

MAILER'S JOURNEY INSIDE THE CIA WITH *HARLOT'S GHOST*

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FOLLOWING ON THE 2018 MAILER SOCIETY CONFERENCE THEME of metaphors of place in Norman Mailer's work, this paper specifically focuses on how Mailer offers metaphors of place in his 1991 novel *Harlot's Ghost*. The novel develops metaphors of "place" that are geographical and architectural, but Mailer also explores "place" as the privilege of position in social class and in U.S. government bureaucratic hierarchies. The inside place in *Harlot's Ghost* is the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency or CIA. As a place for secret government, the CIA has haunted the thoughts of Americans since its inception after World War II. How Mailer builds his narrative around the metaphor of the "ghost—which according to *The Secret Book of Intelligence Community Humor* by Edward F. Mickolus means "to float among offices while awaiting a permanent position" (62). Mailer also plays on the commonly used American slang word for a spy, "spook." I will discuss Mailer's metaphors of place especially in connection with his novel's repeat suggestion that the CIA is sheltering a "mole"—a metaphor commonly used to describe a spy who is suspected of leaking secrets from inside a secure official place. Mailer's use of such metaphors, I argue, is to a considerable extent why the novel succeeds at showing the mid-twentieth century CIA and its upper-echelon agent mindsets during the Cold War.

METAPHORS OF PLACE

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the primary current theorists of metaphors, have argued, and proven through research, that "our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured" (Lakoff and Johnson 56). They describe the significance of metaphor in terms of the everyday use of

language, but they also detail how theoretical language employs metaphor, such as the language of politics and economics. Lakoff and Johnson explain that theories and arguments use building metaphors when, for instance, one describes “the foundation” of a theory or “the form” of an argument (Lakoff and Johnson 46). For Mailer, metaphors of place are sometimes literary language, sometimes arguments applied to frame reality as exactly as it is possible for a writer like Mailer to do. With his metaphors of place, Mailer can continue an ideological journey to probe and shape ethical positions, doing what Lakoff and Johnson have noted can be done by those accomplished in the use of such metaphors:

Political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors can hide aspects of reality. But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by virtue of what it hides, can lead to human degradation. (Lakoff and Johnson 236)

Mailer seems completely aware of potential ethical pratfalls in his use of metaphor. He consistently offers metaphors, including cryptonyms and nicknames for people and places, which show how CIA insider knowledge compounds the desire for secrecy and degrades the ghost. To get at the forbidden knowledge, Mailer takes it upon himself to be the literary mind ghostwriting a fictional agent’s memoirs, granting himself access into the motivations of intelligence officers colloquially called ghosts or spooks and, in the interest of freedom, revealing their mysterious conversations. By comparison, more recently than Mailer’s ideological efforts, Jonathan Potter has argued that in general, for the people involved in such ideological or literary conversation or argument, “what is in the narrative is there for its role in building a moral identity” (Potter 174). To a social scientist like Potter, any future construction of credible reality depends on accepting that what is external can be known; reality is discoverable, existing independent of anyone’s inside or secret knowledge. As a scholar I think Potter’s view should be able to hold in writing about government matters; that is, I think covert operations are or should be discoverable and the public should resist when any select government-insider group proposes that they must guard such secret

information. But as a literary fiction writer, Mailer asserts the opposite, which is that to overcome governmental barriers to public knowledge only the writer's imagination is needed, to at least speculate, if not discover, what secrets are hidden. In his Author's Note in the novel's afterword, Mailer asserts:

It is a fictional CIA and its only real existence is in my mind, but I would point out that the same is true for men and women who have spent forty years working within the Agency. They have only their part of the CIA to know, even as each of us has our own America, and no two Americas will prove identical. If I have an argument to make, then, on grounds of verisimilitude, I will claim that my imaginative CIA is as real or more real than nearly all of the lived-in ones. (Mailer 1285–1286)

Mailer may be time bound theoretically by insisting on such a view of social reality and knowledge construction. However, his insistence that he be allowed to create a fictional CIA that should be accepted as one CIA reality helps to explain why he offers so many scenes and dialogues of characters engaged in licentious and immoral behavior along with numerous reports and letters that are hard to decipher and provide inadequate knowledge of American intelligence history.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON *HARLOT'S GHOST*

