

Jane Fonda's Antiwar Activism and
The Myth of Hanoi Jane

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This thesis examines Jane Fonda's antiwar activism during the Vietnam War, focusing on the period from late 1969 through 1973. Her early activism was characterized by frequent protests against the war, speeches at antiwar rallies and college campuses, and involvement with the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War. In 1971 Fonda organized an antiwar troupe, FTA, which performed antiwar songs and sketches to active-duty servicemen in America and Southeast Asia. Fonda's notorious trip to North Vietnam is examined in detail, as are her comments in 1973 regarding American POWs. Negative reaction to Fonda's activism is examined, and the myth of "Hanoi Jane" is traced from its wartime origins through its postwar evolution. The John Kerry-Jane Fonda photograph incident of 2004 is reviewed, and treated as a symptom of decades-long anti-Hanoi Jane ideas, rather than an isolated incident. Fonda's gender, the media's treatment of her at various stages, and her own missteps all receive consideration in determining where Jane Fonda ends and the myth of Hanoi Jane begins.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents,
Catherine and David King,
and my brother, Matt.

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Introduction: “Hanoi John Kerry”

In February 2004, after John Kerry had become the front-runner for the Democratic nomination, two Vietnam-era photographs of the Senator surfaced. Both photographs showed Kerry at antiwar rallies, both photographs received the attention of television news, the blogosphere, radio shows, and newspapers across the country; most importantly, both photographs featured not one famous face, but two; the presidential candidate appeared – and was soon associated – with one of the most admired, most controversial women of the Vietnam era: actress-turned-activist Jane Fonda.

The first photograph surfaced due to the efforts of Ted Sampley, a retired Green Beret who ran “a Web site for veterans devoted to defeating John Kerry.” Sampley told the *New York Times* that he had “spent months looking for a photograph of Mr. Kerry and Jane Fonda.” In early February, he received an anonymous email offering to sell him a photograph. In this undoctored photograph Fonda is seated several rows ahead of Kerry at a 1970 Vietnam Veterans Against the War rally at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Sampley paid the \$179 requested by the anonymous emailer, posted the image on his website, and watched as the photograph went viral online.¹ Within days, the *Washington Times* ran the photograph in its pages. The accompanying article in the conservative newspaper was predictably harsh in its treatment of both Fonda and Kerry. Headlined “Photo of Kerry with Fonda enrages Vietnam veterans,” the article asserts that Kerry’s “association with her 34 years ago is a slap in the faces of Vietnam War veterans.” One veteran is quoted as saying that Jane Fonda is “someone that is so notorious and hated by veterans,” and that

¹ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Conservatives Shine Spotlight on Kerry’s Antiwar Record,” *New York Times*, February 13, 2004.

Kerry's participation in the antiwar movement "was possibly the worst thing he could have done to the soldiers still in the field... He basically gave aid and comfort to the enemy."²

The next day, newspapers across the country passed on news of the photograph to their readers, all the while editorializing and embellishing Fonda's story. On February 12, Madison Wisconsin's *Capital Times*, referring to Fonda by the epithet "Hanoi Jane," informed readers that Fonda, as an antiwar activist, had visited the North Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, in 1972. America was still at war with North Vietnam, but this did not prevent Fonda from "[criticizing] the American government over Hanoi radio." The newspaper went on to assert that Vietnam veterans remember her – unkindly – for one act in particular: "dressing in Viet Cong combat fatigues and mugging for TV cameras as a Communist sympathizer while thousands of U.S. soldiers were dying in the jungles of Vietnam."³ In this one sentence, the paper managed to misrepresent Fonda's trip, the infamous Hanoi photograph, and even the state of the war in Vietnam when Fonda visited Hanoi.

In the first place, she was wearing traditional Vietnamese clothing, not combat fatigues. No video or photograph of the incident indicates that she was mugging; if anything, Fonda seems unaware of and unconcerned with the photographers. Calling Fonda a "Communist sympathizer" at the very least misconstrues the thrust of her activism and her Hanoi trip; she was in North Vietnam to document an illegal act of war – the bombing of North Vietnam's dike system. Prior to this trip, Fonda had spent over two years working in the antiwar movement, most often with veterans and active duty GIs – not communists. Finally, at the time of Fonda's visit, American ground troops were all but withdrawn from Vietnam. In July 1972, the last combat unit was preparing to leave Vietnam; not to be confused with the Vietnam War of the late 1960s,

² "Photo of Kerry with Fonda enrages Vietnam Veterans," *Washington Times*, Feb 11, 2004.

³ John M. Glionna, "Republicans drag out photo of Kerry and 'Hanoi Jane,'" *Capital Times (Madison)*, February 12, 2004.

thousands of American soldiers were not fighting and dying in Vietnam's jungles.⁴

Had the "Hanoi Jane" tales been confined to a few local papers, or the Fonda-Kerry connection been limited to a lone, innocuous photograph of the two, rows apart, in a large crowd, the impact would have been negligible. However, the Fonda-Kerry photograph quickly went national, and within days the half-truths espoused by a careless journalist would seem tame compared to the deliberate "visual lie" crafted by Kerry's political enemies.

On February 13, *NBC News* ran a story titled "The Vietnam War is Still a Major Issue in American Politics." The voice-over notes that John Kerry, while in the United States Navy, won a Bronze Star, Silver Star and three Purple Hearts, then continues, "but what Kerry did after the war – denouncing it – even appearing with the antiwar activist derisively dubbed Hanoi Jane – won't go away either." The accompanying visual is the photograph of Fonda, sitting and listening at the Valley Forge rally, with Kerry several rows behind her – his face circled in white. The news story then informs viewers that "The conservative weekly *National Review* [has concluded that] 'John Kerry... helped to slander a generation of American soldiers.'" Next, NBC cuts to an interview with *National Review* editor Mackubin Thomas Owens, who asserts that Kerry wronged fellow veterans by "tarring them as committers of atrocities, rapists, murderers."⁵ Notably, this news story used the Fonda connection as a segue to criticize Kerry as a foe of the American soldier. Equally notable, the story never mentions Jane Fonda by name; she is referred to, exclusively, as "Hanoi Jane."

The same day, the *New York Times* reported on the existence of a second Fonda-Kerry photograph. In an article titled "Conservatives Shine Spotlight on Kerry's Antiwar Record," the

⁴ Mary Hershberger. *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon* (New York: New Press, 2005), 82.

⁵ "The Vietnam War is Still a Major Issue in American Politics," *NBC News*, February 13, 2004, http://www.nbcuniversalarchives.com/nbcuni/clip/5115453633_s07.do (accessed May 31, 2011).

paper, while noting that the picture's origins are unclear, nevertheless describes the new, implication-filled image: the two activists are "side by side, Ms. Fonda behind a microphone and Mr. Kerry, holding a notebook, to her right."⁶ The *New York Times* was one of the more esteemed news outlets to report on the spliced image. The article explains that Kerry's alleged association with Jane Fonda could hurt his presidential campaign because Fonda "still draws the ire of some veterans."⁷ Notably absent from this article is any mention of Fonda's Vietnam-era work with veterans; similarly, the article also neglects to contextualize the antiwar activities of a young John Kerry, and the tens of thousands of veterans who joined him in opposition to the war.⁸

While the article acknowledges that the authentic photograph of Fonda and Kerry was taken two years prior to Fonda's Hanoi visit in 1972, the implication remains that, for a presidential candidate, the slightest association with Fonda poses a serious problem – even when the candidate was both a decorated war hero and a well-known and outspoken antiwar activist in his own right.

The fake photograph was exposed as such within days.⁹ On February 14, New York's *Newsday* became "the first major paper to blow the whistle on the Kerry forgery." This disclosure was carried in other papers, including the *Berkeley Daily Planet*, which called the image "a forgery that suckered the *New York Times*."¹⁰ The California paper continued to take the *Times* to

⁶ Stolberg, "Conservatives Shine Spotlight on Kerry's Antiwar Record."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ In his study of VVAW, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War*, Andrew Hunt notes that the organization had "chapters in all parts of the country," and its member mailing list numbered in the "tens of thousands." Andrew Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 1-2.

⁹ Among those who spoke out against the forgery was photographer Ken Light, the man who took the Kerry photograph and still has the original negative in his file cabinet. Light wrote a piece for the *Washington Post*, accompanied by the two original photos. He explains that his photograph was taken at a peace rally in New York on June 3, 1971; the Fonda photo is from a rally in Florida, occasioned by the Republican National Convention of August, 1972. Light, who teaches a course on "Ethical Problems in Photography" also points out that the caption below the photo, including an "AP Photo" credit is also "a lie." Ken Light, "What's fake... what's real?" *Washington Post*, March 3, 2004.

¹⁰ Richard Brenneman, "Kerry Photo Altered, Used for Political Attacks," *Berkeley Daily Planet*, February 17,

task, describing it as “the most illustrious media outlet to be taken in,” before comparing the splice job to the “forgeries Stalin’s minions concocted” and noting that the fakery first appeared on partisan websites and the conservative *Newsmax*.¹¹ *Berkeley*’s Richard Brenneman is clearly suggesting that the *New York Times* neglected to do its homework before giving the fake a publication boost in a national paper. Brenneman goes on to note that “even before the *Times* published [their] story... Snopes.com, a website devoted to exposing urban legends, had correctly labeled the creation a forgery, tracking down and posting the original photos used to create the composite.”¹² A final denunciation of the *Times* story brought former veteran and prisoner of war Senator John McCain into the fray, for McCain had previously described Ted Sampley, the man who created the anti-Kerry website, as “one of the most despicable people I have ever had the misfortune to encounter.”¹³ Notably, this fact-checking journalist, writing from the liberal Bay Area, nevertheless contributes to right-wing, anti-antiwar myth-making. According to Brenneman, Fonda, during her trip to Hanoi, was photographed “[urging] soldiers to shoot down the ‘American imperialist war raiders’ who were bombing Hanoi.”¹⁴ Only Brenneman knows where this quote came from. A Google search of the term “American imperialist war raiders” (in quote marks) turns up four results – all of them links to Brenneman’s article. Given that nearly everything Fonda said in America – and over Radio Hanoi – was recorded by the FBI and subsequently made public in an effort to discredit her, it is highly unlikely that Fonda ever said the words Brenneman encloses with quotation marks. This incident exemplifies a trend that antiwar movement historian Mary Hershberger has identified. She writes, “since the war in

2004. See also Michael Rothfeld, “Less Than Picture-Perfect: 1971 photo of Kerry doctored,” *Newsday*, February 14, 2004.

¹¹ Brenneman, “Kerry Photo Altered, Used for Political Attacks.” *Newsmax* is a prominent right-wing news website; its contributors include David Limbaugh, brother of the inflammatory radio personality, Rush Limbaugh; Pat Boone and Bill O’Reilly.

¹² Brenneman, “Kerry Photo Altered, Used for Political Attacks.”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Vietnam, noisy right wing charges have back-washed into the public memory and pervaded media reporting.”¹⁵

While the Brenneman article featured some dubious sourcing, it correctly exposed the “visual lie,” as did countless other news organizations in the days that followed. Given that the faked image had been utterly discredited within the week – the *New York Times* acknowledged the forgery on February 14 – one might expect that the photograph, the Fonda-Kerry linkage, and the revived interest in “Hanoi Jane” would, accordingly, lose steam. However, the notion that Fonda and Kerry had been traitorous comrades gained a life of its own.

National Review offered an early indication that the Fonda-Kerry linkage – and the vilification of both for their frequently misrepresented antiwar activism – would not quickly be dispelled. On February 18, four days after mainstream media exposed the forgery, an article appeared on the *National Review* website, titled “Hanoi Jane Memories: Some vets are not fonda John Kerry.” Its author, Anne Hendershott, took aim at both Fonda and Kerry – despite the fact that the only documented connection between the two was a photograph of Fonda seated several rows ahead of Kerry at a pro-veteran anti-war rally. Hendershott asserted that veterans remember how Kerry and Fonda portrayed “Vietnam War veterans as sadistic soldiers willing to torture and maim innocent civilians.” In making this assertion, Hendershott refers to the Winter Soldier Investigation, charging that Kerry’s statements were “so extreme that even contemporary critics of the Vietnam war have disputed his outrageous claims.”¹⁶ In fact, the Winter Soldier Investigation, organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), featured testimony from over one hundred veterans from the Army, Navy and Marines; dozens of veterans discussed

¹⁵ Hershberger, 185.

¹⁶ Anne Hendershott, “Hanoi Jane Memories: Some vets are not fonda John Kerry,” *National Review*, February 18, 2004. <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/209552/hanoi-jane-memories/anne-hendershott> (accessed March 20, 2011).

methods of torture routinely employed by American servicemen, and testified to their own complicity in incidents of violent rape and other atrocities.¹⁷ After the investigation, a shocked John Kerry said “there was a lot of stuff I hadn’t heard... there was a lot of rough stuff out there, and it blew some of my images. I mean, it shattered some of my conceptions.”¹⁸ Kerry, rather than accusing fellow soldiers of atrocities, had his own conceptions “shattered” by revelations at the hearing. When Kerry referred to this investigation in his testimony before Congress in 1971, he stated that veterans, “honorably discharged, and many very highly decorated,” had “testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia.” He then listed some of the crimes that veterans had testified to in Detroit.¹⁹ Kerry may have relayed the disclosures of the Winter Soldier Investigation to Congress, but he was hardly the only veteran to discuss the horrors of Vietnam at the inquiry in Detroit. Moreover, not a single testimony offered in those hearings has been debunked, discredited or disproven by any of its critics.

The author of the *National Review* article, Anne Hendershott, lives in Waterbury Connecticut, where the crew for Fonda’s movie *Stanley and Iris* encountered the daily protests of a handful of veterans during the 1988 filming. Hendershott observed that, as of 2004, “more than a decade after the Fonda movie controversy in town, you can still spot the bumper stickers on Waterbury cars with the slogan ‘We’re Not Fonda Hanoi Jane.’”²⁰ Hendershott appears to overstate the hostility towards Fonda that once emerged in Waterbury. In 1988, the organizers of the protest, Frank Fabbri and Guy Russo, lamented to the *New York Times* that the half-dozen demonstrators were a “sad” turnout, especially when the actress was “being mobbed by 200

¹⁷ The Winter Soldier Investigation was an inquiry into war crimes in Vietnam. It was held in Detroit, Michigan in January of 1971.

¹⁸ Quoted in Gerald Nicosia, *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans’ Movement* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 91.

¹⁹ John Kerry, “A Vietnam Veterans Opposes the war” in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008), 413.

²⁰ Hendershott, “Hanoi Jane Memories.”

starry-eyed extras.” The 1988 article goes on to contrast Fonda’s popularity and generous charity work with the meagre demonstrations against her. Fonda spent one night at a fundraiser that attracted 2,500 people, was hosted by a “local veterans group, Vets Who Care” and “raised \$27,000 for the handicapped children of Agent Orange victims.” The previous night she had helped raise \$10,000 at a literacy fundraiser.²¹ Few protestors were mobilized during the film shoot, and the majority of veterans who did protest, like Fabbri and Russo, were veterans of World War II, not Vietnam. However small, the Waterbury film shoot was nevertheless covered extensively by the national media, and it became the most visible protest against Fonda in the entire post-Vietnam era; the fact that veterans were involved in the protest has allowed commentators, like Hendershott to characterize Fonda and antiwar activists like her as “radical and most unpatriotic.”²²

The *National Review* article was hardly the last of the 2004 election cycle to link Fonda and Kerry, and to express anger over both activists’ antiwar stances. Letters to the editor from across the United States revealed an intense anger over the remote tie between Fonda and Kerry.²³ One letter-writer commented that John F. Kerry’s middle initial “must stand for Fonda, as in Hanoi Jane Fonda. Maybe we should call him Hanoi Jack”; another letter to the editor suggested with horror that Kerry, if elected, might make his first cabinet appointment “Secretary of Defense Hanoi Jane Fonda.” Yet another called Kerry “the male Hanoi Jane,” and charged that Fonda and Kerry traveled and protested together, calling soldiers “child killers”; the angry writer

²¹ Nick Ravo, “Jane Fonda Finds Peace in her Time,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1988.

