



Celebrating Allies - part 3: Are you looking for a ghostwriter?

written by Sarita Fae Jarmack
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Today we continue our celebration of the Allies who handle much of the behind-the-scenes work that is needed to keep fan-bu-tastic (=fabulous meets fantastic) content appearing on our beloved website. Over the past two days we have celebrated our Managers of T & S - aka Ninnu and Andrea - and today and tomorrow we celebrate our language editors. As a general rule we are quite amazed to note that most of the content that we receive is very good to begin with, requiring very few linguistic edits.



Let this be a reminder to all of us Anthros: if anyone attempts to say that we are poor writers, just let them know that Allegra vehemently disagrees!

Yet, of course all texts benefit from an additional diligent pair of eyes which – in addition to exploring content – caressingly polish up any remaining hick-ups that the prose may continually entail. In this we have from the beginning been very lucky: we have benefitted from the expert eye of Marie-Louise Karttunen, whom we'll highlight tomorrow, as well as the diligent gaze of Sarita Fae Jarmack.

What needs to be also noted is that – because of the 'rogue kid' that Allegra is, remaining insistently outside established academic institutions – we continually run the website with no outside funding. In practice this means that also Sarita and Marie-Louise volunteer us their work, something that we appreciate immensely and can only treat as embodying genuine dedication toward academic pursuits.

We mention this also for the following reason: if in the near future we approach you again for funds, you'll know why! It would be so nice to be able to compensate these fabulous Allies for the work that they put in for the website, thus helping to spread 'anthropological gospel' to the world!

Here to celebrate Sarita we share a post that she wrote for us on (some of) her experiences as an editor, a post first published in April 2015. Have you every sent out that email – or thought about it?

Dear Academics: Are you looking for a Ghostwriter?

Time is ticking and though your confidence is dwindling with blank pages, your office and every other room is getting cleaner. Anxiety sets in, confusion, and your self-inflicted isolation leaves you treading water in a vast academic sea.



Finally, your fingertips meet the now spotless keyboard. In complete desperation they type out a few words and across the glowing screen now reads:

"Can you write this for me?"

.... [sip of cold coffee]... and send.

Is this you? Probably not, but if it is, don't worry I don't know you. However, I am the one receiving these notes and adverts. They can be found all over freelance websites and editing pages. The following is one from oDesk, which can receive 10-40 bids from willing writers around the world.

Qualified Academic Writers Wanted



Hourly - Intermediate (\$\$) - Est. Time: More than 6 months, Full Time - Posted 4 hours ago

I am looking for someone who can produce A-quality academic work for students at American universities. Knowledge of the thesis-body-conclusion academic essay model is a must. ... [more](#)

Client: ★★★★★ Skills: [Accounting](#) [Article Writing](#) [Business Writing](#) [Essay Writing](#)
[Financial Accounting](#) [Research Papers](#) [Technical writing](#)

Having conducted my own research, written a thesis and obsessively revisited my data for conference papers, I began officially offering editorial services to other academics and researchers in 2012. This includes all the normal editing stuff along with detailed feedback on argumentation, structuring and the importance of storytelling. I also make myself available to discuss content or analysis (much like you would with a colleague or supervisor) and with a background in education and international settings I offer tutoring for ESL writers.

It is a pleasure to mingle in the crevices of minds and ideas, delicately urging critical thought as the authors and I work together to development their writings. It has provided insight into various systems and how they and its scholars crank out journal papers, dissertations, and books. However, mostly shared are the insecurities, lack of resources and pile of flaws that line our academic systems - a



driving motive for many to keep *the email* at their fingertips.

Mushing ideas together can obviously be an incredible experience, and necessary when working with abstract processes of thought. We all have different motivations for pursuing higher education and sometimes we need assistance articulating and forming ideas, especially across languages. Most of those I work with usually approach me with these motives, however it is after a few meetings or edits, sometimes panicking, when I most frequently experience *the request*. As a short-term solution, some offer to tag on a little extra cash, while others requests PhD dissertations for \$100 USD or a research proposal for \$50. First, I am always utterly baffled at how an editor does not take insult to a priced offer of this sort; much less undergo the task of writing a dissertation. However most importantly noted, paper writing cannot be made into a thing of immediate, instantaneous production. It is a slow process, a tool, to help organize our thoughts, knowledge, ideas, combining them with those already created for those that are to be created. It is a creative process, a platform to showcase, explore, learn, and develop through. And, if you don't have an idea for a proposal nor can attempt to write one, I urge you to question your pursuit in this very long journey ahead of you.

The public doesn't seem to mind a practice of ghostwriting (if you want to call it that) amongst politicians, celebrities, and busy CEO's. Even if the public finds out it was not actually written by the named author, they are quite [forgiving](#). However, higher education assumes those writing under their name, have organized the knowledge themselves. Which is then peer reviewed or graded – determining if you, the person who has the name on the paper can be accredited with the process of generating it. When using a ghostwriter, you did not. Or as Forbes contributor on Business Communication [Cheryl Conner](#) puts it, “The ethical breach is asking an imposter to create material and then pretending that it was written by the person who hired the ghostwriter.”

While I cannot morally or financially afford to write the papers, I am curious about the individual's motives and how our academic systems support or drive



these actions. And where have we developed this idea that dissertations are anything less than the slowest of processes? Why are we going outside our institutes, away from supervisors, to ask questions about the 'one way', the 'right way' that data should be written about? Why are researchers approaching me with these propositions? While some of our Allies have dug deeper into necessary topics on [publications](#) and our [academic systems](#) to address these concerns, I urge a reflection on what is being gained by having work written or maybe more detrimentally what is being lost when not writing it.

Simply put, if this original creativity in our academic writings are extracted, what is left?

So, as the one receiving your ghostwriting requests for your dissertations and journal articles, my response is this:

1) Make a cup of tea.



2) During tea, exercise getting amazed at stuff.

Try reading your tea box (its contents travelled around the world twice just to make it to you - from where? Have you been there; what is in it; what information has the company made available to you; what are the words you don't know? Taste it. Is it any good; how do others prepare it?)

3) Start small, but start. Apply the same 'tea curiosity' to sections of your writing projects. What, who, where - maybe Google the face of that long ago inventor,



scholar, activist. Were they bald? What did they like to eat; what failures did they learn from?

4) Have another cup of tea. Wander and daydream with thoughts on how you get to form/write words and ideas that connect you and your existence with others – then do it.

5) Lastly, muster up all the courage you possibly can and slip your paper to someone for feedback. (This is when you send me your work!!).

WARNING: Obviously, all of this takes a lot of time and tea!

As our systems and its ideas around publishing, productivity, and creating continue to drive actions like *the email*, there too will always be someone out there that will ghostwrite work for a price. But as someone concerned with the dynamics of academia as a whole, I want to acknowledge that there is also always someone out there that will want to do **more** than write it. As we play with ideas, create space, assist each other in our curiosity, we fumble into creating. That's where I'm told all the good stuff happens; where life happens. With a slew of circumstances that foster a space hardly supportive of slow processes, are we not all still responsible for the delicacy of our own mind, thoughts, and dignity? I suppose if part of higher education, of academia, of education it comes down to what we as individuals and as a whole are in pursuit of... is *the email* the answer?

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