There have been mixed reviews about whether *Harlot's Ghost* succeeds as a literary novel. Generally, since its publication year of 1991, as scholar David Rampton notes in a 2006 *Journal of Modern Literature* article, "Plexed Artistry: The Formal Case for Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost*," many critics have decried "the book's length, its shapelessness and its generic eclecticism" (Rampton 49). For example, Mailer was criticized by Richard Rorty for depicting the CIA as "pervaded by hypocrisy and self-deception," which Rorty considered "leftist thought" (qtd. in Rampton 48). Additionally, *New York Times* reviewer John Simon took personal issue with Mailer, asserting that in this novel "the author of '*Harlot's Ghost*' does come across as a punch-drunk writer trying to outbox all competition, real or imaginary" (Simon n.p.). Simon was obviously poking fun at Mailer's love of boxing, turning Mailer's dedication to the sport into a pun on his pugnacious writing style, but he

was also willing to insult Mailer, as though trading punches, saying that *Harlot's Ghost* reflected Mailer's "penchant toward paranoia" (Simon n.p.). Other reviewers who have felt entitled to a no-holds-barred approach to criticizing this novel have been considered by Alexander Hicks, in his *Mailer Review* study "*Harlot's Anatomy*." Such criticism of Mailer seems to me to be based on already-formed opinions about his stance as an American intellectual or literary figure, rather than consideration of the extent to which Mailer accurately reflects how the U.S. intelligence community obsessed over Cold War fears about leaks of classified information. However, I do agree with the critics that the novel suffers from being too long. J. Michael Lennon, Mailer's recent biographer, notes that the book is "longer and more detailed than any of Mailer's other fictions" and that "the novel's several lines of action never really coalesce" (613). In my opinion, it would be improved if the more than four hundred pages Mailer devotes to the CIA's alleged involvement in events leading to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy were cut. The character Molene (note the feminized play on "mole") appears to be modeled on women known to have been intimate with JFK in the 1950s and early 1960s, especially Judith Exner. The fictional Molene is an airline attendant who penetrates positions of power through her ability to attract powerful men, whether in organized crime or in elected officialdom. While at no more than mid-level, Mailer's protagonist CIA agent Harry Hubbard meets Molene in a hotel bar and eventually asks her to marry him. Overall, the fictional romance comes across as a contrived character meet-up to let Harry Hubbard be the representative CIA personnel working in Florida, like real-life CIA agent Cord Meyer, Jr., who allegedly was involved with the CIA's Cuba-related operations in Florida, hiring and protecting people who came to be considered to have known or done something that lead to JFK's assassination. Mailer unconvincingly turns Meyer's real-life cultivated contacts into fictional character Harry's rapt belief in Molene's pillow talk about Mafia and White House trysts. Mailer's ruminations on how the CIA pandered to mobsters and American-Cuban connections conspiring to kill Fidel Castro, and the possibility of that hub causing JFK's assassination, seem like a structural sidetrack, about which he devoted an entire novel, *Oswald's Tale*, written immediately after *Harlot's Ghost*. Showing how consumed Mailer was with JFK's assassination, this section, in my view, nonetheless intrudes on Mailer's solid eight-hundred pages that always return to the potential for an undetected mole to be inside the U.S. intelligence community.

MAILER'S BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Rampton suggests that, in the meager scholarly discourse on *Harlot's Ghost*, the common view is that there is "a relative lack of material about how the book is put together" (Rampton 50). This view at first seems to overlook the four pages of works Mailer gives as his sources in the book's bibliography. Alternatively, it may suggest that critics do not feel it should be necessary to read the material Mailer cobbled together from so many fiction and non-fiction sources. It might be impossible for scholars who are not interested, as am I, in spies and intelligence history to dedicate the time to enjoy *Harlot's Ghost* in terms of how the source texts inform the narrative. In my view, a perusal of only a few of the works in Mailer's bibliography make evident how such texts directly inform his narrative and supply *Harlot's Ghost* with character models. Indeed, this aspect of the novel was noted by Christopher Hitchens, who interviewed Mailer in the October 1991 issue of *VOGUE* magazine, shortly after the publication of *Harlot's Ghost*. Hitchens' lead-in states that "Mailer has read an enormous library of CIA literature, from the memoirs of the defector Philip Agee to the bluff testimony of the former directors." Mailer justifies his own credibility versus that of his sources in the Author's Note:

To a degree, it could be said that my comprehension of the CIA comes from books I have reinterpreted for myself quite as much as from works that informed me more directly. The result, and this is all I will claim, is that I have given the reader my sense of what the Agency may have been like from 1955 to 1963, at least as seen through the eyes of a privileged young man who grew up in it. (Mailer 1285–1286)