²² Hendershott, “Hanoi Jane Memories.”

²³ The only connection between Fonda and Kerry was the organization VVAW, and it was at a VVAW rally that the authentic picture was taken. Notably, Fonda was primarily associated the organization in 1970, before and during the Winter Soldier Investigation; though Kerry attended the investigation, it was *after* WSI that Kerry “[assumed] a major leadership role in the organization.” Nicosia, 98. After the photographs were released in 2004 Fonda told the press, “Any attempt to link Kerry to me... is completely false. We were at a rally for veterans at the same time. I don’t even think we shook hands.” Glionna, “Republicans drag out photo of Kerry and ‘Hanoi Jane.’”

then christened the democratic candidate “Hanoi John Kerry.”²⁴ These letters set the tone for a nationwide display of intense hatred toward Fonda – or, more accurately, the image of the traitorous Hanoi Jane that increasingly threatens to eclipse Fonda and her actual Vietnam-era activism. Though Fonda’s activism was largely focused on supporting veterans and active-duty GIs, and though her antiwar speeches were publicly exonerated by the Justice Department, she was nevertheless vilified in newspapers across the country in letters to the editor. One letter bluntly states, “Jane Fonda is a soldier-hating actress,” while another calls her a “bloody traitor.”²⁵

These letters, together with the articles written by journalists in February 2004, illustrate several trends in contemporary depictions of Jane Fonda, the antiwar movement, and the Vietnam War. Many of these trends began during the war years, appeared to have moderated by the mid-to late-1970s, and have since re-emerged with a vengeance. For example, characterizations of antiwar activists as degenerates, radicals and “bums” were not uncommon throughout the decade-long American involvement in Vietnam, and 2004 was not the first time that Fonda’s name was linked with the words “treason” and “traitor.” Yet, such labels were not widely used in the decade immediately following the war’s conclusion. These epithets from the war years were revived and vigorously propagated in the late 1980s – the same years that Hollywood was turning out revisionist fantasies of Vietnam, such as *Rambo II* (1985), *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987), *Rambo III* (1988) and the *Missing in Action* franchise.

In addition to the resurgent Vietnam-era elements, other themes that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s had little precedent in the actual war years. In respect to Fonda, two trends that have

²⁴ “Valley Soundoff,” *Valley Independent* (Monessen, PA), June 11, 2004; Darrell E. Wilson, “Fears of the future from the past...,” *Gatesville (TX) Messenger & Star Forum*, June 2, 2004; Don Ketchem, “Hanoi John Kerry,” *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, CA), June 23, 2004.

²⁵ Rudolph Zona, “Kerry a ‘turncoat,’” *The Post-Standard* (Syracuse, NY), February 27, 2004; James M. Martino, “Letters,” *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, CA), July 21, 2004.

emerged in recent decades are not reflective of the Vietnam era. The first is the name “Hanoi Jane.” Fonda did indeed travel to Hanoi in 1972, and the term first appeared that same year in a small number of publications. However, the name “Hanoi Jane” did not catch on in the 1970s; along with epithets like “Hanoi Hannah” and “Hanoi Rose” – both of which were applied to Fonda in 1972 – “Hanoi Jane” seemed destined for extinction by 1975.²⁶

Secondly, although animosity towards Fonda certainly existed in 1972 and 1973, amongst some Americans on the home front and a small number of POWs who may have listened to her broadcasts, veterans as a whole never vilified Fonda. The thousands of veterans who were members of VVAW did not resent her activism on their behalf, and the crowds of GIs who went to see her antiwar troupe at GI coffeehouses were, by all accounts, appreciative of Fonda’s efforts. The American public in general was not antagonistic towards Fonda; in the years after Vietnam, she continued to be a top box office-draw, and was consistently listed as one of America’s “most admired women.” For example, Fonda was named one of the ten most admired women in America in a 1976 *Redbook* poll – just one year after the war ended. Through the 1980s, she continued to appear near the top of similar lists, whether conducted by professional pollsters or women’s magazines.²⁷

Closely related to the myth that Fonda was a much-hated anti-soldier, anti-American figure – in short, that she was Hanoi Jane – is a second myth. As the articles of 2004 illustrate,

²⁶ According to the extensive newspaper database, www.newspaperarchives.com, the name “Hanoi Jane” appeared 61 times in American newspapers in 1972, 31 times the following year, and nine times in 1974. By 1975, “Hanoi Jane” failed to appear even once; the trend continued in 1976. Over the next ten years, “Hanoi Jane” was used an average of just 5.5 times each year. In 1987-88, there was an explosion of “Hanoi Jane,” with 52 mentions in 1988 alone. (The reasons for this increase will be explored in Chapter 9.) This number was topped twice more: during the First Gulf War in 1991, and in 2004. These two years saw, respectively, 83 and 62 references to “Hanoi Jane;” in both cases the number exceeded that of 1972 – the year Fonda went to Hanoi.

²⁷ According to Gallup polls in the 1980s, Jane Fonda and Barbara Streisand were the two actresses with the highest “marquee value,” as audiences indicated these were the two female stars they would make a special effort to see on-screen. Joseph Carroll and Jeffrey M. Jones, “Julia Roberts Is Top Current Movie Star, While John Wayne Is All-time Favorite,” Gallup, March 23, 2001. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1870/Julia-Roberts-Top-Current-Movie-Star-While-John-Wayne-Alltime-Favorite.aspx> (accessed March 21, 2011).

Fonda has recently been depicted as someone who was both a key representative of the antiwar movement and one of its most extreme leaders. Like “Hanoi Jane,” this notion of Fonda as both a central antiwar figure and an extremist is similarly contradicted by the historical record. Fonda became active in the antiwar movement *after* it had shed its radical elements and was on its way to becoming a more centrist movement. Antiwar movement historian Charles DeBenedetti has noted that by 1970, when Fonda became an activist, radicalism within the antiwar movement had begun to wane and “militant extremism” had “spun off on the periphery.” Between 1970 and 1972, as “street actions” diminished, “antiwar dissonance expanded through the population and escalated among the nation’s elite.” Thus, Fonda was much closer to mainstream America than critics concede, both in the timing of her disillusionment, and the limited extent to which the movement she joined in 1970 was considered “radical.”²⁸

When contextualized by contemporary events, Fonda’s antiwar activism, which began in earnest in 1970 and did not abate until the war’s end in 1975, did not evince anti-American thinking nor extreme tactics. Considered alongside the widespread disenchantment with the war and the public’s participation in events like the Moratorium of 1969, harsh criticisms of the war by leading publications, the more overt activities of other activists, and the illegal and covert government repression of respected and even pacifist activists, Fonda’s antiwar years hardly seem extreme. Perhaps the best example of Fonda’s lack of remarkability is the fact that many Americans went to Hanoi; like Fonda, some were criticized upon their return, but many were not. Yet, by 2004, *none* were vilified – nor even mentioned – on a par with Fonda, who, by then, had been irrevocably crowned “Hanoi Jane.”

²⁸ Charles DeBenedetti, Charles Chatfield, assisting author, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 3, 298.

Chapter I: Looking at Jane Fonda, Thinking about Hanoi Jane

In April 2005, thirty years after the Vietnam War ended, Jane Fonda's autobiography, *My Life So Far*, hit bookstores. The book was well received, and Fonda embarked on a tour of the United States, hitting the talk show circuit and autographing thousands of copies at book signing events.²⁹ At a book signing in Kansas City, a Vietnam veteran waited in line for 90 minutes. When he reached the front of the line, he handed Fonda a copy of her book, and then "spit a large amount of tobacco juice into her face." Fonda was then 67, the man ten years her junior. Fonda continued to sign books, telling organizers that she was fine. After all the books were signed, Fonda, who declined to press charges, said, "in spite of the incident, my experience in Kansas City was wonderful and I thank all the warm and supportive people, including so many veterans, who came to welcome me last night." The tobacco juice-spitting veteran, Michael A. Smith, told the media that he had planned to spit in Fonda's face and had no regrets. He added, "For a lot of us, the war will never end. And our war with her will never end."³⁰

Though few observers would argue that Fonda deserved this level of debasement, many journalists during the previous year's presidential campaign, when Fonda's alleged ties to Kerry emerged as a controversial issue, did imply that veterans were justified in vilifying Fonda. A small number of letter-writers went so far as to suggest that she be executed for treason. These letters, some written by veterans, describe Fonda as a dangerous extremist, call her "Hanoi Jane,"

²⁹ The *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed that *My Life So Far* "belongs alongside the memoirs of Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Marilyn French and Katharine Graham... To hold this book in your hands is to be astonished by how much living can be packed into sixty-plus years." Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* called it a "sisterly, enveloping memoir... an intimate, haunting book," and *O: The Oprah Magazine* recommended the book as "fiercely intelligent, detailed, probing, rigorously revealing." Randomhouse.ca <http://www.randomhouse.ca/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780739319857&view=print> (accessed June 8, 2011).

³⁰ "Police: Veteran Arrested For Spitting On Jane Fonda: Fonda Declines To Press Charges," KMBC.com, April 20, 2005, <http://www.kmbc.com/news/4396975/detail.html#ixzz1OAFdaMhf> (accessed June 2, 2011).

and, like Smith in Kansas City, accuse her of being a “traitor,” asserting that “she cost the lives of a lot of good men.”³¹ What, exactly, did Fonda do during the Vietnam War to earn the enmity of veterans?

According to journalists in 2004, Fonda “donned Viet Cong combat fatigues,” “[mugged] for TV cameras as a Communist sympathizer,” and “posed atop an anti-aircraft gun as if waiting for a chance to shoot down U.S. warplanes.”³² According to primary documents from the 1970s, Fonda did none of these things. The more instructive question might be, where does Jane Fonda end and Hanoi Jane begin?

In 1972 Jane Fonda was known as both a Hollywood actress and a committed antiwar activist. She had already worked extensively with the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), providing most of the funds for their 1970 inquiry into war crimes, the Winter Soldier Investigation.³³ In 1971 she had toured America and Southeast Asia, performing for GIs at off-base coffeehouses with the antiwar troupe FTA, which included actor Donald Sutherland, singer Holly Near, and comedian Dick Gregory. She had separated from her apolitical first husband, French film director Roger Vadim, and had recently and quietly begun a relationship with activist Tom Hayden, who would become her second husband. Though Fonda’s most recent film was socially critical, and she had begun her involvement as an activist in late 1969, print journalism remained primarily interested in Fonda’s appearance, relationships and fashion choices until late 1970, when Fonda was arrested at the Cleveland Airport on charges of drug

³¹ Ibid.

³² Dotty Lynch and Steve Chaggaris, “Washington Wrap,” *CBS News*, February 12, 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/02/13/politics/main600176.shtml?tag=mncol:lst:5> (accessed June 4, 2011); John M. Gilonna, “Republicans drag out photo of Kerry and ‘Hanoi Jane,’” *Capital Times*, February 12, 2004; Deborah Orin, “John Kerry in the Jane Gang – Kerry and Fonda Pictured at 1970 Viet Rally,” *New York Post*, February 12, 2004.

³³ Hunt, 61.

smuggling. The “drugs” turned out to be vitamins; Fonda was carrying them in vials labeled “B,” “L,” and “D,” for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. After the arrest, Fonda’s activism, which included fundraising, visiting GI coffeehouses, and speaking at public rallies, received greater attention, but her words were often ignored. Journalists were as likely to comment on Fonda’s lack of make-up as to quote anything she had said. That would change in mid-1972, when Fonda’s words would be pored over by the CIA, quoted by Congressmen, and included in briefs for President Nixon to read.

In July 1972, Fonda paid a now-infamous visit to North Vietnam. The purpose of her visit was to document the American bombing of North Vietnam’s vital dike system – a fact the White House continued to deny at the time of Fonda’s trip. While behind enemy lines, Fonda went on Radio Hanoi to plead with American pilots to think about what they were doing, and was photographed fraternizing with North Vietnamese soldiers and sitting on an anti-aircraft gun. While this event created waves at the time, the public response did not come close to the vitriol that erupted in 2004. It was not until 1973 that Fonda appeared to offend American sensibilities on a large scale. Comments that she made to the *New York Times* regarding American POWs ignited a backlash that included angry letters to the editor in the nation’s most read newspapers, and a debate among Maryland legislators as to whether Fonda ought to be executed or merely have her tongue removed. According to primary sources from the 1970s, it was the comments of 1973, not the 1972 trip, that inflamed public opinion against her. Notably, while the 1973 comments made Fonda controversial, she was not viewed then, nor in the decade that followed, as someone who could tar reputations by association. Yet, by 2004, in the minds of journalists and letter-writing Americans, Fonda’s Hanoi visit of 1972 had rendered her, in the public imagination, an anti-soldier, war-losing, un-American traitor; in short, Hanoi Jane.

The mythic “Hanoi Jane” has only recently come under investigation by scholars, who are interested in her evolution, her recent currency as a polarizing entity, and the forces behind the anti-Fonda backlash. Carol Burke explores Hanoi Jane within military culture in her book *Camp All American, Hanoi Jane, and the High and Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture*. Burke, a folklorist, professor, and former instructor at the United States Naval Academy, discusses the institutionalized hatred of Fonda as a modern incarnation of the age-old myth of “the seductive woman who turns out to be a snake.”³⁴ Burke demonstrates that the hated Hanoi Jane is every bit as useful to today’s military as she was during the Vietnam era. New recruits, “who weren’t even born when Fonda spoke out against having US troops in Vietnam... learn that being a real warrior and hating Jane Fonda are synonymous.”³⁵ Though Burke touches on important themes in her study of Hanoi Jane within military culture, she discusses Hanoi Jane within the wider civilian culture only briefly.

The major work on the “Hanoi Jane” narrative is Jerry Lembcke’s 2010 book *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal*, which explores the myth of Hanoi Jane in the context of wartime *femme fatales* throughout history. Lembcke, a professor of sociology and a Vietnam veteran, has previously written on the myth of antiwar protestors spitting on returning veterans. He discusses the Hanoi Jane myth as it relates to other post-Vietnam efforts to rewrite the history of the war. Lembcke clearly distinguishes between Hanoi Jane – a myth, undocumented by credible sources – and Jane Fonda, the person and public figure whose actions have been recorded by newspapers and government documents over the decades. Given that Lembcke is primarily focused on the construction of the Hanoi Jane myth, he spends little time detailing

³⁴ Carol Burke, “Why They Love to Hate Her.” *The Nation*, Vol. 278, No. 11 (2004), 16.

³⁵ Burke, “Why They Love to Hate Her,” 14.

Fonda's actual history in the movement. As one reviewer noted, *Hanoi Jane* "is not a narrowly focused effort to compare the 'real' Jane Fonda to the image of 'Hanoi Jane.' Rather, Lembcke shows how Fonda's demonization played an important part in a powerful right-wing campaign to attribute American defeat in Vietnam to left-wing scapegoats..."³⁶ In addition, Lembcke provides crucial information and insight into why "Hanoi Jane" has become increasingly galvanizing with time, and he links this myth to other post-Vietnam myths that have similarly been constructed by historical revisionists.

Complementing the recent scholarship on "Hanoi Jane" is historian Mary Hershberger's 2005 book, *Jane Fonda's War: A Political Biography of an Antiwar Icon*. This is the first book primarily concerned with Fonda's political years and her contributions to the antiwar movement. Though Fonda has frequently appeared in antiwar histories, particularly those focused on the GI or veterans movement, there has been no antiwar history that focused on Fonda as a central figure.³⁷ Works concentrating on Fonda herself have been undertaken largely by biographers.

