>20</sup>Anteby et al., “Stand-in Labor and the Rising Economy of Self,” 1305.

<sup>21</sup> It’s interesting how prominent ghostwriting is with personal memoir writing, specifically within the sphere of celebrity authors. With a precarious line of authentic presentation, one might find it risky to leave it up to a third-party writer to develop this public perception of “self.”

from was the genre of poetry. It seems that a poet might find themselves being a ghostwriter, but a ghostwriter will seldom write poems in the name of another author. This begs the question of why notions of poetic authorship differ from that of prose literature?

The answer begins with the more intimate, authentic, and concrete nature of poetic authorship. Ghostwriting and other authorial slipperiness is not cultivated here because the market of poetry is niche with a general lack of capital produced by the genre as a whole. Unlike drama, scriptwriting, or even popular fiction, “poetry is not a commodity that can be sold on the auction block for profit.”<sup>22</sup> This has to do with exactly the type of capitalistic prerogatives that allow for ghostwriting in the first place. There is clear money in popular fiction, the easily-digestible, tame-formed stories that the masses readily consume. Poems are so often perceived as intense and difficult to excavate, which inhibits poetry’s ability to be exuberantly marketed to consumers. Similarly, the American capitalist economy and society places more priority on pragmatic information-gathering, such as business and tech industries, than on artistic ventures. With an ever-increasing desire for marketability, poetry is put on the backburner because “there has been throughout our history a strong anti-intellectual strain that is deeply suspicious of learning and the arts.”<sup>23</sup> In short, neoliberal capitalism has a difficult time fostering and appreciating creativity. There is an overwhelming enthusiasm for profitable uses of language, meaning that there is an omnipresent belief that language should be “practical, transparent, and disposable”, and an ignorance of attempts to explore and utilize language’s “opacity, ambiguity, or metaphoricity.”<sup>24</sup> Ghostwriting is a profession that toes the line of this

---

<sup>22</sup>David Bergman, “Marketing Poetry”, in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 22, no. 3/4 (2000): 211 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4338123>.

<sup>23</sup>Bergman, “Marketing Poetry,” 217

<sup>24</sup>Bergman, “Marketing Poetry,” 218

phenomenon, both adhering to capitalistic behaviors of profit and tapping into the capabilities of language.

Most poets rarely reach the level of reputation and readership necessary to make employing a ghostwriter affordable, let alone profitable. Further, it is reasonable to say that a poet's formal work with poems—the figurative manipulation of language through imagery, metaphor, enjambment, etc.,—is singular to those who willingly choose to engage with the laborious task of creating poems. This is to say that it might be reasonable to suggest that it is easier for a ghostwriter to inhabit the voice and style of a prose writer than a poet whose work is singular and niche. There have been many movements within the poetic community that suggest this formal work isolates poetry from other forms of art.<sup>25</sup> Despite pushes to obtain a larger audience, poetry remains less profitable than other genres. Thus, ghostwriting cannot flourish under the umbrella of poetry because there is simply no room between an author and the language. A poet cannot be estranged from the language because of the low marketability of the genre.

Contemporaneously, social media has subverted the above discussion, even welcoming the commodification of poems in ways new to the genre in order to produce profit. Social media sites like Instagram or Tumblr allow for a poet to reach broader audiences; furthermore, the subgenre of “Instagram poetry” is particular in its simplicity and digestibility, which also promotes the anti-intellectualism that hinders poetry as a whole. Publishers, traditionally soaked in capitalist constraints, have to modernize the way they perceive poetry's marketability; indeed,

---

<sup>25</sup> The movement discussed most widely is the Expansivist/ New Formalist poets. While tangential to the purposes of this paper, it should be noted that Bergman's review reveals the lack of success these poets have had, which is likely a result of the overpowering capitalistic grip on literature. For more of Bergman's specific thoughts on this, see David Bergman, “Marketing Poetry”, in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 22, no. 3/4 (2000): 212-222, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4338123>.