Mailer's belief that the CIA looked at the world through the eyes of a privileged young American may be directed at many of the bibliography's biographical sources, all of which make clear that they entered the CIA from privileged backgrounds. I suggest it is possibly also a glaring comment on the typical agent's political position that is derived from the biography of Cord Meyer Jr., who was shot in his left eye during combat in World War II and thereafter could only see the world with his right eye. Within the bibliography, Mailer makes a point of starring the books that persuaded him on his view of the CIA; Meyer's published works are listed but not starred. Earning

Mailer's star first alphabetically is Agee's excoriating tell-all, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, which the former CIA agent published in 1975 from his by-then permanent exile outside the United States. I also believe that *The Master Spy* by Phillip Knightly, about the British mole Kim Philby, is important to have read to understand how Mailer relied on such sources to create his ambivalent and conflicted spy characters in *Harlot's Ghost*. Rampton requested that "those who think *Harlot's Ghost* one of the noteworthy literary creations of our time can now get on with explaining what we can learn from it" (Rampton 61). To oblige, I think the novel can be explained as Mailer's effort to reflect the documented official paranoia about intelligence failures and the potential that unknown moles were hiding while working inside U.S. government intelligence buildings.

MAILER'S SUCCESSFUL FORAY INTO CRITIQUING THE CIA

Mailer's critical stance on mid-twentieth century CIA activities can be substantiated as having validity by comparing the views expressed by Loch K. Johnson, a scholar of U.S. intelligence history, who spoke to the intelligence community in Washington following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Addressing 9/11 as a U.S. intelligence failure, Johnson compared it to earlier intelligence failures, concluding, "for a wide span of time between 1975–1995, counterintelligence did not receive the attention it warranted from intelligence managers and overseers" (Johnson 2001). Instead of bolstering counterintelligence as it should have, Johnson argued, the U.S. Congress during that twenty-year period had sought to redress the damage the CIA had caused between 1956–1971. Johnson proposed that this 1956–1971 period of failure had first been identified in a series of articles appearing in the *New York Times* from October–December 1974. Journalists had investigated how the CIA had abused its power over those years by covering up the extent to which it had spied on American citizens domestically as well as on foreign citizens and governments overseas. Johnson then elaborated:

In the midst of these allegations, Congress passed the first major law to institute tighter supervision over the CIA: the Hughes-Ryan Act. This law was designed to strengthen executive and legislative control over covert action, the most aggressive form of intelligence in which the CIA attempts to manipulate events abroad through propaganda, political, economic, and paramili-

tary operations. . . . From 1975 on, America's support for a muscular, unbound intelligence capability would have to compete with another value that had long invested the rest of the government, namely, liberty—the safeguarding of the American people against the power of their own government, not just foreign governments. The nation's leaders began an unprecedented experiment in trying to balance security and liberty with respect to the secret agencies. . . . The Era of Trust had relied on an attitude of benign neglect by overseers, a “don't ask, don't tell” approach shattered by the investigative findings of the Church Committee and the Rockefeller Commission. Beginning with implementation of the Hughes-Ryan Act and carrying on until the Iran-*contra* expose in 1987, lawmakers, presidents, and DCIs attempted during the Era of Uneasy Partnership to fashion a workable relationship between democratic openness and effective spying, between liberty and security. (Johnson 5–7)

Considered from its perspective of 1991 rather than from the terrible realization of failed intelligence learned in 2001, Mailer's novel represents a major American author's imaginative decision to hold the entire U.S. government accountable for Cold War covert operations, which were justified by the intelligence leadership as necessary to stop the spread of Communism. The novel also exhibits awareness of the later hindsight efforts by the U.S. Congress to assuage the public's residual uneasy feelings about such covert practices. In *Harlot's Ghost*, Mailer portrays fictional CIA characters as blind to the potential for such demands from the American public. Very little of the late twentieth-century faltering decision-making and second-guessing that, according to Johnson, haunted the CIA in 2001 is in Mailer's novel, which is why I think it should be considered to succeed as a novel bent on showing the mentality in place in the CIA in the mid-twentieth century.