Fonda's biographers – almost all male – tend to focus extensively on her early life, her early acting career – studying with Lee Strasberg in New York and working in Hollywood – and her life with Roger Vadim in France. Her biographers have been overwhelmingly concerned not only with *Jane* Fonda's film career, but also with the lives and careers of her famous father and brother. These male-authored biographies include long digressive passages about Henry Fonda's film career and what old cronies have said about him. There is also a persistent tendency for these authors to portray Fonda's early career and her life with Vadim positively, to be critical of

³⁶ Christian G. Appy, Review of *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal*, University of Massachusetts Press, http://www.umass.edu/umpress/spr_10/lembcke.htm (accessed June 4, 2011.)

³⁷ Two prominent books that cover the veterans' movement in detail are Andrew Hunt's *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* and Gerald Nicosia's *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans' Movement*. Both monographs detail Fonda's work with VVAW, most notably her fundraising efforts for the Winter Soldier Investigation. Fonda also figured prominently in the documentary of the GI movement, *Sir! No Sir!* (2005). For a broader history of the antiwar movement, see Charles DeBenedetti's *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*.

and largely uninterested in her activism, to be pointedly negative about Tom Hayden, and to celebrate Fonda's return to a successful Hollywood career.³⁸

Scholars interested in Fonda have also focused largely on her film work. However, in contrast to the Fonda biographies, the more scholarly, academic articles on Fonda are typically written by females interested in evaluating her film choices based on her professed feminism.

Mary Hershberger's *Jane Fonda's War* (2005) thus departs from the film-oriented, male-authored biographies and the film-oriented, female-authored scholarship, for it is unequivocally interested in Fonda's antiwar activism. Hershberger traces Fonda's emerging concern with the war, beginning in the late 1960s, and details her various activities within the movement. This narrative ends in 1975, the year the last Americans were evacuated from Saigon. Hershberger then analyzes Fonda's "legacies" from the standpoint of 2005. While the decision to focus only on Fonda's movement years provides for a concise history, in eliminating three decades of history, Hershberger has neglected to fully contextualize Fonda's legacies, which have evolved substantially in the intervening years. While Hershberger's subsequent analysis is insightful, and while she makes reference to some events of the past 30 years, the reader does not learn of Fonda's fluctuating public persona nor the shifts in American society since 1975, both of which help explain the ambivalent perceptions of Fonda that were brought to the surface in 2004.

One drawback of *Jane Fonda's War* is the author's obvious desire to rehabilitate Jane Fonda; as a result, primary sources that would paint Fonda as less-than-perfect are not considered. Another drawback is the fact that Hershberger's consideration of the Hanoi Jane myth is somewhat limited. *Jane Fonda's War* nevertheless remains extremely useful as a detailed

³⁸ Jane Fonda's biographers have included the following men: Thomas Kiernan, whose published the first Fonda biography in 1973, Gary Herman and David Downing (1980), Fred Lawrence Guiles (1982), Michael Freedland (1988), Bill Davidson (1990), Christopher Andersen (1990), Tom Collins (1990), and Sean French (1997). The focus on Fonda's film career, rather than her activism, is not entirely surprising, given that all of these men are celebrity biographers.

chronology of Fonda's wartime activism. It also provides a lone female perspective in the canon of Fonda biographies, most of which have been infused with – not only a male voice, but a male gaze.

Two further monographs merit consideration. The first is Jane Fonda's autobiography, published in 2005. While subjective, this monograph is crucial to any study of Jane Fonda, for it provides key information about otherwise unknowable events. For example, Fonda's trip to North Vietnam in 1972 received scant media attention at the time. Primary news sources reported with little fanfare that Fonda had boarded a plane for France, with Hanoi as her final destination. Throughout Fonda's nearly two weeks in North Vietnam, the American press reported only that the North Vietnamese media claimed that Fonda had spoken over Radio Hanoi. Since Fonda traveled alone, there is no first-hand record of her itinerary and experiences apart from her own recollections.

Throughout *My Life So Far*, Fonda attempts to explain her version of certain stories that were treated one-sidedly by the media, such as the “drug” incident in Cleveland. She also focuses extensively on certain phases of her life that have been overlooked by biographers. Notably, while Fonda provides interesting anecdotes for each of her film experiences, she dwells less on her films than many of her biographers. Hers is the only account that discusses *The Workout* with any level of detail or sincerity, and her focus on her years of activism is exponentially more detailed than any of the biographies (*Jane Fonda's War*, which was published months later, notwithstanding). Specifically, Fonda provides a detailed account of her early activism in 1970, which received relatively little media attention at the time. Her chapters on the Hanoi trip illuminate a range of experiences during her stay, including meaningful interactions with Vietnamese citizens and numerous bombing raids. Fonda also provides a context for her trip – namely, the Nixon Administration's bombing of North Vietnam's dike system in the summer of 1972. Fonda frames

her trip as primarily an effort to document with photographs and video the bombed dikes. She also provides a convincing explanation for her comments regarding the POWs in 1973, and includes a first-hand account of the much-reported Waterbury protests of 1988. In addition to the individual incidents Fonda elaborates on, she also presents an account of her public and private life that is thematically unified, while avoiding resort to stereotypes, simplifications and sound bites.

Fonda's memoir, while deeply personal, also represents the perspective of an antiwar activist who remains committed to the causes she embraced in the 1970s. A sharply different account of the "movement" and its legacy emerges in *Destructive Generation*, a monograph written by two former New Leftists, Peter Collier and David Horowitz, that is highly critical of Sixties radicals. When Fonda's recollections of her early activism are considered alongside Collier's, the respective memoirs provide contrasting perspectives on Fonda's entry into the movement. In addition, *Destructive Generation*, written by left-wing activists-turned right-wing author-advocates, exemplifies the rightward shift in American society since the 1970s – a shift that is of great import to the re-imagining of the Vietnam War and of Jane Fonda's role as an antiwar figure.

As Fonda recounts her early activism in *My Life So Far*, she admits, "I wanted to act on what I was learning and feeling but didn't know what to do."³⁹ Her candid and somewhat incredulous manner of expression, captured in her autobiography of 2005, worked against her efforts to be taken seriously in 1970, when she began to speak out against the war. At the time, journalists were dismissive of her sincere, sometimes over-stated appeals, even when her words evidently resonated with antiwar protestors and GIs. The fact that Fonda was an actress who had been cast in roles that highlighted her sexuality presented an additional hurdle she regularly had to scale. Her earnestness and visible abhorrence with the war, combined with sexist notions within

³⁹ Jane Fonda, *My Life So Far* (New York: Random House, 2005), 197.

American society about women – especially young, beautiful women in the movies – made Fonda an easy target for those who sought to attack the peace movement by ridiculing its leaders.

There is no shortage of dismissive characterizations of Fonda from the early 1970s. *Destructive Generation*, written years later, is a more recent indictment of Fonda's early activism, but from the perspective of one-time fellow-activists. This monograph provides not only a viewpoint that contrasts with Fonda's, but an example of one stream of right-wing antipathy towards Fonda that has survived the passing decades. In *Destructive Generation*, author Peter Collier recalls his first encounter with Fonda, whom he took to Alcatraz. In 1969 Native Americans had occupied the island; Fonda read about the occupation in a *Ramparts* magazine article, written by Collier, whom she then contacted. According to Collier, Fonda arrived on the scene "at the very moment" the New Left was simultaneously "becoming chic" and "beginning to degenerate." He recalls that Fonda said she was back in America because that was "where it was 'happening.'" He replied that she may have "waited too long; the Sixties were over. A look of horror crossed her face, and she said, 'Oh, I hope not.'"⁴⁰ With this anecdote, Collier captures Fonda's solemnity that was often lampooned by those on the right. William F. Buckley Jr., for one, "chuckled over 'her solemn Red Guard face,'"⁴¹ It was not just Fonda's seriousness that Collier remembered. He describes a thank you note he received from Fonda, in which her exclamation point was a small circle, rather than a dot, and states that he would not have been surprised if she had finished off her sentence with a heart, instead of a circle. In addition to this speculative over-analysis, Collier complains about Fonda's later activism, citing her "vulgar" Marxist rhetoric during T.V. Appearances, and the "spectacle" of "her propaganda appearance in

⁴⁰ Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2006), 310.

⁴¹ Kasindorf, "Fonda: A person of many parts; A restless yawning between extremes."

Hanoi.”⁴²

Notably, Collier’s account of Fonda, penned years later, is from a book co-written with David Horowitz, a well-known figure of the contemporary American Right. Both Horowitz and Collier were left-wing activists who became outspoken against their former colleagues in the 1980s. Their disparaging comments towards Fonda should thus be read as attacks from the Right – not the Left. It is therefore not surprising that Collier’s view of Fonda correlates with that of William F. Buckley Jr. – the famous conservative writer and founder of *National Review*. These men represent one perspective that is highly critical of Fonda the activist; they depict Fonda as an uninformed and fundamentally unserious political actor, whose attempts to contribute to the political discourse were either obnoxious or humorous. This perspective tends to stress the fact that Fonda was an *actress*, with little authority or intellectual prowess with which to speak about political issues.⁴³ This view also tends to foreground the fact that Fonda was a child of Hollywood and the daughter of a famous actor, thereby rendering her suspect as a privileged and morally-loose dilettante. Another emphasis from these quarters is on Fonda’s pre-1969 status as a sex symbol, and hence someone who is not to be taken seriously. This perspective echoes in twenty-first century bumper and urinal stickers, available for sale online, that take aim at Barbarella-Fonda.⁴⁴ In the 1970s, Fonda’s physical appearance was similarly open to ridicule

⁴² Collier and Horowitz, 311.

⁴³ Indeed, Fonda was not a perfect activist nor public speaker. In interviews from the early 1970s, though she is well-informed, her speaking seems highly affected. (See Phil Donahue’s interview with Jane Fonda from 1972. *The Phil Donahue Show*. Available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHFwzcwks4>.)

Fonda concedes in her autobiography that she was at times “humorless,” and employed “radical jargon that rang shrill and false.” She goes on to explain that she was a “newcomer” to the scene, but one who received a great deal of critical attention from the press. Fonda, 227, 228. For all of Fonda’s tonal and word-choice errors, it is no less true that male journalists of the 1970s, and Right-wing Americans today, use Fonda’s sexuality to belittle her and distract from the usually detailed and poignant content of her antiwar message.

⁴⁴ See stickers available for purchase at ebay.com. Some read “Fuck You Jane” above a Snoopy-like figure in pilot costume; another reads “Jane Fonda/ American Traitor/ Bitch.” Others are available in three different varieties; customers can choose a contemporary picture of Fonda, a picture of her from the *Workout*, with her legs wide apart, or a cartoon picture of her from the Vietnam era; all varieties read “Hanoi Jane Urinal Target.” Ebay. http://shop.ebay.com/i.html?_nkw=jane+fonda&sticker&_sacat=0&_odkw=fonda+sticker&_osacat=trksid=p

when she shed her long blonde hair and sex kitten image in favor of activism. During the filming of *Klute*, Fonda's crew made it known that they disapproved of her antiwar activism and "her defiance of feminine convention: she had stopped wearing make-up." William F. Buckley also weighed in on Fonda's transformation, commenting, "she must never even look into the mirror anymore."⁴⁵

While there are those who criticize Fonda from the Left, most of the derision aimed at Fonda is from the Right. Interestingly, today's critics on the Right recite two seemingly contradictory narratives. On the one hand, as we have seen, conservatives are dismissive of Fonda, poking fun at her sex kitten and *Workout* phases. Yet, an even louder refrain from the Right angrily denounces "Hanoi Jane" for her activities in the antiwar movement and the supposedly detrimental impact she had on servicemen when she spoke on Radio Hanoi. This allows the contemporary Right to dismiss and mock Fonda, while they simultaneously blame her for demoralizing American troops stationed in Southeast Asia. These views of Fonda – as a frivolous pretty face *and* as a dangerous subversive – appear contradictory, but are, in fact, intertwined. The former, exemplified by Collier's account of Fonda and Buckley's belittling commentary, was *the* narrative applied to Jane Fonda, beginning in 1969 and continuing throughout her involvement in the antiwar movement. However belittling, this narrative can at least claim to have originated in the historical era of the 1970s. The second portrayal, which casts Fonda as a dangerous, traitorous anti-American character, does not fully emerge until years *after* the Vietnam War. Notably, the first narrative – Fonda as sex symbol – has grown since the 1970s, and has, in fact, helped the second – Fonda as dangerous traitor – to gain in popularity. Both

[3286.c0.m270.11313](#) (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁴⁵ One day, Fonda arrived on set to find that the crew had draped a "huge American flag... above the door of her character's room." Historian Rick Perlstein suggests this act was an indictment of both her antiwar activism and her embrace of feminism. Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: the Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 521.

narratives are deeply gendered, and both, until recently, have escaped the scrutiny of journalists and academics alike.

There remains much to be written about the portrayals of Jane Fonda through the 1960s and 1970s – more often than not, shaped by *male* journalists and commentators – and how gender facilitated the myth of Hanoi Jane. Women’s studies scholars who have looked at Fonda have said little about Hanoi Jane and tend to be ambivalent in their assessment of Fonda. Typically, they note her evolution from the badlands of *Barbarella* into a feminist actress and producer, praising film choices like *Julia* (1977) and *9 to 5* (1980), while critical of Fonda’s decision to play prostitutes in *Klute* (1971) and *Steelyard Blues* (1973), and of her real life role as a fitness personality. An early example is a 1988 essay by Barbara Seidman in *Women and Film*, which criticizes Fonda, then, “one of America’s most popular feminist icons” for being in “the very lap of Hollywood.”⁴⁶ Seidman, who applauds Fonda for “[giving] women fuller and fairer dramatic representation,” is also sharply critical of Fonda’s suggestion that “healthy sexiness is possible after forty.” This, according to Seidman, “merely extends the years over which her sisters can recriminate themselves for less accommodating and luscious physiques and less discipline to make ‘the work-out’ the central passion of their lives.”⁴⁷ Seidman is clearly attuned to feminist critiques, and she does not hesitate to level them at Fonda. Interestingly, even though her essay explores Fonda’s on- and off-screen activities from the 1960s through the 1980s, nowhere does Seidman applaud Fonda – as a woman with wealth and power – for fearlessly speaking out and becoming politically involved in the 1970s, and nowhere does she note the flagrant and belittling sexism Fonda was routinely subjected to.

Tessa Perkins, whose scholarly work focuses on stereotyping in the media, was the first to

⁴⁶ Barbara Seidman, “‘The Lady Doth Protest Too Much, Methinks’: Jane Fonda, Feminism, and Hollywood,” in *Women and Film*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 187.

⁴⁷ Seidman, 227, 211.

write critically about the media's treatment of Fonda, which she described as "frequently belittling if not downright contemptuous."⁴⁸ In "The Politics of Jane Fonda," Perkins notes that in Fonda's early career, her "sexuality, her opinions about sex and her father's opinions about her" constituted much of the coverage.⁴⁹ Perkins' analysis spans three decades, but she is primarily concerned with the media's treatment of Fonda during her activist years, and she highlights some of the more egregious examples of sexism towards Fonda in that era. Perkins notes that the language employed by the press was "saturated with gender references," and makes the important observation that the rhetoric typically "damns her politics as much by rendering her harmless and ridiculous as anything else."⁵⁰ This is a key observation; at the height of her activism, Fonda was not often depicted as a dangerous radical, but as an uninformed "girl" – despite the fact that she was then in her thirties. According to the myth of Hanoi Jane, however, Fonda was very much a threat to the American war effort. Perkins does not discuss the discrepancy between the reporting of the 1970s, which saw Fonda as someone not to be taken seriously, and the essence of the Hanoi Jane myth – that Fonda bears real responsibility for demoralizing American troops and providing "aid and comfort" to the enemy.

In all probability, Perkins was not attuned to the Hanoi Jane myth; in 1991, when her essay was written, Fonda was famous for her films and *Workout* videos, and "Hanoi Jane" was still a fledgling myth. The name had been coined in the 1970s, but by the time Seidman and Perkins were writing, the myth existed only on the peripheral right. At the time, the more pressing debate about Fonda concerned her feminism, which is, in fact, central to Perkins' argument. Unlike Seidman, who views Fonda as someone whose "intellectual and political

⁴⁸ Tessa Perkins, "The Politics of 'Jane Fonda,'" *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (New York: Routledge, 1991), 239.