“the traditional gatekeepers of what is publishable and/or critically relevant have been circumvented through the Internet, and now publishers must look to online audiences to find what is popular and publishable.”<sup>26</sup> Rupi Kaur, author of popular instagram poetry books *Milk and Honey* and *Home Body*, provides the best example of this burgeoning phenomenon. Her books are confessional, feminist, and concerned with a youthful exploration of humanity. Paired with illustrations and other media, she communicates relatable ideas of selfhood to a large audience. Whereas poetry was casually perceived as intellectually inaccessible, Kaur presents herself and her poems to an audience as a way to obtain inner peace and that “she can pass [it] on to them, if only they buy her books.”<sup>27</sup> Kaur and other Instagram poets have been able to cultivate a brand that speaks to a wider audience, effectively forcing the publishing industry to reconsider the marketability of poetry; and if publishers are unable to do this, then these Instagram poets simply “bypass the traditional publishing industry and communicate directly to their readers”<sup>28</sup> through social media sites. It is a deft strategy that fosters appreciation for poetry while being profitable for the poet and the industry at large.

Despite this subversion, Instagram poetry is famously simplistic and ignores much of the precise formal work that defines poetry. Ostensibly, practices like ghostwriting might become more frequent with these Instagram poets because of the increased marketability and reception; still, it is hard to imagine a need for ghostwriting with texts incredibly easy to write. Furthermore, the ethical dilemma ghostwriting presents in regard to authorship transmutes into a different dilemma: are Instagram poems undermining the artistry of poetry and giving the

---

<sup>26</sup> Lili Pâquet, “Selfie-Help: The Multimodal Appeal of Instagram Poetry,” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 52, no.2 (2019): 299, <https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/jpcu.12780>

<sup>27</sup>Pâquet, “Selfie-Help...”, 299.

<sup>28</sup>Pâquet, “Selfie-Help...”, 311.

general public the wrong idea of what poetry should look like?<sup>29</sup> Perhaps poetry may continue to exist in niche literary communities (primarily within the realm of academia), but the beauty of poetry is the immense work that it put into the crafting of language. Artistry shouldn't be sacrificed for approachability because "great poets act in the service of the language which is its ultimate inspiration, instrument, and end."<sup>30</sup> The fact that ghostwriting may never permeate poetry as a genre surely means that poetry is written authentically, meaning that poets are already reaching the goal of authentic branding that many authors who use ghostwriters are striving for.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have honed in on ghostwriting's presence within literary practices, primarily because ghostwriting has an inherent and wrought relationship with authorship. Theories perpetuated by poststructural scholars like Barthes and Foucault advocate for a separation between author and text so that the language can be read without interference; this mode of thinking allows for gig jobs like ghostwriting to occur because the absence of authorial intent and name justifies having someone else write the actual text. Using H.P. Lovecraft and Harry Houdini as examples, I have illustrated the very real occurrence of ghostwriting within the literary community. I have also delved into capitalism's complicity in the ethical concerns involving ghostwriting. Stand-in labor, those who adulterate in the name of authenticity, might have positive consequences if the coalescence of the social and economic sectors can occur; still, the estrangement from recognition that ghostwriters experience may be too palpable, especially

---

<sup>29</sup> This isn't to ignore the triumphs of Instagram poetry. Indeed, this is a subgenre that has brought wider attention to poetry and given it a larger platform. Still, the pitfalls of the subgenre present new ethical concerns that won't be discussed in depth within this paper.

<sup>30</sup> David Bergman, "Marketing Poetry", in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 22, no. 3/4 (2000): 222 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4338123>.

when capitalism bestows tight constraints on them. Lastly, I discuss how poetry inherently subverts this phenomenon of authorial slipperiness and economic influence because of its low marketability and niche understanding of formal technique. Ghostwriting is separated from poetry, perhaps positively, because poets cannot estrange themselves from the language in ways that authors of other genres can.

Ghostwriting convolutes our perception of authorship within literature, serving as a viewfinder into the social and economic corruption that plagues stand-in labor. Throughout this paper, I have subtly hinted at a way to mitigate some of these issues. To put it plainly, ghostwriters should be given ample credit alongside the author in order to reconnect authorship to text and dismiss the moral ambiguities of stand-in labor. Honesty in attributing authorship pushes back against neoliberal capitalist publishing practices, but it may point us in the direction that poetry has always looked to: authentic, vibrant readings of language that isn't plagued with ethical contrivances. A more genuine reading of language, which is requisite in reading poetry, might just allow for the beauty and power of literature to resolve these peripheral issues. Ghostwriting may cease to exist prominently, but these writers would quite literally exit the capitalist purgatories they are placed in and become concretized as authors with a strong relationship to the literary landscape and the language that should ideally drive it.