MAILER'S TAKE ON AN AUTHENTIC CIA AGENT

Mailer begins *Harlot's Ghost*, in the year 1983, with the lead character Harry Hubbard preparing to travel to Moscow with a manuscript he has written about his covert career experiences. Through a series of flashbacks, the narrative then tells about Harry's childhood, schooling, and all the stages to his work at CIA, beginning in 1948 and extending to 1965. Harry's arrival in

Moscow in 1984 provides the novel's conclusion. In relation to real, documentable U.S. intelligence history, Mailer's Alpha-to-Omega beginning and ending with the years 1983-1984 years may have special significance, because those years edge toward but stop just short of the highly publicized "Year of the Spy" in 1985, when eight US government employees were revealed to have spied for foreign countries. None of those extensively publicized real or alleged spies from 1985 is mentioned, by name or by their real or alleged acts of espionage, although any one of them could have contributed to offering a solution to the mystery of the unknown mole in the novel's denouement. Mailer ends *Harlot's Ghost* with the words "To Be Continued." It seems to me an obvious conclusion that, since Mailer could have continued his mole theme with any of those sensational cases, he intentionally chose his end date of 1984 so as not to include the revelations in 1985, ultimately preferring *Harlot's Ghost* irresolution. Given that the novel is Mailer's longest at more than 1300 pages, Mailer must have realized that he already had too many earlier real-life stories about suspected moles and CIA agent betrayal to incorporate those that emerged in 1985, which is known to be the year he began writing *Harlot's Ghost*, describing it to friends as a "spy novel" (Lennon 607).

When concentrating on the mole plot, Mailer tells a well-developed generic tale about certain CIA officials' purported activities and their inclination to abuse their authorized access to restricted places and top secrets. Mailer satirizes Harry as the scion of a Maine family, who succeeds at getting a workaday position in the U.S. government by relying on his family and school ties. Harry gets inside the CIA by always following the advice from his father, who is himself in the CIA, and from his father's best friend and both Hubbards' ultimate boss, Hugh Montague, who is codenamed "Harlot." Montague is also Harry's godfather and the Hubbard family's relative through marriage to Harry's third cousin, Kittredge, a woman whom Harry also loves. That Montague is his guide into the CIA's higher reaches, and its hidden depths, is illustrated through an elaborate scene utilizing metaphors of place that derives in part from Dante's *Divine Comedy* and in part from Mailer's shared knowledge of both rock and social climbing. While in his teens, Harry is taught rock climbing by Montague, who takes him to a demanding rock face. In the extensive scene of climbing, following, and relying on Montague's guidance, Mailer renders a Dantesque experience, with Montague (a mountain of pain, in rough translation) the hoary-headed Virgil figure bringing along young Harry:

One's fears on the rock soon gain proportion. If one does not take the lead like Montague, but is belayed from above by a good climber, it soon becomes clear that you can afford on occasion to fall. Unaware my first time up of such relative security, I made every move as if a mistake might be my death. (Mailer 153)

Flush with the feeling of achieving success, Harry looks ahead to an avocation of climbing for the rest of his life's journey, until Montague asks him to back down from this individualized plan. Nonplussed, Harry accepts Montague's counsel, abandoning any thought of attaining such future success on his own. Mailer makes clear that the metaphor of the rock climb means that control over Harry's life and career will always be *en groupe* and beyond his individual grasp. He can only succeed through "relative security," which is offered by his father and a godfather who will always be above, guiding him and, at times, pulling him up. Another who also provides him with "relative security" is his cousin Kittredge, who by marrying Montague also earns a career in the CIA. Kittredge becomes Harry's elusive Beatrice. Early in the novel, we learn that Harry will eventually marry Kittredge, but the consummation of his ideal love for his cousin is realized only when Harry's career in the CIA is all but over.

Harry, new to his CIA career, realizes the necessity of relative security when he receives a cable from Bill Harvey, a bombastic character in the novel but also a real-life American CIA station chief in West Berlin during the 1950s. In his first assignment, the fictional Harry is an entry-level code clerk at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, going by the cryptonym CLOAKROOM. Fictional Bill Harvey asks CLOAKROOM to find out more about a German agitator named Wolfgang. Harry bungles the job, from Harvey's long-distance viewpoint. Much afraid of Bill Harvey's power to report his failure as a career-ending dereliction of duty, Harry decides to tell his father and his godfather about his worries that Harvey will find out he is the employee behind the cryptonym. Harry is able to escape an investigation because Cal Hubbard and Hugh Montague know how to give Harry relative security. They invent a trail of fake cryptonyms that lead away from CLOAKROOM, thereby creating enough degrees of separation between CLOAKROOM and Bill Harvey to protect Harry's career. Then they make sure that Harry's first overseas assignment is in Berlin, where Harry can distract Har-

vey from tracking down CLOAKROOM's identity while working under Harvey's very nose.