⁴⁹ Perkins, 240.

⁵⁰ Perkins, 243, 242.

shortcomings as a legitimate feminist advocate” are obscured by her immense popularity, Perkins views Fonda as *the* “feminist heroine” of the seventies.⁵¹

In fact, Perkins relates that, while writing about another prominent female, women “invariably asked her why [she] didn’t do something on Jane Fonda.” Fonda’s name came up with surprising consistency, as feminists described the significance of certain Fonda films to them personally.⁵² Perkins notes that Fonda’s films deliberately avoid a sanctimonious approach. Rather than making films for “the already converted left-wing elite,” Fonda’s acting and producing ventures feature women grappling with real problems, who, over the course of the film, achieve greater independence and become more enlightened.⁵³ Perkins thus paints a very different picture of Fonda from the one suggested by Seidman. Together, these two perspectives illustrate the debate about Fonda-as-feminist from the late 1980s; the fact that self-professed feminists were talking about Fonda’s feminism, her films, and, in Perkins’ case, decades-old media sexism suggests that any debate about Fonda as Hanoi Jane – a gender-saturated topic – was, at that time, nowhere near the surface.

Perkins’ “The Politics of Jane Fonda” is extremely useful for a number of reasons. Her main argument is that “although the ways in which Fonda was written about in the press seemed both to undermine her particular political activities and to attack feminism, feminists in the seventies could use this attack as the basis of a sympathetic identification with the Fonda image.”⁵⁴ Perkins goes on to note that “of the sixteen films Fonda made before 1968 *Barbarella* is overwhelmingly the one that is referred to – and almost comes to stand in for all the others.”⁵⁵

This is a crucial observation, for it is the notion that troops viewed Fonda as *Barbarella* that gives

⁵¹ Seidman, 227; Perkins, 238.

⁵² The films referred to most frequently were *Klute*, *Coming Home*, and *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* Perkins, 238.

⁵³ Perkins, 246, 247.

⁵⁴ Perkins, 237.

⁵⁵ Perkins, 244.

the Hanoi Jane myth its dramatic force. Perkins also observed that elements of the media “consistently and uncritically foreground... the sexuality of earlier roles and seem to take pleasure in holding Fonda responsible for them.” Perkins then ties this to Fonda’s appeal to feminists, observing that countless women “had been through a similar range of experiences and changes” in the 1960s, and that “Fonda’s political rite of passage paralleled that of many feminists. This shared experience constituted an important element in feminists’ identification with Fonda.” Like Jane Fonda, many women were constantly questioned about “their own ‘earlier’ phases.” Such women would have both sympathized with Fonda’s burden of scrutiny, and taken offence at the press’ frequent references to Fonda’s “ideal ‘pre-political’ past when [she] was an uncomplaining sex kitten.”⁵⁶

Susan McLeland, writing in 2001, delves deeper into the media’s representations of Fonda, focusing on the years 1968-1974. In *Headline Hollywood*, McLeland’s essay, “Barbarella Goes Radical: Hanoi Jane and the American Popular Press,” argues that Fonda was “interpreted in the press” as going through several stages between 1968 and 1974. Her image evolved from “the sex kitten next door,” to the “political dilettante;” together, she and Tom Hayden were considered “radicals” until 1974, when both were perceived to have mellowed, and become “almost ‘respectable moderates.’”⁵⁷ Like Perkins, McLeland links Fonda to feminists in the 1970s; she notes that, “descriptions of Fonda during the early 1970s match the ‘humorless’ designation designed to denigrate ‘libbers’ in the popular press.” A *Life* article on Fonda was titled “Nag, Nag, Nag!” and the press continually “scrutinized her physical appearance,” even

⁵⁶ Perkins, 244-245, 239.

⁵⁷ Susan McLeland, “Barbarella Goes Radical: Hanoi Jane and the American Popular Press,” in *Headline Hollywood: A Century of Film Scandal*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean and David A. Cook (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 236, 233.

when they claimed to cover her activism.⁵⁸ McLeland's central argument is that the press treated Fonda as a "beautiful body/shrill voice" in the years between Barbarella and Fonda's broadcasts in Hanoi. McLeland notes that Fonda's broadcasts over Radio Hanoi contained nothing the actress had not repeatedly said during the FTA tour; it was only when Fonda's voice was disembodied that her body ceased to "undermine her message," and her words were finally heard.⁵⁹

McLeland is the first to observe that marriage – twice – made Jane Fonda more acceptable to men in the media. Her marriage to Tom Hayden "helped to redefine her as a woman who possesses – and is ruled by – a body, emotions, and a man." Domestication, even to a fellow "radical," rendered Fonda less threatening. Similarly, McLeland argues that Fonda's marriage to "iconoclastic but conservative [Ted] Turner" was interpreted in some quarters as "a 'shrew' who was tamed by a real man, at last."⁶⁰ Notably, this pre-Iraq War, pre-2004 article suggests that Fonda, a once-radical figure, was, in 2001, hardly labouring under the weight of "Hanoi Jane."

Katherine Kinney is the first scholar to suggest that the hostile treatment of Fonda decades ago echoes in the discourse of the twenty-first century. Kinney, writing in 2003, reflects post-9/11 sensibilities, in which patriotism was highly valued and narrowly defined. As Susan Faludi has argued, traditional gender stereotypes were also revived and valorized, and the media promoted narratives of manly men rescuing frail women. Deviations from these stereotypes were not embraced.⁶¹ In "Hanoi Jane and Other Treasons: Women and the Editing of the 1960s," published in the journal, *Women's Studies*, Kinney, who studies the manipulation of images and how this shapes public perceptions, examines American women activists in the 1960s. She makes

⁵⁸ McLeland, 237.

⁵⁹ McLeland, 240, 242.

⁶⁰ McLeland, 246, 249.

⁶¹ Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

salient observations about Jane Fonda – observations not made by scholars in earlier decades – which suggest that Hanoi Jane and the discourse surrounding her had undergone significant change by 2003, when Kinney’s article was published. Kinney argues that the image of Hanoi Jane has become shackled to a host of misinformation and hateful sentiments, which now influence most of what is written about Fonda. She also found that there was a “quite frightening level of misogynist rage still directed at Fonda,” and that “layers of misinformation and vitriol... control most stories written about her.”⁶² Notably, in the aftermath of the 2004 photo tampering, the fakery itself was exposed, but the notion that Jane Fonda had very nearly committed treason remained intact.⁶³ In subsequent months, letters to the editor continued to rail against “Hanoi Jane” and years later, journalists continue to allude to Hanoi Jane, never mentioning Fonda’s five years of antiwar work, nor the fact that her activism frequently centred on veterans and active-duty soldiers.

Only rarely have scholars delved into the media coverage of Fonda by (usually male) journalists from the 1950s through the 1970s, and how this male gaze impacted Fonda as an activist. As McLeland and Perkins have noted, primary sources from the 1970s indicate that many male journalists were critical of Fonda’s changed appearance and preferred the Jane Fonda of old.

In the Hanoi Jane myth, Fonda’s opting out of make-up and blonde hair dye, and her turn to baggy clothes is forgotten; instead, the characterization of Jane Fonda as an all-American Hollywood pin-up replaces Fonda’s actual wartime image. It is the fantasy version of her as Barbarella that reverberates in the Hanoi Jane myth, where Fonda is cast as a sex symbol-cum-

⁶² Kinney, “Hanoi Jane and Other Treasons: Women and the Editing of the 1960s,” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2003), 373.

⁶³ This bears a strong resemblance to the incident in Cleveland in 1970, when Fonda’s “drug” charges were front page news; reports that the charges were dropped days later were buried near the back of newspapers, if reported at all.

traitor. In fact, Fonda responded to the media's incessant focus on her looks by changing her appearance so as to divert attention from her movie star looks and towards her antiwar message. In the myth of Hanoi Jane, Fonda's public role as an activist and her years-long rejection of her former sex symbol image is forgotten. Since the 1980s, when Fonda once again dressed like a movie star, the notion has taken hold that Fonda, circa 1972, was best known as Barbarella, and that her "betrayal" of American forces was particularly harmful, since she was, to American GIs, both an object of desire and an exemplar of the American women they were fighting for.

In reality, Fonda had ditched the blonde hair and ingénue roles by early 1969. By the time she traveled to Hanoi, her brown shag haircut, casual attire, and makeup-free face would have been as familiar to the American public as the blonde Barbarella image.

Alongside the myth that Fonda was inseparable from Barbarella in the minds of American soldiers is another myth, one that co-exists uneasily with Barbarella: that antiwar Fonda was, in her time, a dangerous extremist. As this study will demonstrate, Fonda was, more often than not, characterized dismissively by the press and government officials. While some figures in the government used her name to generate publicity for themselves, the Justice Department adamantly refused to prosecute Fonda, and no more than a handful of politicians called for action against her. In recent years, the main criticism of Fonda has shifted from one that sees her as frivolous and peripheral to one that views her as dangerous, and Fonda has frequently been cited as a prominent figure of the antiwar movement. Despite the fact that many men and less-sexualized women engaged in actions no different from Fonda's, she alone is often cited. The Right has singled her out as a traitor, frequently implying that antiwar dissent itself is unpatriotic. Similar mischaracterizations can be found among pundits on the Left, who cite her as a negative

role model, an example of what *not* to do.⁶⁴ The implied message, from both camps, is that wartime dissent is a dangerous enterprise.

Recent works on Jane Fonda/ Hanoi Jane have stressed both the importance of gender and the mythic qualities of Hanoi Jane. Carol Burke argues forcefully that gender is at play in military indoctrination and that Jane Fonda serves as a powerful symbol in the military's pro-male ritualization.⁶⁵ Jerry Lembcke has noted that Fonda's status as a powerful and wealthy female, and a former sex symbol made her an ideal symbol for betrayal, similar to mythologized characters of older wars, like Tokyo Rose.

This work will argue that the Hanoi Jane myth has been successful, in part, because it has been underpinned by equally alluring supporting myths. Some of these myths are directly linked to Fonda, such as the Barbarella myth. Another enduring myth that appeared in journalistic accounts in the early 1970s held that Jane Fonda, as a young woman and an actress, was unqualified to speak about the war, and, hence, must be uninformed about the war. Another common thread – intoned by journalists and biographers since the 1960s, persisting to the present – is that Fonda's behaviour has consistently been shaped by her male companions/lovers/ significant others. In the 1970s, journalists lamented the old days when Fonda was Vadim's

⁶⁴ For example, "Lesson of 'Hanoi Jane' Leads Antiwar Forces to Shift Strategy," a 2003 *Los Angeles Times* article, reported that "mindful of the hostility that greeted actress Jane Fonda when she returned from... Hanoi... the antiwar movement is planning to emphasize its support for U.S. troops." In fact, the "hostility" that greeted her upon returning from North Vietnam was minimal, and her activism had been primarily in concert with the veterans and GI movements. Johanna Neuman, "Lesson of 'Hanoi Jane' Leads Antiwar Forces to Shift Strategy," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 2003.

⁶⁵ Burke relays a goodnight ritual at the U.S. Naval Academy, in which a freshman student calls "Goodnight!" to the company commander, who calls, "Goodnight!" in return. "A litany of goodnights then passes down the chain of the company's command. At the end of this ritual courtesy," the first-year student calls out "the final goodnight, 'Goodnight, Jane Fonda!' and the entire company shouts its enthusiastic retort: 'Goodnight, bitch!'" Burke notes that this ritual serves to include even the newest recruit, assuring him "of his insider status by expressing collective disdain for an outsider." Burke notes the reasonableness of calling goodnight to any number of Vietnam War personalities other than Fonda – such as Ho Chi Minh or Tom Hayden, who made more visits to wartime Vietnam than Fonda, or Joan Baez, who was "every bit as much a staunch critic as Fonda." Burke concludes that Fonda remains the Naval Academy's favourite target because of her transformation "from the girl who stood for the girl they had once known" into an antiwar activist and feminist. Carol Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High and Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 177, 184-5.

muse; today, Tom Hayden is often credited for Fonda's politicization, even though she and Hayden were not acquainted when Fonda became an activist, and had only just started dating when she went to Hanoi. A related myth holds that Jane Fonda is a chronic chameleon, programmed by the times in which she lives. Fonda's phases are typically exaggerated and isolated in order to paint her as a manic enthusiast who jumps from one extreme – Barbarella, to another, the antiwar and feminist movements, to yet another, the *Workout*, to still another, Mrs. Ted Turner. McLeland suggests that the press of the 1970s “interpreted” four Fonda phases; biographers have since continued this trend, adding more phases as they see fit.

Countering the pervasive view of Fonda as chameleon, Tessa Perkins notes the consistencies in Fonda's life. Perkins argues that pre-activist Fonda voiced proto-feminist thoughts throughout the 1960s; for example, Fonda criticized Hollywood's emphasis on sex. She also asserted that she was not keen to get married, explaining, “What I fear about marriage... is being possessed.” In Perkins' view, Fonda expressed her wariness of marriage “on precisely those grounds which feminists would identify in coming years.” Perkins also argues that after her “activist phase,” Fonda's went on to make films that spoke to women's issues.⁶⁶ Indeed, Fonda has not stepped away from the causes she embraced in the 1970s. Fonda has consistently spoken out for peaceful solutions, not war-making; she has been a supporter of GI rights and has shone light on veterans' issues, such as the appalling conditions at VA hospitals; and she has continued to raise the issue of gender inequality on film and to raise money for organizations that help women and girls. Her *Workout* “empire” in the 1980s helped finance Hayden's “Campaign for Economic Democracy,” which worked to help elect progressive candidates. Since the early 1990s, whilst married to Ted Turner – himself a strong supporter of women's issues – Fonda

⁶⁶ Perkins, 241.

created G-CAPP, an organization that works to prevent teen pregnancy in Georgia.⁶⁷

In addition to myths about Jane Fonda, the Hanoi Jane myth is also underpinned by myths about the Vietnam War. The first is that the soldiers in Vietnam shared a common passion to defeat communism in Vietnam. An examination of Fonda's antiwar activism greatly undermines this myth. From the active-duty antiwar GIs she spoke with at coffeehouses across the United States, to the tens of thousands of soldier in the United States and Southeast Asia who attended the antiwar FTA shows, to the Winter Soldier Investigation Fonda helped organize, it is clear that the GI movement and the Vietnam veterans movement constituted a significant opposition to the ongoing war. The level of soldierly dissent that is evident when one traces Fonda's activism does not take into account other demographics that further undermine the notion of a pro-war military; these include unprecedented numbers of draft-dodgers, shocking levels of officer "fraggings" by enlisted men, and large numbers of desertions within the military. If one ignores these trends and the fact that Fonda visited North Vietnam *after* American combat troops had largely withdrawn, and instead believes the myth that soldiers were committed to winning, then Fonda's broadcasts over Radio Hanoi seem more important, and her pro-GI dissent seems significantly less patriotic.

A related Vietnam War myth is that the war was lost – not by demoralized troops, many with antiwar sentiments or drug addiction issues, fighting in jungles against determined Vietnamese guerrillas – but by defeatism at home, brought on by the antiwar movement. This theme first appeared in President Richard Nixon's famous Silent Majority speech in 1969, and was later picked up, after the war, by those looking for scapegoats to explain the American defeat. In 1969, three years before Jane Fonda went to Hanoi, President Nixon postulated, "...let us understand -- North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans

⁶⁷ For more information, see the G-CAPP website, <http://www.gcapp.org/programs> (accessed July 15, 2011).

can do that.”⁶⁸ Since, for some Americans, it was inconceivable that North Vietnamese peasants could outlast American troops; that American troops were refusing to fight and had lost faith in the war’s aims; that veterans were joining antiwar groups in unimaginable numbers; that, in short, political and military leaders had erred and lost a war, then perhaps it was Americans at home who were responsible for the loss. The antiwar movement was the obvious target. However, in 1975 when the last Americans were evacuated from Saigon, a majority of Americans and their congressional representatives believed the war was un-winnable. It would be a decade before a narrative of defeatist, un-American Americans, of spitting activists and Hanoi Jane, could be promoted with any hope of persuading the public.