During his assignments, Kittredge is his cousinly pen pal, but eventually Harry's letters seem to be reports that bypass the sign-off process. The great care Kittredge takes to set up an anonymous post-office box address and create a "cut-out" stage for receiving Harry's letters does suggest that the two may be circumventing standard reporting procedures.

In comparison to Harry's fictional relatives offering security, Mailer's non-fiction sources had varying degrees of family help in getting their covert jobs, but Mailer chooses to emphasize any nepotism offered in the biographical accounts. He also borrows from them to emphasize his characters' hang-ups about such family leverage. Knightley identifies an intergenerational Freudian type of father-son conflict as having been a psychological block for Kim Philby and Agee also mentions a difficult decision made not to follow in his grandfather's and father's business. Both moles resorted to alcohol and had marriage problems and divorces. For other comparison, the self-portrayals in notable spy memoirs that Mailer read, such as those by American CIA personnel such as Cord Meyer, Jr. and E. Howard Hunt, show they made major career decisions only after drastic family dynamics forced them to do so. For example, Meyer gives prominence to the despairing effect of losing one of his sons when a car hit the boy as he was running across the road outside their house. Hunt seems to have both succeeded and floundered as an enlisted man during World War II by serving repeat stints the Army and the Navy in New York and Florida until his father asked old friend Bill Donovan to give his son a job at the Office of Strategic Services. Replicating such narratives, Mailer applies this genre's style, which is stoic and earnest in mood yet often opaque, as if the author cannot help but continue to classify his messages but occasionally permits himself to reveal causes or give credit where due. Mailer adopts the style of intertwining expressionless and extensive intelligence reporting with emotive and terse personal confessions, as though his character Harry's digressions on his family and personal distractions represent the normal style of spies. By so often writing such everyday prose in *Harlot's Ghost*, Mailer conveys how in real life American agents deal with personal needs, family-life pressures, and career-employment duress, more than covert-job dangers.

Mailer further authenticates Harry as an ordinary covert agent by drawing on Agee's real life story for Harry's professional trade talk. For example,

Mailer takes from Agee the CIA terms “witting” and “unwitting.” Mailer obviously considers the terms to be worthwhile to his narrative overall, since he uses “witting” seventeen times and “unwitting” three times. Unfortunately, he does not explicitly define them or make their meaning clear, so that up to twenty long passages begin to read as if Mailer is making an effort to expand his vocabulary, since the words that conventionally mean nothing more than “aware” or “unaware.” Consequently, Agee is a required reference to appreciate that Mailer is using special CIA terms, with “witting” meaning a person who consciously knows they have a relationship with the CIA and “unwitting” meaning a person who is not fully aware or informed during such contact. As Agee explains:

The vehicles for grey and black propaganda may be unaware of their CIA or U.S. government sponsorship. This is partly so that it can be more effective and partly to keep down the number of people who know what is going on and thus to reduce the danger of exposing true sponsorship. Thus editorialists, politicians, businessmen and others may produce propaganda, even for money, without necessarily knowing who their masters in the case are. Some among them obviously will and so, in agency terminology, there is a distinction between “witting” and “unwitting” agents. (Agee 64)

The idea abounded from the mid to late twentieth century that the CIA “ghosted” many press releases and books as well as co-opted many journalists, artists, and scholars, making such American intellectuals, along with the readers of such material and any foreign counterparts, to some extent “witting” of CIA activity. Therefore, Mailer could be doing nothing more than suggesting that such complicity itself creates wooden prose, but by not being explicit about such terminology-laden writing, at times the prose seems to be less creative and original than usual for Mailer. As one example, near the conclusion of the novel, Harry Hubbard recalls how his early boss in Berlin, Bill Harvey, bragged to him, “I am the man who uncovered Philby,” and Harry replies, “We are all witting of that” (Mailer 1277). By not giving readers his Agee-derived insider knowledge that “witting” is a CIA trade term, the dialogue seems contrived. Mailer thus deprives the reader of understanding when insider conversations are underway that reveal time spent

on the job learning and discussing the agent characters' ethical responsibility and ability to keep secrets or protect identities. Once again, Mailer's decision to keep the reader in the dark may be his intention, in order to create the sense of deprivation that he believed the US government was creating among the American public.

Moreover, Mailer treats the theme of intense paranoia at all levels about unidentified leaks and cloaked moles at CIA by placing Harry's Berlin assignment in 1956. There were heightened tensions between the Soviet Union and the American-British alliance that year, the result of the Soviets' discovery of the Allies' tunnel under Soviet Army headquarters that was designed to eavesdrop on the Soviets' communications in East Berlin. Historically, it is now known that the Soviets had been informed about the tunnel from its planning stage, a secret revealed by George Blake, a real-life Soviet mole within British intelligence. But the Soviets intentionally remained silent until the tunnel was finished in order to embarrass the Americans and British with their public protestations. An epistolary musing by Kittredge offers the hint that the American CIA leadership were unwitting and incapable of doing preventative counterintelligence—or alternatively, perhaps capable and witting, letting the eventual compromise occur through nonchalant negligence: "Hugh feels the Russians are preparing deceptions on a grand scale, and the Berlin tunnel, for example, may have been stage-managed by a KGB mole in MI6 from the beginning. Of course, I don't know when my poor ice-climbing goat is going to find time to mine that Berlin mountain of files. He has so many urgent tasks" (Mailer 501). This excuse that bureaucracy made a mountain out of a molehill in Berlin, or was unable to sight a molehill until it was a mountain, seems to be Mailer's consistent point of view on the CIA during the Cold War.

Mailer also continually creates situations where Harry Hubbard's own trustworthiness becomes a question mark. It is not just that Harry is overtly suspected of being a mole early on by the likes of Bill Harvey. Over the years Mailer shows how Harry has encounters with both women and men, usually social and professional at diplomatic-type functions, but sometimes in bedrooms for sex, sometimes at apartments and golf courses for friendship, where he may be handing over secrets during those rendezvous through dialogues and interpersonal interactions that potentially have different layers of meaning. Then, in a last-minute turn of events, Harry ventures into speculative thoughts about who could have been a mole inside CIA and offers the

reader the unanticipated thought that his godfather Harlot could have been one. Harry at the end appears “witting” of Montague. Furthermore, Mailer makes it seem that Harry actually likes Montague better for having possibly been a Soviet mole. On the whole, Mailer’s suggestive ending is very elusive as to what any reader’s sympathy should be for such a final but almost totally new idea of Harlot. It is also unclear if or why Harry himself may be sympathetic to the idea that his godfather, his life and career guide, got away with being a mole because he is projecting his own nefarious deeds onto his mentor. This ending ultimately does not explain why privileged insider Mainiacs, who have shown no ideological motivation like Agee or Philby had in opposition to capitalism and insider privilege, would have wanted to spy for the Soviet Union. Mailer emphasized their powerful background and rich family connections so much that, in my view, potentially persuasive reasons for why such bureaucrats turn into moles, such as their salaries needed to be supplemented or that they were being blackmailed into hiding their peccadilloes, are not given adequate countervailing treatment.

For many readers, there is a strong sense of dissatisfaction about the shadowy places that Mailer has forced his reading audience to visit when the novel comes to a full stop with the “To Be Continued” last line. Hicks gives good insight on what Mailer was doing to give such “artistically calculated ambiguity” at the end (218), believing that the conclusion can be “viewed as a series of forward looking questions” (219). In addition, I suggest that Mailer intentionally closed with his “To Be Continued” double-cross (since he never continued the novel) to leave hanging the existing questions of the unresolved actual suspicions that secrets were escaping and that there were moles yet to be found within the US government intelligence community in the early 1990s.

In fact, Mailer’s decision to end with such a trailed-off false promise has turned out to be amazingly prescient. First in 1995, CIA agent Aldrich Ames was captured, and then in 2001, FBI agent Robert Hanssen was likewise arrested, convicted, and sent to prison for spying for the Soviets for many years. As a result, when scholars now analyze and interpret *Harlot’s Ghost*, they need to add to their literary approaches some intelligence history and insider-Washington bureaucracy knowledge, the way Mailer’s bibliography shows he did to write this novel. During the late twentieth century, the specter of undetected moles haunted the corridors of power inside the Washington intelligence community and especially inside the CIA. Mailer

stoked his creative fires to ensure that at least one independent American writer recorded that historical fear trembling inside the warrens of the U.S. government. Since significant moles in the U.S. intelligence agencies were discovered so soon after the publication of *Harlot's Ghost*, Mailer's decision to dig metaphorically into the CIA's history was not merely a writer pursuing his own paranoia. Mailer took it upon himself to probe into real bureaucratic concerns. Finally, *Harlot's Ghost* should be viewed as not just literary fiction or historical fiction, but Mailer's original foretelling of actual moles in place in the U.S. government.

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