Certainly, neither Fonda’s trip to Hanoi, nor her activism in general, were universally praised by Americans at the time. As historians, sociologists and feminist scholars have observed, the fact that Jane Fonda – a young, famous and admired female – became a feminist and tireless activist made her a hero to some, and a pariah to others. This study will argue that Fonda was routinely objectified by male journalists before becoming an activist; that once she became an activist, the media treated her dismissively, often because of her former status as a sex symbol, and used gendered language to berate her. Despite all this, Fonda was, in her own time, not viewed as a foremost antiwar activist. Indeed, in July 1972, when Fonda and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark both visited Hanoi, the American press paid much more attention to Clark’s visit than to Fonda’s. Equally important, Fonda was not, by any measure, the most extreme antiwar activist.⁶⁹ When her actions, rhetoric, or prescriptions for the war are compared with the words, actions and ideas of others – including United States Senators, beloved Civil

⁶⁸ Available at University of California Berkeley Library, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/pacificviet/nixonviet.html> (accessed June 14, 2011).

⁶⁹ Even amongst celebrities, Fonda was not the most Hanoi-friendly activist. Joan Baez traveled several times to North Vietnam. She was there during the Christmas bombing of 1972 and recorded a song at a Hanoi bomb shelter. “Joan Baez Performs At a Service in Hanoi,” *New York Times*, December 22, 1972.

Rights figures, and respected religious peace groups – Fonda emerges as the less extreme figure. Notably, when her actual activism is assessed, Fonda hardly appears antagonistic towards America or its fighting men. Though Fonda’s rhetoric was undeniably anti-war and conveyed compassion for the Vietnamese, what she actually said and did – not what 21st century journalists erroneously attribute to her – could hardly be construed as anti-American.

As newspapers of the day reveal, Fonda was castigated – not so much for her actions in Hanoi, as for comments that she made in 1973, when she voiced doubt about POW claims of torture in North Vietnam. This was the low point Fonda’s her popularity; over the next two years, as the war wound down and the Nixon Administration unravelled, many of Fonda’s claims about the war and the outgoing Administration were vindicated. When the unpopular war finally ended in 1975, its memory – napalm, body bags, draft card-burnings, and activists far more radical than Jane Fonda – was fresh in people’s minds. Blaming the antiwar movement for the war, and blaming Jane Fonda for American deaths, would not have resonated with post-Watergate, war-weary Americans in 1975. For a full decade, news and pictures of American visitors in Hanoi had not been news at all. However, as the memory of the war and the antiwar movement receded, and as revisionist narratives circulated, the picture of Fonda sitting amidst North Vietnamese soldiers at an antiaircraft site increasingly became an image that could shock. Over the next fifteen years, several events helped shape the burgeoning myth of Hanoi Jane; these included the release of the film, *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987); national coverage of a handful of Fonda protestors in Waterbury in 1988, and the presidential election that same year; the First Gulf War, with its admonitions to protestors “not to be like Jane Fonda;” the publication of increasingly fantastic POW memoirs, their gradual incorporation of Jane Fonda, and, with the advent of the internet, the widespread circulation of violent POW myths that cast Fonda as traitor; and finally, a hyper-patriotic post-9/11 culture and the invasion of Iraq. In 2003, commentators Left and Right engaged in another

round of warnings to protestors about “ending up like Jane Fonda.” These events laid the groundwork for what happened in 2004 – linking a presidential candidate, already known as a former antiwar activist, with another former antiwar activist, in order to galvanize the right and delegitimize the left.

As the public discourse of 2004 demonstrated, Fonda has increasingly become a symbol of the wider antiwar movement. The narrative of Fonda’s “treachery” is not the only myth that has been propagated in recent years. A related myth portrays the GIs in Vietnam in the early 1970s as pro-war, when, in fact, many were actively anti-war, as rebellions at American bases and resistance (sometimes in such extreme forms as fraggings) in Southeast Asia indicate. For over twenty years, efforts to rewrite the history of the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement have fused with efforts to propagate the Hanoi Jane myth. As part of a larger aim – to avoid an ahistorical understanding of the antiwar movement – this account will seek to understand the events that comprised Jane Fonda’s years in the antiwar movement, from 1969 through 1975. It will be argued that Jane Fonda was representative, rather than unique, when compared with the increasingly antiwar American society of the early 1970s. This explains why Fonda tended to be viewed as a popular – rather than polarizing – figure from the late 1970s through the 1980s.

Chapter II: Introducing Jane Fonda

“As soon as she gets Hollywood out of her system she’ll settle down with a nice, handsome husband, make babies, and that will be it. By 1965, I think she’ll be more often on the society pages than the entertainment pages.” – Unnamed news correspondent, 1960⁷⁰

In 1970, Jane Fonda began attending antiwar rallies. She toured the country, visiting GI coffeehouses and listening to the active duty soldiers and veterans who congregated there, and, after Nixon announced his Administration’s decision to bomb Cambodia, Fonda began speaking about the war. Though she would later say, “I wasted the first thirty-two years of my life,” Fonda’s pre-activist life determined both how the general public received her activist turn, and her ability to draw an interested audience in order to raise money for antiwar groups.⁷¹ Three elements of Fonda’s pre-1970 story are crucial for understanding Fonda’s activist years and the public’s response to them: Fonda’s star-image in America, based on her off-screen life and her films; the media’s routine characterizations of Fonda; and her evolving political consciousness during the 1960s.

In 1959, Jane Fonda arrived in Hollywood. The Associated Press described her as a “curvaceous, high-breasted figure. She’s 5’7 1/2” tall, weighs 112 pounds. Her body is what the trades call lissom and her face, which is a womanly version of her father’s, is photogenic. She

⁷⁰ This statement appeared in a cable from a news correspondent to his editors in 1960. Quoted in Christopher Andersen, *Citizen Jane: The Turbulent Life of Jane Fonda* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1990), 59.

⁷¹ Quoted in Andersen, 132.

packs all that with a 132 IQ.”⁷² This description, focused overwhelmingly on Fonda’s appearance, set the tone for the media’s treatment of Fonda. Upon the release of her first film, *Look* magazine highlighted her “kittenish quality,” and *Time* magazine informed its readers that Fonda had “a smile like her father’s and legs like a chorus girl.”⁷³ A female critic, by contrast, wrote, “she is a goodlooking lass and she can act.”⁷⁴ Indeed, over the next four years, Fonda cemented herself as one of Hollywood’s brightest young actresses. She was nominated for a Golden Globe award and starred in six feature films. In 1963, Fonda arrived in France to make a film; she was greeted, in the words of one contemporary journalist, “as if she were the D-day fleet.”⁷⁵ Fonda spent the next six years based in France, but she returned to the United States frequently, making such memorable films as *Cat Ballou* (1965), a comedy-western in which Fonda played a loyal daughter-turned-outlaw, and *Barefoot in the Park* (1967), a Neil Simon comedy about two newlyweds, starring Fonda and Robert Redford. In *Barefoot in the Park*, Fonda’s spontaneous, emotional, highly energetic character exhausts her new husband, a conservative young lawyer. Both *Cat Ballou* and *Barefoot in the Park* were hits at the box office, and with *Cat Ballou* Fonda commanded “one of the highest salaries paid any star in 1965.” The *New York Times* hailed her “impressive professional score,” which at just 27, included “nine films made in Hollywood and Europe [and] four Broadway plays,” and by 1966, *Time* magazine stated that Fonda had “established herself... as one of the world’s most sought-after film actresses.”⁷⁶

While living in France, Fonda began a relationship with Roger Vadim, whom she married

⁷² James Bacon, Associated Press, quoted in Andersen, 53.

⁷³ Quoted in Andersen, 57; “Cinema: The New Pictures, Apr. 11, 1960,” *Time*, April 11, 1960, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,826232,00.html#ixzz1Pka9Ygiz>, (accessed June 19, 2011).

⁷⁴ Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Films in Review*, quoted in Andersen, 59.

⁷⁵ “The Blonde Black Panther,” *Time*, September 9, 1966, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,836323-1,00.html>, (accessed June 19, 2011).

⁷⁶ Andersen, 105; Howard Thompson, “The Importance of Being Jane,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1965; “The Blonde Black Panther,” *Time*.

in 1965. Vadim, perhaps best known for introducing Brigitte Bardot in *And God Created Woman* (1956), was a renowned director and notorious womanizer, who, after separating from Bardot, had wooed and directed Annette Stroyberg and Catherine Deneuve. In an article on Fonda, *Time* magazine referred to Vadim's women as "pussycats," most of whom he "more or less married."⁷⁷ Fonda's marriage to Vadim certainly played little immediate role in developing her feminist consciousness. Neither did Vadim, who was avowedly apolitical, play a role in Fonda's political consciousness. In fact, Vadim, though notoriously resistant to monogamy and ever willing to push the boundaries of screen sex, was far from the most radical film personality in either Hollywood or France. Unlike many of his colleagues in France, Vadim never committed himself to activism nor flirted with small-c communism. He described himself as interested only in the "pleasures" of life: "the sea, nature, sports, Ferraris, friends... art, nights of intoxication, the beauty of women."⁷⁸ Despite Vadim's inclinations towards sexual and artistic freedom, the Vadims' lifestyle was placid compared to many in young Hollywood of the late 1960s. As Fonda's Hollywood-centric biographers have noted, many in New Hollywood were experimenting with not only LSD, cocaine and methamphetamine, but also, as one chronicler noted, "witchcraft, satanism, the occult. Jane did not fall into this category. Ouija boards, seances and voodoo were of absolutely no interest to her."⁷⁹ When the Vadims were in New York or Hollywood for one of Fonda's film shoots, they encountered "a crowd so fast it made even the jaded Vadim feel like a starched-collared Puritan."⁸⁰ Though the couple socialized with some of Hollywood's loudest personalities, neither Vadim nor Fonda were, by any means, the most "radical" of their generation.

⁷⁷ "The Blonde Black Panther," *Time*.

⁷⁸ Fonda, 145; Rhoda Koenig, "Love of the Blondes," *New York Magazine*, April 7, 1986, 63.

⁷⁹ Andersen, 134. Fonda, in fact, complained about LSD proselytizers. She opined to one magazine, "An alcoholic drinks, but an alcoholic doesn't say, 'Come on, you have to be an alcoholic too.' Sure, I've taken pot. I prefer a good drink." *Calendar*, January 1969, quoted in Andersen, 120.

⁸⁰ Andersen, 133.

Fonda made four films with Vadim; however, their collaborations received relatively little attention in the United States compared to her Hollywood pictures of the same era. *Barbarella* (1968), the most successful of the Fonda-Vadim ventures, only grossed \$613,285 at the American box office. The domestic gross for *Cat Ballou* (1965) was \$20,666,667; *Barefoot in the Park* (1967), \$19,994,515; and *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969), \$12,600,000.⁸¹ Few Americans saw *Barbarella* upon its initial release, and it is highly improbable that, of the POWs and GIs in Vietnam in 1972, more than a handful had seen *Barbarella* four years earlier. This contrasts with the myth that, for American POWs and GIs, Fonda's antiwar statements over Radio Hanoi were both shocking and detrimental to their spirits. According to the Hanoi Jane myth, Fonda's words and actions in Hanoi were harmful precisely because she was viewed by these young American men as the all-American pin-up fantasy, *Barbarella*. However, as the box office numbers of the 1960s indicate, Americans were much more likely to have seen Fonda in any number of Hollywood films; and as the following chapters will demonstrate, Fonda's activism in the early 1970s did much to dispel notions of her as a sex symbol. Very few Americans, by 1972, would have associated Fonda primarily with her *Barbarella* image. Yet, as Tessa Perkins has noted, Fonda's early career has, in recent years, been "vastly [oversimplified]" to the point of being reduced "to a single stereotype," namely, *Barbarella*.⁸²

In contrast to later perceptions of pre-activist Fonda *as* *Barbarella*, Perkins observes that "Fonda's early acting career was interestingly, and perhaps unusually, varied," her roles ranging from virginal and girly to a street girl, a "frigid widow to a dumb [southerner];" the films

⁸¹ "Barbarella," IMDB, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062711/> (accessed June 20, 2011); "Jane Fonda's Box Office Stats," The Movie Times, <http://www.the-movie-times.com/thrsdir/actress/BO/BO.cgiactor=jfonda&order=by ear&view=all> (accessed June 14, 2011); "Barefoot in the Park," IMDB, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061385/> (accessed June 20, 2011).

⁸² Perkins, 239, 241.

themselves ranged from “ironic social comedy” to satire to “tough social-political drama.”⁸³ The latter category refers to *Hurry Sundown* (1967) a little-remembered film about “racial injustice in contemporary Georgia.”⁸⁴ Roger Ebert, writing in 1967, observed that director Otto Preminger had bent “over backward to produce an enlightened and... progressive film about race relations.”⁸⁵ Onscreen, Fonda played the wife of a wealthy plantation owner; off screen, the experience served as a “two-month primer in Deep South racism.” The hotel the cast stayed at “flew the Confederate Stars and Bars rather than the American flag,” and the city itself quickly turned against the socially critical film. The cast and crew, who were soon assigned round-the-clock armed guards, were routinely threatened and had their tires slashed. At one point during filming the sheriff told the entire cast and crew to get out of town and not come back. According to Fonda’s co-star Robert Hooks, locals barely concealed their hatred for the film; “you could feel their eyes watching you behind lace curtains... like they could cut your heart out.” Fonda was shocked that words like “nigger” and “coon” were voiced off-script; she said, after the filming, “I want to wake up all the people who are asleep and say, ‘Hey, it’s not necessary, the world is big enough for everybody!’”⁸⁶

The experience of *Hurry Sundown*, and its impact on Fonda’s awareness of racial problems in America, coincided with her growing awareness about the Vietnam War. Living primarily in France from 1963-1969, Fonda experienced the Vietnam War differently from other U.S. citizens, but her reactions to the trajectory of the war were remarkably in line with the majority of Americans.

⁸³ Perkins, 239-240.

⁸⁴ Set in Georgia, the filming took place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for fear of violence in Georgia. Andersen, 108.

⁸⁵ Roger Ebert, *Hurry Sundown*, May 29, 1967, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19670529/REVIEWS/705290301/1023> (accessed June 18, 2011).

⁸⁶ Andersen, 108, 109.

Back in 1959, Fonda, whose all-American appeal was described as that of an “Eisenhower-era ingénue,” was notified that the Pentagon had named her “Miss Army Recruiting” of that year. “Draped in red white and blue ribbon emblazoned with her new title,” Fonda gave an acceptance speech in which she “[praised] the armed forces” and defended “the need for a well-prepared military to discourage America’s communist enemies.”⁸⁷ Like most Americans, Fonda accepted the Cold War ethos she had been raised with. As a little girl, her father had served in the Navy during World War II, earning a Bronze Star. In her autobiography, Fonda remembered being “filled with pride” when her father returned home from the Pacific. In her youth, Fonda would tear up while singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” and, at the time she was honored by the Pentagon, Fonda was “a believer” in the United States and its moral infallibility.⁸⁸

In terms of her pre-Vietnam unquestioning acceptance of the American perspective, Fonda was not unlike many Americans of her generation. In the extensive 2001 study of Vietnam veterans’ political activism, *Home to War*, Gerald Nicosia, who interviewed some 500 Vietnam veterans, begins by pointing out “how thoroughly apolitical most of the nation’s young were in the early 1960s.”⁸⁹ Nicosia went on to paraphrase the famous veteran and antiwar activist Ron Kovic, observing that theirs was a generation raised on “gung-ho Hollywood movies,” who believed, even as teenagers, that “the world’s bad guys had all been soundly beaten by our fathers’ generation.”⁹⁰ Nicosia continues,

As Kovic and many others have related, we were a generation born and bred on patriotism, on the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school and absolute respect for

⁸⁷ Andersen, 51, 74.

⁸⁸ Fonda, 196.

⁸⁹ Nicosia, 1.

⁹⁰ Nicosia, 2.

the American flag... ‘The land of the free’ was not a cliché for us; it was something we were thankful every day for being born into, since everyone from teachers to preachers kept drumming into us how horribly bad all those unfortunate wretches in the rest of the world had it, how glad they were just to get hold of the things we cast off... if they weren’t even worse off being tortured in some godawful prison for the rest of their born days just for opening their mouths once too often...⁹¹

If this was how typical, middle American boys felt about their country, it stands to reason that Jane Fonda, raised with all the privileges money could buy, and with a movie star-war hero for a father, would be all the more susceptible to the Hollywoodized version of the Cold War.

After Fonda became an activist, she would be criticized from the Right as a know-nothing actress, and from the Left as an opportunistic latecomer. It would be more accurate to characterize Fonda as someone who accepted the Cold War consensus, as most Americans did, through the 1950s and into the 1960s, and, like many Americans, was forced to reevaluate her beliefs when confronted by reports of American atrocities in Vietnam and images of American failings during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

Living in France, Fonda experienced the Vietnam War differently from most Americans, but her reactions to the war’s events nevertheless paralleled those of Americans at home. In *My Life So Far*, Fonda recalls her husband’s reaction to the newspaper one August day in 1964. Congress had passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, and Vadim exclaimed that there was “no way” American would win a war in Vietnam. Fonda recalls thinking, “sour grapes... Just because the French lost...”⁹² As American public polls from 1964 indicate, the majority of Americans were similarly confident that their government would succeed where the French had lost.

While filming in Paris in 1966, Fonda became aware of the debate amongst “French intellectuals concerning America’s involvement in Vietnam.” Though Vadim was cynical about

⁹¹ Nicosia, 3.

⁹² Fonda, 193.

politics, most of his colleagues were “decidedly left-wing.”⁹³ Thereafter, Vadim’s friends routinely accosted Fonda, criticizing “the United States as an imperial aggressor.” Fonda “was resolute in her defence of the United States,” insisting that it could not be compared with the old colonial powers. She argued that American troops were in “Vietnam only to help [the South] defend itself against communist aggression.”⁹⁴ Fonda, presenting the standard American argument, was not quick to join the antiwar camp; she was even less inclined to side with French critics against her country. As her actions in 1968 and 1969 demonstrate, Fonda was uncomfortable both with listening to the French criticize America, and with criticizing her own government from abroad.

Despite Fonda’s reluctance to accept criticism of the American war effort, she grew “increasingly troubled by news reports on French television that American warplanes were dumping leftover bombs on Vietnamese villages and hospitals. French friends [continued to ask] how she could countenance such atrocities.”⁹⁵ According to her autobiography, Fonda did not fully realize the extent of the destruction American planes were causing in Vietnam until 1968. Unlike many Americans, Fonda did not witness the developing war from her living room; however, in early 1968, pregnant and bed-ridden, Fonda became absorbed by the images of bombs “hitting schools, hospitals, and churches.” Particularly jarring to her was the Tet Offensive; like Americans back home, Fonda was dumbfounded by the incongruity between the television images and General Westmoreland’s claims of success. She writes that the “psychological impact” of the Tet images was “devastating.”⁹⁶

While many Americans were likewise shocked and dismayed to see the Vietnamese

⁹³ Andersen, 106.

⁹⁴ Andersen, 88, 106.

⁹⁵ Martin Kasindorf, “Fonda: A person of many parts; A restless yawning between extremes,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1974.

⁹⁶ Fonda, 192, 193.

attacking American soldiers, rather than welcoming them as liberators, few Americans had the opportunities afforded to Fonda. At the time of her political awakening, Fonda was introduced to American GI resisters in Paris and she went to hear respected intellectuals discuss the war. She also was able to take the time to read and research the war over the next two years.

Shortly after the Tet Offensive, Fonda attended a large antiwar rally in Paris that featured such prestigious figures as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.⁹⁷ Of this experience, Fonda writes,

For the first time I felt embarrassed for my country, and I also wanted to go home. It was too painful being in France, hearing the criticisms, and not doing anything. But what to do? I didn't like criticizing America while I was in another country.⁹⁸

Fonda faced an additional dilemma: she was well aware that she could not immerse herself in activism while married to Vadim, who was “too cynical to commit himself to any movement.”⁹⁹ Indeed, Vadim would later call his wife, “Jane d’ Arc,” and complain of her activism to the press, saying he felt like he was “babysitting for Lenin.”¹⁰⁰ It would take Fonda nearly two years to fully realize that she could not throw herself, “heart and soul into the antiwar effort” and still partake in the “permissive, indolent life” she had up until then shared with Vadim.¹⁰¹

For the next year, Fonda, still living in France, abstained from publicly criticizing the

⁹⁷ According to Andersen, Fonda also watched the International War Crimes Tribunal, organized by Sartre and Bertrand Russell, which took place in Europe in 1967. Andersen states that “Jane followed the proceedings carefully,” and notes that the tribunal concluded that the United States had dropped more explosives on Vietnam, by 1967, than in the Pacific during WWII, and that 8 million South Vietnamese had been herded into encampments. Notably, the tribunal was ignored in the American press and few Americans would have been aware of its findings. Andersen, 122.

⁹⁸ Fonda, 193-4. This statement may seem at odds with Fonda’s 1972 decision to speak over Radio Hanoi. Notably, the 1972 broadcasts were all addressed to American servicemen whom Fonda believed were not aware that they were bombing civilian targets. Equally important, as the Justice Department later observed, Fonda said nothing over Radio Hanoi that she had not already said, repeatedly, on American soil.

⁹⁹ Fonda, 194.

¹⁰⁰ The “Jane d’ arc” comment is quoted in a *Life* magazine article from 1971; the “babysitting for Lenin” comment was made to a reporter in 1970, when Vadim was busy filming *Pretty Maids All in a Row*, a movie in which a married but philandering teacher has sexual flings with his female students; he eventually kills several of his conquests in order to keep them quiet. John Frock, “Nag, nag, nag!” *Life*, April 23, 1971, 51; Detroit *Free Press*, December, 1970, cited in Andersen, 159.

¹⁰¹ Fonda, 194.

United States; however, she was hardly inactive in the antiwar cause. Shortly after the Paris rally, Fonda had her first encounter with an active-duty antiwar soldier. This activist informed Fonda of RITA (Resisters Inside the Army), a newly formed organization, and Fonda soon realized there was a growing “network of American resisters and conscientious objectors in Europe,” who were in need of employment and financial assistance.¹⁰² Fonda began “contributing money... to the GI office in Paris;” she helped GI resisters get dental care and passed on some of Vadim’s old clothes. She also listened to countless stories from “the GIs who passed through,” thereby developing “a deep respect for the courage of the antiwar GIs.”¹⁰³ Mary Hershberger has noted that, by 1968, there were at least 50 GI deserters in Paris, “where they spoke at public rallies” about the bombings and massacres in Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ It would be two more years before Vietnam veterans were able to organize a large antiwar rally on American soil. When the rally finally took place in September 1970 at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, the event would be Fonda’s first speaking engagement at a large-scale rally. Whether living in the United States or France, whether contributing to the antiwar cause with consciousness-raising, appearances, or financial resources, Fonda was consistently drawn to the GI and veterans movements.

According to Fonda biographer, Christopher Andersen, by 1968, Fonda “no longer felt compelled to defend U.S. foreign policy to foreigners; obviously there were plenty of Americans who agreed with them.” He cites a personal interview with Fonda, in which she said, “I began by being defensive... but then I saw Americans at home protesting the war by the hundreds of thousands, and soldiers deserting. I began to study and read.”¹⁰⁵ Fonda maintains that despite her own antiwar sentiments, she never felt at ease when foreigners criticized the United States.

¹⁰² Fonda, 194.

¹⁰³ Hershberger, 6; Fonda, 195.

¹⁰⁴ Hershberger, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Andersen, 121.

She notes that, like herself, the GI resisters in Paris, “became defensive whenever a French person criticized America.” She also points out that it was a resister who suggested she read *The Village of Ben Suc*. Fonda read the book, which details the total destruction of a prosperous village, in “one stunned sitting.”¹⁰⁶ She then read Howard Zinn’s *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* and David Halberstam’s *Best and the Brightest*, followed by *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.¹⁰⁷ The truth about the horrors of war in Vietnam and the plight of African Americans shocked Fonda; she writes that “reading... *The Village of Ben Suc*, I felt betrayed as an American.”¹⁰⁸ She subsequently subscribed to *Ramparts* – the preeminent magazine of the New Left – and, as Mary Hershberger notes, Fonda spent over two years “[studying] the course of the war... before speaking out publicly against it.”¹⁰⁹ At the same time that Fonda was being galvanized as an American by the information she was reading, she was also, slowly, beginning to feel empowered as a woman by the images of women activists on television. “I watched women leading marches,” she later said. “I watched women getting beaten up. I watched women walking up to bayonets... and they were not afraid.”¹¹⁰

In late 1969, Fonda cut off her long blonde hair and began sporting her trademark shag haircut that appears in photos from 1970 through 1973. This change in appearance coincided with her involvement in the antiwar movement, the American Indian Movement, her public statements of sympathy for the Black Panthers, and her seemingly sudden entry into leftist causes generally. Although Fonda’s political consciousness had been evolving, in private, for several years, the

¹⁰⁶ Fonda, 195.

¹⁰⁷ Hershberger, 5; Fonda, 201.

¹⁰⁸ Fonda, 196.

¹⁰⁹ Hershberger, 5, 6.

¹¹⁰ Andersen, 127.

American public was largely unaware of Fonda's political concerns. Her new appearance and priorities – which seemed to have changed almost overnight – understandably surprised many observers. Indeed, in footage from 1970, Fonda is almost unrecognizable from just a few years before. For example, in one television appearance from 1967, a blonde-haired Fonda appears with Vadim on Merv Griffin. She is bubbly, good-natured and girly. She talks about her new farmhouse with Vadim; he waxes poetic about the difference between cinematic nudity (art) and *Playboy* nudity (not art).¹¹¹ It is little wonder that some Americans were surprised when a dark-haired, shag-cut Jane, unsmiling and sombre, started appearing on television in 1970 to urgently discuss political issues that, for some Americans, had been around for the better part of a decade. However, when one looks beyond the hair and make-up, to what Fonda had begun to say in the late 1960s, and what others said about her, the transformation is less abrupt. The famous actor Charles Boyer, who worked with her in *Barefoot in the Park* (1967) said of Fonda, “she is compassionate, and she is concerned about more things than her hair and make-up”¹¹² After *Barbarella*, Fonda began to publicly rebuke her own sex symbol persona, saying it was “silly. I’m no sex siren. I think the whole obsession with sex, and with the size of a girl’s breasts, is a perversion – and it’s a sad comment on the state of manhood in America.”¹¹³

Fonda's next film choice spoke volumes about her desire to both move away from her image as a sex kitten, and to do a film of political importance. The 1935 Horace McCoy novel, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, had been hailed by Sartre and Camus as a modern masterpiece. It was the story of Depression-era marathon dance contestants, who would dance for weeks on end in hopes of winning a cash prize. The film, directed by Sidney Pollack, shows dehumanized dancers struggling to stay on their feet and stay sane while crowds cheer from the stands. As

¹¹¹ The interview is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z84-DtCTALE> (accessed June 22, 2011).

¹¹² Andersen, 114.

¹¹³ Andersen, 119.

Fonda has explained, the story used the marathon dances “as a metaphor for the greed and manipulateness of America’s consumer society.”¹¹⁴ Fonda threw herself into the role of Gloria, a tough, cynical, desperate marathoner. The experience of playing Gloria had several important effects on Fonda; it increased her confidence as an actor, which simultaneously lessened her “willingness to swallow” her director-husband’s lifestyle, including his “appreciation of beauty, pleasure, and comfort,” which she had once found endearing. Now, it seemed frivolous.¹¹⁵ Fonda also felt empowered to do away the trappings of her sex symbol image. It was after *They Shoot Horses* that she lopped off her blonde hair and adopted the shag cut she would make famous in *Klute*. However, back in France, Fonda felt like she was wasting her time. Many Westerners were making the pilgrimage to India; Fonda decided she, too, might find “inner truth” in the East.¹¹⁶

Her month-long stay in India was a crucial turning point. It was her first visit to a Third World country and she was “sickened by the bodies that littered the streets of Calcutta, by rampant disease and poverty on a scale unimaginable to most Westerners.” She was appalled by the Europeans and Americans she encountered who had no problem with the conditions; they said that she “didn’t understand India” and that the Eastern religion of impoverished Indians lifted them above “such things.” She also visited royalty in a small Himalayan kingdom and was “incensed at the disparity between rich and poor.” Finally, Fonda met some members of the Peace Corps; they understood her reaction, and she briefly considered joining them.¹¹⁷

Fonda flew from India to Los Angeles, where she was unnerved by the rich homes, immaculate gardens and “silent streets, where the rich drive their big cars and send their children

¹¹⁴ Fonda, 208.

¹¹⁵ Fonda, 211, Andersen, 135.

¹¹⁶ Fonda, 213, 214.

¹¹⁷ Andersen, 139; Fonda, 214. Fonda later said, “I might have become a hippie if I hadn’t gone. It cured me of that forever... These people are starving... Do something!” From an interview segment in *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda*, directed by John Parsons Peditto (1988: Mbs Television Production Company, Orbis Communications Inc, 1988), available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEohgNJS8Rw> (accessed June 22, 2011).

to the psychoanalyst and employ exploited Mexican gardeners and black servants.” She found it inconceivable that the streets of Beverly Hills could be so quiet and clean and rich “when there were New Delhis in the world.” Fonda would soon pick up a copy of *Ramparts*, with an angry American Indian woman on the cover. The story, written by David Collier, titled “Red Power,” moved her deeply. She later said, “I hadn’t known anything. I couldn’t believe what we had done to the Indians.” The article included disturbing statistics, such as a Native American life expectancy of 44 years, and chronic diseases that were supposed to have disappeared from the United States. The main thrust of the article, however, was the story that American Indian activists had seized Alcatraz.¹¹⁸

For the next weeks Fonda was expected to promote *They Shoot Horses*. The film was released in December 1969 to rave reviews. The legendary Pauline Kael wrote, “Gloria... is the strongest role an American actress has had on the screen this year... Jane Fonda goes all the way with it, as screen actresses rarely do once they become stars.”¹¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, Mike Nichols – then the hottest director in Hollywood, having recently made *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *The Graduate* – offered Fonda “the part of a girl with forty-inch boobs.” She turned it down. By mid-February, she would tell Vadim their marriage was over.¹²⁰ Weeks later, Fonda would make her political sympathies public during her visit to the Native American-occupied Alcatraz.

¹¹⁸ Fonda, 215; Andersen, 140, 144.

¹¹⁹ Pauline Kael, “Deeper Into Movies,” *The New Yorker*, December 20, 1969, 71.

¹²⁰ Andersen, 143.

Chapter III: Speaking Out: They Shoot Students, Don't They?

"I'm not a dabbler. If I was going to oppose the war, it would be in the streets of America with my fellow countrymen, who, I could see on French television, were marching in growing numbers in the States." – Jane Fonda¹²¹

"We must show as much willingness to risk some of our prestige for peace as to risk the lives of young men in war." – Bobby Kennedy¹²²

By late 1969, Fonda had returned from India, was promoting the socially-critical *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, and was growing increasingly concerned with several "movement" causes. However, despite having chopped off her blonde locks, she still *looked* like the old Jane Fonda – feminine, immaculately groomed, fashionable. The readiness of the American media to ignore her political concerns – while she still *looked* like Jane Fonda the movie star – is evident in two articles from late 1969. A *New York Times* article, published after Fonda's trip to India, is titled "Jane Fonda, on Clothes and No Clothes." The article is unconcerned with Fonda's recent journey through the slums of India and makes no mention whatsoever of her growing political consciousness. The most radical quote from Fonda concerns the actress' wardrobe; Fonda now wears "different kinds of clothes, a lot of them [bought] second hand at the Flea Market." Though Fonda was in town to promote *They Shoot Horses*, this, her first politically-themed film, is only referenced in passing. The journalist – a female, Joan Cook – took note of Fonda's dress size, weight, and the fact that she has appeared "nude or semi-nude in several movies," an inaccurate statement; at her most revealing, Fonda appeared, from the back, in nude underwear in

¹²¹ Fonda, 194.

¹²² Robert F. Kennedy, "Robert F. Kennedy Calls Vietnam an Unwinnable War, February 8, 1968," in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon, (D.C. Health and Co., 1990), 352-55, 91.

a swimming pool. Cook rounds out the article with a detailed description of Fonda's physical appearance and the appellation, "the sex symbol of two continents."¹²³

A similar article appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. In "What Dreams are made of – Jane Fonda Is High – on Just Herself," Rex Reed is bitingly sarcastic in his description of Fonda, who, during their New Years Eve interview, mused about the past decade, lit up, and telephoned her brother to wish him "Happy Decade." The article begins with a description of Fonda's sweater, miniskirt and legs. Her trip through India's slums is not mentioned, save for a picture and a caption that reads, "Jane on a visit last year to New Delhi, India, where pot is the real thing."¹²⁴ Presumably, she tried to shift the topic of conversation to more substantive issues. Reed writes, "The subject changed to 1970. Biafra. Slum housing. Strikes. Corruption in congress." Yet, Reed declines to write about Fonda's concerns regarding these issues. She is quoted only briefly in expressing her discontent with the political situation – America's "pouring money into military wars" – and with Hollywood: "even now, after 'Horses,' I'm still getting offers for sex parts."¹²⁵ As both the *Tribune* and the *Times* articles illustrate, while Fonda still looked like a Hollywood actress, her political concerns were all but ignored by journalists, both male and female, who preferred to comment on her appearance as they steered the conversation away from politics and towards topics such as lifestyle and clothes.

After viewing *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* Pauline Kael wrote, "Jane Fonda stands a good chance of personifying American tensions and dominating our movies in the seventies."¹²⁶

In the following year, Fonda found her place in the antiwar movement and, though journalists

¹²³ Joan Cook, "Jane Fonda, on Clothes and No Clothes," *New York Times*, December 5, 1969, 38.

¹²⁴ In discussing her trip to India, Fonda states explicitly that the trip taught her that she "wasn't a hippie; that given a choice, I'd dig wells rather than go to an ashram or space out on dope... [I]t's not possible to make things better when you're spaced out." Fonda, 215.

¹²⁵ Rex Reed, "What Dreams Are Made Of: Jane Fonda is High – on Just Herself," *Chicago Tribune*, January 25, 1970.

¹²⁶ Kael, "Deeper Into Movies," 71.

continued to paint her as a melodramatic, uninformed actress, Fonda was becoming an increasingly effective and informed full-time activist.

Jane Fonda's inaugural political act was her participation in the Native American occupation of Alcatraz. David Collier had received a call from Fonda's agent, saying that Fonda "wanted to get involved with important political issues at home." Would Collier be willing to introduce her to people in the New Left? "Naturally... I said yes," Collier recalled; he would be "delighted" to take her to Alcatraz.¹²⁷ Fonda went to the island prison in San Francisco Bay, which had been closed by this time for seven years, on March 1, 1970.¹²⁸ Her visit "put the Alcatraz squatters on the front page again."¹²⁹ That fact likely taught Fonda a lesson she would employ repeatedly over the next years, and even decades: that she, a movie star, had the power to bring public attention to social and political issues.

On the heels of her visit to Alcatraz, several Indians she had met there asked her to join them in occupying Fort Lawton in Washington State. This would be Fonda's "first act of public protest."¹³⁰ She was arrested, along with "85 other persons, mostly Indians," who were attempting to reclaim a portion of their ancestral land, reported the *Chicago Tribune*, in an article titled "Army Repels Jane Fonda's Indian Band."¹³¹ The tendency to use Fonda – an actress – to downplay legitimate grievances is evinced in the article's title, which conjures up images of child's play, not protest. At a news conference later that day, Fonda promised that she would continue to fight for "minority groups, and American servicemen who are opposed to the Viet

¹²⁷ Quoted in Andersen, 144.

¹²⁸ "Jane Fonda Joins Cause of Indians," *Long Beach Independent*, March 3, 1970.

¹²⁹ Andersen, 144; Fonda's attention to the Alcatraz Indians made front page news in at least eight American newspapers that week. Newspaperarchives.com.

¹³⁰ Fonda, 221.

¹³¹ *Chicago Tribune*, "Army Repels Jane Fonda's Indian Band," March 9, 1970.

Nam war.”¹³² Indeed, for Fonda, the GI movement went hand in hand with the struggles of minorities in the United States. She was briefly involved with the Black Panther Party, mostly in helping them raise bail money. Fonda explains in her autobiography that while she empathized with African-American grievances, she could not accept the practice of “meeting state violence with citizen violence.”¹³³ The GI and veterans movements were a natural fit for Fonda; they avoided the violence espoused by the Panthers, they were movements neglected by the media, and, since many dissident GIs were ethnic minorities, the GI movement in particular allowed Fonda to wed her concerns with war and race.

In early 1970 Fonda met Fred Gardner, the veteran who had started the first GI coffeehouse outside Fort Jackson in 1968. By 1969 there were over 20 coffeehouses “near military bases across the nation.” They were “run by veterans and civilians who offered GIs a friendly environment, food, nonalcoholic beverages, entertainment, and antiwar literature... and provided counselling on GI rights.”¹³⁴ Gardner encouraged Fonda to talk to active-duty GIs and she soon embarked on a cross-country road trip, complete with stops at Indian reservations and GI coffeehouses. Fonda later said, “I took off on that trip a liberal, and I ended up a radical.”¹³⁵

Initially, Fonda maintained a low profile. Her visits to coffeehouses were informal, as were the occasional stops at college campuses, where Fonda sat and talked with students. During

¹³² *Chicago Tribune*, “Jane on Warpath,” March 10, 1970. Fonda’s efforts to work with the American Indian movement soon led to early criticisms of her activism from the Left. Emblematic of the criticism is a later article in which an Indian activist asked, “do we need a white woman to lead us?... If she really wants to help, why doesn’t she just give money for legal aid and stay in the background?” (*The New Yorker*, May 27, 1972, quoted in Andersen, 148). Fonda’s subsequent activism evinces a consideration of this criticism. Though Fonda would speak at many rallies and raise much money in the process, she would rarely engage in acts of protest as conspicuous as Fort Lawton again. With VVAW, Fonda spoke and raised money, but often stayed in the background – particularly during the Winter Soldier Investigation.

¹³³ Fonda, 222. Fonda claims that her involvement with the Panthers consisted “wholly” of raising bail money. However, she also publicly supported Angela Davis and Huey Newton, even hosting a press conference for Newton in her New York apartment. “Newton urges rally to stop ‘lynching,’” *Hayward Daily Review*, August 23, 1970.

¹³⁴ Hershberger, 8.

¹³⁵ *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 9, 1971.

this trip she began to financially support the antiwar movement, making “contributions to the United States Servicemen’s Fund, which provided start-up... funds for the coffeehouses.”¹³⁶ While in Colorado, Fonda engaged in her first public protest against the war, a “36-hour fast for peace” in Denver.¹³⁷ From there, she went to Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, where the “base commander had agreed to meet with [her]” to discuss the recent “sick call,” in which a hundred soldiers carrying peace signs had lined up in front of the medical dispensary to say “they were sick – sick of the war.” All the soldiers had been put into the stockade and Fonda had heard rumours that “they were being beaten.”¹³⁸ She writes,

it was hoped that my meeting the base commander would lead to the release of the soldier-protestors. Surprisingly, the general took us on a tour of the stockade and let us talk to prisoners. If he hoped by this to show us that the GIs were being well treated, it backfired. We saw prisoners who seemed catatonic... Some, who identified themselves as Black Panthers, said they had been beaten, and it appeared to be so... Perhaps [the general] misjudged the effect it would have on me. In any case, the visit was abruptly called to an end and we were ushered out...¹³⁹

Days later, on April 30, 1970, Fonda checked into a hotel just in time to watch Nixon announce the invasion of Cambodia. Apart from public protests and taking reporters’ questions, Fonda had thus far listened to others talk about the war. With the invasion of Cambodia, Fonda agreed to speak to a large crowd for the first time. A small meeting at the University of New Mexico thus transformed into an address to hundreds of students, scheduled for May 4, 1970.¹⁴⁰

Fonda’s reaction to the Cambodia news was in line with that of many Americans. On the heels of the announcement, the Senate began the symbolic process of repealing the Tonkin Resolution. At the State Department, 250 career officers “sent a joint letter of protest to Secretary

¹³⁶ Hershberger, 9.

¹³⁷ “Jane Fonda: Fast Was Fantastic,” *Long Beach Independent*, April 15, 1970.

¹³⁸ Fonda, 237.

¹³⁹ Fonda, 238.

¹⁴⁰ Fonda, 242.

of State William Rogers” and several NSC staff members “quit Kissinger’s service in protest.”¹⁴¹ Outside of Washington, students at hundreds of universities across the country walked out, constituting “the largest student strike that the United States had ever known.”¹⁴² Antiwar historian Charles DeBenedetti notes that “normally apolitical groups, including Nobel science laureates, entertainment celebrities, musicians, architects, and publishers,” were coalescing in opposition to the war.¹⁴³

At the same time, two other developments were taking place. On May 1, Nixon famously called student protestors “bums.” The next day he told his aides to accuse those who protested the war of “giving aid and comfort to the enemy.” He added that they “should draw the line ‘hard and deep’ and use accusing words like ‘treason.’”¹⁴⁴ A second development specifically concerned Fonda; around the time she was in Colorado, the FBI had put her under surveillance. J. Edgar Hoover ordered that a thorough dossier be kept on Fonda, labelled “Jane Fonda: Anarchist.” Thenceforth, Fonda would be under “intense scrutiny from the government.”¹⁴⁵

On May 4, Fonda was at the University of New Mexico for her scheduled talk. “On the podium before her was a sign that said simply ‘Vietnam.’”¹⁴⁶ This contrasts sharply with the visual statements made by other antiwar speakers. For example, the antiwar United States Senator, Ernest Gruening, had, in 1966 “[spoken] from a platform bearing the sign ‘Shame America’ with red, white and blue bombs falling on a cowering nude woman clutching two infants.”¹⁴⁷ Fonda declined to use either visual or rhetorical flourishes of this sort to get her

¹⁴¹ DeBenedetti, 286, 284.

¹⁴² Hershberger, 11.

¹⁴³ DeBenedetti, 284.

¹⁴⁴ Hershberger, 11.

¹⁴⁵ Fonda, 239; Andersen, 147.

¹⁴⁶ Hershberger, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Robert D. Johnson, “The Progressive Dissent: Ernest Gruening and Vietnam,” in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent*, ed. Randall B. Woods, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.

message across. The talk in Albuquerque was Fonda's first speaking engagement at a public rally; she was surprised when the auditorium became "packed to overflowing."

She began by talking about "recent war reporting from Vietnam." She also told students that the United States had been in Cambodia for years (as she had heard from veterans), and that Americans who had gone to Cambodia had seen the evidence of American bombings. She stressed the importance of remaining nonviolent, and concluded by urging the students "not to write off conventional politics and to "write letters every two weeks to the president and congressional representatives.""¹⁴⁸ As soon as she finished speaking, someone asked Fonda why she had not mentioned the shootings that had just taken place at Kent State University. No one had given her the news yet; Fonda then marched with the students to the university president's house, asking him to shut down the university in mourning for the Kent State deaths.¹⁴⁹ After Fonda's departure, the university president did in fact "send a telegram to Nixon protesting the Cambodia invasion" and the students called their protest group "They Shoot Students, Don't They?"¹⁵⁰ Like many Americans, the Spring of 1970 made a deep impression on Fonda; she notes in her autobiography that in addition to the deaths at Kent State and Jackson State, "35,000 National Guardsmen were called out in sixteen states," and "more than five hundred GIs were deserting every day."¹⁵¹

On May 9, Fonda spoke at a "huge" national rally in the nation's capital, attended by nearly 100,000 protestors. Fonda was asked to speak first, greeting the protestors; she did so warmly, with a reference to Nixon's recent characterization of student protestors: "Greetings fellow bums," Fonda called to the crowd. The rally was a success; the crowd roared when

¹⁴⁸ Fonda, 242; Hershberger, 13; "Jane Fonda Blasts U.S. Asian Policy," *Albuquerque Journal*, May 5, 1970.

¹⁴⁹ Fonda, 242.

¹⁵⁰ The students also began a university strike. On May 8, the Governor called in the National Guard, which arrived with bayonets on their rifles. One TV news cameraman and nine students were bayoneted. Hershberger, 14.

¹⁵¹ Fonda, 243.

“several hundred people marched into sight under banners that read... ‘Federal Bums Against the War,’” and the *New York Times* noted that the crowd “demonstrated peaceably.”¹⁵²

Fonda resumed her road trip, but her actions were noticeably bolder than before Cambodia and Kent State. She visited a coffeehouse outside Fort Hood, went to the gate of the base, and began handing out leaflets.¹⁵³ Fonda was arrested on site by military police, notified that she was permanently barred from the base, then released. Afterwards, reporters congregated at the nearby coffeehouse, where Fonda told them, “I am not here as a movie star or publicity kick... I am a person who is fighting against the war and for GI rights... I went [to Fort Hood] because GIs are not permitted to distribute leaflets.” Fonda also said, “I wish the news media would not refer to me as a movie star.”¹⁵⁴ Despite the unglamorous nature of Fonda’s visit to the base, the press could not resist commenting on her appearance. One news article opened with the line, “Jane Fonda, wearing a blue work shirt unbuttoned halfway down the front, was arrested Monday.”¹⁵⁵

In subsequent weeks, Fonda continued to visit GI coffeehouses; she was arrested two more times by military police for distributing literature, at Fort Bragg and Fort Meade. She also spoke at the University of Maryland to approximately 2000 students gathered on the lawn. She told these students that it was “vital” to support antiwar GIs, “because it is far more of a sacrifice for them to wear a peace button at the risk of a court-martial than for a student to parade.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Hershberger, 15; John Herbers, “Big Capital Rally Asks U.S. Pullout in Southeast Asia, *New York Times*, May 10, 1970.

¹⁵³ The leaflets read: “Last week at Kent State University, 4 students involved in a peaceful demonstration were shot and killed. Another died of bayonet wounds. These deaths and the thousands of injuries caused by police violence are a direct result of the government’s repression of the antiwar movement so it may continue its dirty work uninterrupted. We demand an end to the use of police, National Guard and federal troops to suppress popular movements.” The fifth death, which was reported in the press, did not occur; the bayoneted student survived the wounds. Hershberger, 15.

¹⁵⁴ “Actress Arrested, Ejected in Ft. Hood Leaflet Effort,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 13, 1970.

¹⁵⁵ The article returned to Fonda’s appearance mid-way through the story, commenting, “she wore blue denim bellbottomed trousers, a wide leather belt and sandals.” Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Stephen Neary, “Jane Fonda, Mark Lane Are Arrested, Banned in Antiwar Act at Ft. Meade,” *Washington Post*,

Mary Hershberger has noted that Fonda was also willing to speak at small events, and was “constantly booked at universities, churches, GI coffeehouses, community colleges, and public rallies.”¹⁵⁷

Though Fonda was a popular newcomer to the antiwar cause, she also made some mistakes in this early phase of her activism. As Christopher Andersen has noted, Fonda’s first political television appearance, on ABC’s *Dick Cavett Show*, was not a resounding success. Fonda “appeared arrogant and shrill” and her comments contained factual errors; “as she left the studio, someone from the audience walked up to [her] and spat in her face.”¹⁵⁸ Fonda also gave a speech in defence of the Soledad Brothers, who had killed a prison guard, and said, of Black Panther founder Huey Newton, “he’s the only man I’ve ever met... who approaches sainthood.”¹⁵⁹ These early gaffes did nothing to gain the respect of elements of the media that were more than willing to castigate female activists. Right-of-centre columnist and Lil’ Abner cartoonist Al Capp, who had already taken aim at Joan Baez, found Fonda an easy target.¹⁶⁰ In his syndicated column, Capp wrote,

Jane Fonda has revealed a new side of herself, which is the last thing the world expected from a girl who has revealed every side of herself in a movie career in which she has mainly played nymphomaniacs in their working clothes.¹⁶¹

Capp’s comments illustrate the tendency of Fonda’s male critics to use her gender, her career, and especially her previous acting roles against her. The fact that Fonda had recently won a New York Film Critics Circle Award and been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for her role in *They*

May 23, 1970; Michael Kernan, “A Day in the Life of Jane Fonda,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 1970.

¹⁵⁷ Hershberger, 17.

¹⁵⁸ Andersen, 147.

¹⁵⁹ Andersen, 157; *Chicago Sun Times*, May 9, 1971, cited in Andersen, 150. While Huey Newton was not generally viewed as a hallowed figure in the early 1970s, his more thuggish behavior was not as evident in this period as it would become in later years.

¹⁶⁰ For Capp’s treatment of Baez, see “Comics: Which One Is the Phoenie?” *Time*, January 20, 1967, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,843312,00.html> (accessed June 26, 2011).

¹⁶¹ Al Capp, “She did not grow ‘Fonda’ the Army, *The Gastonia Gazette*, April 4, 1970.

Shoot Horses made little difference. From 1970 through today, male commentators have been able to strike at Fonda through her acting roles of the 1960s, making her at once vulnerable – for her critics know her much more intimately than she knows them – and humorous, for who could take seriously the politics of someone who has made a career out of playing sex kittens on-screen? Both of these tactics – attacking Jane Fonda as an exposed female and as a politically unserious actress – are tightly interwoven with Fonda’s gender. Were she a male, a history of playing Casanovas would hardly be as damaging; nor would it be as easy to dismiss Fonda as “shrill” or as less attractive in real life than in her movies.¹⁶²

Such criticisms of Fonda abounded in the early 1970s. While critics were recalling the old Jane Fonda, the new Jane Fonda was busy building her knowledge of the war in Vietnam. Specifically, Fonda was hearing about the war first-hand from soldiers who had served there, and was discovering needs within the GI and veterans movements that she could help meet.

As she visited GI coffeehouses, Fonda heard stories from veterans about the atrocities going on in Vietnam. She heard about the torture of civilians, of “genitals cut off Vietcong for trophies,” and prisoners falling to their deaths from helicopters.¹⁶³ Such revelations contributed to Fonda’s willingness to support VVAW’s upcoming inquiry. Fonda also heard from countless antiwar GIs, who demonstrated to her that “opponents to the war are not simply those who are deserting or burning their draft cards... The military is filled with men who are against the war,”

¹⁶² Male actors-turned-political activists have not escaped demeaning commentary in recent years. Sean Penn has been criticized for proselytizing, accused of being anti-American, and has had his film roles used against him to suggest that he is either overly-emotional or under-intelligent. A recent article in the *New York Post* refers to both Fonda and Penn, asserting that “their influence far outweighs their brain capacity.” The post-9/11 political climate and media landscape are certainly factors in the 21st century attacks against both Penn and Fonda. It remains to be seen whether Penn will, in forty years, be characterized as a traitor, as Fonda is today. Despite the willingness of today’s commentators to berate Penn, it is no less significant that of all the Vietnam-era activists, including high-profile male celebrities, Fonda is the lone target of 21st century right-wing pundits. Equally notable, even before she went to Hanoi, Fonda was criticized far more than fellow actor-activist Donald Sutherland, who performed alongside Fonda in *FTA*. Andrea Peyser, “Go Ahead and Pledge Allegiance,” *New York Post*, July 4, 2011, available at http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/go_ahead_and_pledge_allegiance_pbn2h6o6w3ItncG6cb0vK (accessed July 18, 2011); Hunt, 214.

¹⁶³ Andersen, 158.

she told the *New York Times*.¹⁶⁴ Fonda also learned that most of them were draftees; in contrast to “the civilian antiwar movement was primarily white and middle-class, the GI movement was made up of working-class kids... who couldn’t afford college deferments,” as well as large numbers of poor “blacks and Latinos.”¹⁶⁵

One thing that Fonda routinely heard GIs speak about was their frustration at their loss of the right to free speech. Seeing that “GIs had little voice and no independent representation when they faced harassment from officers,” Fonda sought to give them legal representation.¹⁶⁶ Together with former Green Beret Donald Duncan and attorney Mark Lane, Fonda sought help from Congress. She “believed that the military might be responsive if members of Congress took an interest in specific GI cases.”¹⁶⁷ In June 1970, the three activists went to Washington and spoke with Senator Charles Goodell, chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Veteran Affairs. Fonda suggested that an independent office, called the GI Office, be set up to process “complaints of repression against GIs who oppose the war.” Fonda said she would raise funds for the office. Senator Goodell, along with three other Senators, including William Fulbright, offered his support. The GI office opened that August; its mandate was to “represent servicemen and women whose rights have been violated by the military.”¹⁶⁸

In the coming months, “Fonda raised over \$50,000 for the GI Office.” Hershberger has noted that until the draft ended completely in 1972,

the GI Office sent investigators to army bases around the country to meet with GIs and collect information about allegations of mistreatment and harassment. Attorneys in the GI Office documented charges and wrote reports for representatives on Capitol Hill, who referred the charges to congressional committees, including the Senate Armed Forces Committee.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Leticia Kent, “It’s Not Just ‘Fonda and Company,’” *New York Times*, March 21, 1971.

¹⁶⁵ Fonda, 223

¹⁶⁶ Hershberger, 18, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Hershberger, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Hershberger, 21; “Jane Fonda Plans to Aid Antiwar GIs,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 1970.

¹⁶⁹ Hershberger, 21.

After the GI office was set up, Fonda turned her attention to VVAW, and would spend the rest of the year helping launch their inquiry into war crimes, the Winter Soldier Investigation.

Today, critics of “Hanoi Jane” routinely overlook the fact that Fonda’s pre-Hanoi antiwar efforts centred on the GI and veterans movements. By the time she arrived on the scene in 1970, antiwar GIs were being repressed by military authorities on bases across the country, and VVAW, in its fourth year, was struggling under the weight of financial burdens and government repression. A year before, antiwar soldiers at Fort Jackson sued the Army “in an attempt to obtain the same rights to protest that civilians have under the First Amendment.” The soldiers asserted that “harassment and intimidation” were routinely used to suppress peaceful dissent against the Vietnam War. This story was reported in the *New York Times* in April 1969; the same article reported that, at that time, there were “at least seven Army posts with newspapers published clandestinely by the soldiers.”¹⁷⁰

The plaintiffs at Fort Jackson, most of whom were “Negroes or Puerto Ricans” were associated with “G.I.’s United Against the War in Vietnam,” a group comprising active-duty antiwar GIs. According to the *New York Times*, Army officials had already investigated antiwar soldiers and found “no evidence of direction or conspiracy by civilian radicals or peace groups.” Nevertheless, those associated with GI’s United, once their identities became known, were “transferred to other bases” or ordered “to ship out to Vietnam.”¹⁷¹ Outside official channels, draftees and soldiers were dissenting in other ways; by 1971, two hundred thousand servicemen were annually AWOL and sixty thousand draft dodgers had already fled to Canada.¹⁷²

The situation for returning veterans could be even worse. By 1970 it was already well

¹⁷⁰ Ben A. Franklin, “G.I.’s Sue Army on Rights,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1969.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Jan Barry, “Why Veterans March Against the War,” *New York Times*, April 23, 1971.

known that wounded veterans could not anticipate receiving quality “medical care once back in the United States.” A *New York Times* article in October noted that approximately 350 soldiers were wounded each week; that Nixon had recently “vetoed a Senate-House effort” to appropriate additional funds “specifically for Veterans Administration hospitals;” and that, at a typical Veterans hospital in New York, one could find a single night nurse tasked to cover “ninety paraplegics.”¹⁷³

While Jane Fonda would eventually stage an antiwar show exclusively for active-duty GIs, and, after the war, produce and star in a film that explored the plight of wounded veterans, much of her early involvement was with VVAW, which got its start several years before Fonda arrived on the antiwar scene. The organization was founded in 1967 by Jan Barry. Barry had completed a tour of Vietnam from 1962-63 when the U.S. presence was supposed to consist wholly of “advisors.”¹⁷⁴ Like many who would join VVAW, Barry was not a radical and had no interest in joining “crazy” antiwar marchers.¹⁷⁵ He declined to join the movement until, in 1967, he saw an ad in the *New York Times* by Veterans for Peace, inviting veterans to the upcoming demonstration, “The Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam,” a peace parade up Fifth Avenue.¹⁷⁶ Veterans for Peace comprised veterans from World War II and the Korean War who opposed the war in Indochina; there was not yet an organization solely for antiwar Vietnam veterans.

The Spring Mobilization was an unprecedented event; it drew 300,000 – the largest antiwar crowd to date – and it marked the first visible showing of antiwar veterans. Prior to the Spring Mobilization, veterans were almost entirely identified with “prowar organizations, such as

¹⁷³ Herbert Mitgang, “The Double Wounds of War,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1970.

¹⁷⁴ Hunt, 12; Nicosia, 15.

¹⁷⁵ Like Barry, “most VVAWers came from working-class backgrounds. Almost none went to Vietnam as radicals.” Hunt, 10, 2.

¹⁷⁶ Hunt, 11; Nicosia, 16.

Veterans of Foreign Wars.”¹⁷⁷ Barry arrived at the demonstration, found the Veterans for Peace contingent, and heard a voice call out, “Vietnam veterans, go to the front!” A small group of veterans marched with Barry, carrying a painted banner that read “Vietnam Veterans Against the War!” As the group marched, a strange thing happened: “Right-wing counter-demonstrators who had screamed” at other marchers grew quiet when they saw the sign indicating that veterans were part of the march. Two months later, Barry and five other Vietnam veterans formally established “Vietnam Veterans Against the War.”¹⁷⁸

The organization’s purpose was simple: “to end the war in Vietnam.” By 1968, the group had launched a newspaper, *Vietnam GI*, which soon became “the most influential GI newspaper in the country.”¹⁷⁹ VVAW could hardly be characterized as “radical” or “extremist.” Leading members were politically moderate, sought to distance themselves from radicals in the larger antiwar movement, and “rejected the countercultural fashions” of the New Left. They had little interest in “street battles with police,” carrying NLF flags, or experimenting with drugs.¹⁸⁰

This organization was a known, non-radical quantity by the time Jane Fonda entered the antiwar scene; however, VVAW was struggling to stay afloat. Like other groups within the antiwar movement, by the 1970s VVAW faced the challenge of “making antiwar activism relevant amid Vietnamization and America’s increased reliance on the air war in Southeast Asia.”¹⁸¹ For VVAW, the task was doubly hard, for they continued to be “misunderstood by authorities and radicals alike;” antiwar advocates “had great contempt toward GIs.” All the

¹⁷⁷ Hunt, 6, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Hunt, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Hunt, 18, 23.

¹⁸⁰ When members appeared in the media, they “usually wore short hair and dressed in suits and ties.” In addition, an official FBI investigation of VVAW concluded that there was no evidence that communists or other subversive elements controlled the organization. Hunt, 20, 21, 5.

¹⁸¹ Hunt, 2.

while, the press paid scant attention to antiwar veterans.¹⁸²

Fonda, who had spoken at the antiwar rally in Washington in May “about the GI movement and why the antiwar movement shouldn’t view men in uniform as the enemy,” was asked to speak at VVAW’s first national demonstration at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.¹⁸³ This event illustrates the fact that wartime divisions did not pit Fonda and other radicals against soldiers; rather, at the end of the march to Valley Forge, antiwar *veterans* were confronted by prowar *veterans*. On the prowar side, a chaplain asserted that the antiwar marchers were “blinded by none other than Satan, anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-America.” The marchers responded by whistling Yankee Doodle Dandy, and flashing middle fingers and peace signs. At the rally, the 150 antiwar veterans, bearing 100 Purple Hearts, were greeted by “nearly two thousand rallygoers.”¹⁸⁴

En route to the rally, Vietnam veterans had met with statements such as “we won our war. You see, these fellas didn’t,” from one VFW member.¹⁸⁵ At the rally, antiwar civilians and veterans listened to speakers like Fonda, who espoused a pro-veteran, antiwar message. Fonda said she thought GI protestors were “the cutting edge of the peace movement,” and she declared,

This is not my country right or wrong. It’s my country, but what is wrong must be changed. I can’t escape the belief that My Lai was not an isolated incident but rather a way of life for many of our military... One thing Nixon can’t ignore is the sound of his own troops marching against his own policies... The rest of us can be accused of being reds, hippies, unpatriotic... but the guys who have been there can’t be ignored.¹⁸⁶

The veterans responded by giving her “a standing ovation.”¹⁸⁷

Despite the success at Valley Forge in the form of heightened visibility, money was a persistent problem for VVAW. In 1970, the organization was in great need of funding for the

¹⁸² Hunt, 3, 21, 16.

¹⁸³ Fonda, 244. This is the rally at which the genuine photo of Kerry and Fonda in the same crowd was taken.

¹⁸⁴ Hunt, 52.

¹⁸⁵ Nicosia, 68.

¹⁸⁶ Nicosia, 68, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Nicosia, 69.

upcoming Winter Soldier Investigation (WSI). State-level investigations into war crimes in Vietnam had already been held. WSI sought to bring together veterans from across the country to testify. The inquiry would rigorously check veterans' documents and have members of the same company testify together in order to corroborate their stories. The organizers hoped to gain national attention, to prove that My Lai was not an isolated incident, and to create momentum to end the war. Fonda agreed to help, and in October, 1970, embarked on a cross-country lecture tour that included "fifty-four college campuses and brought in more than \$10,000 for VVAW," thereby providing the majority of the funding for the inquiry.¹⁸⁸ Other financial supporters included the musical group, Crosby, Stills and Nash, and such non-radical groups as "Clergy and Laity Concerned [and] Business Executives Move for Vietnam Peace."¹⁸⁹

Though Fonda's financial contributions to WSI were vitally important, her involvement with VVAW was not without tensions. Mark Lane was a frequent companion of Fonda's in 1970. In addition to working with her on the GI Office, Lane served as Fonda's lawyer during the "drug" fiasco in Cleveland and, to the dismay of organizers, insisted on having a role in the planning of the Winter Soldier Investigation. Though Fonda appreciated Lane's legal knowledge and political experience, others were unimpressed by the celebrity lawyer. Lane had previously gained fame for writing *Rush to Judgment*, one of the earliest indictments of the Warren Commission's conclusions about the assassination of President Kennedy. Lane would later be dubbed a conspiracy theorist, but even in 1970, many on the Left disliked Lane, whom they saw as exploitative and arrogant.¹⁹⁰ The Citizens' Commission of Inquiry, VVAW's initial partner in planning WSI, ended their involvement with WSI because of Lane. It was suggested that Lane cease his involvement, but Fonda made it clear that she would not stay on as an organizer if Lane

¹⁸⁸ Hunt, 61.

¹⁸⁹ Charles DeBenedetti, 307.

¹⁹⁰ Hunt, 63.

was forced out.¹⁹¹ Then, a month before WSI, Lane's new book, *Conversations With Americans*, was reviewed in the *New York Times*. The reviewer had discovered that "several of Lane's interviewees had fabricated accounts of atrocities in Vietnam." Not only was Lane's reputation tarnished, but his involvement in the planning of WSI meant that the inquiry and its forthcoming disclosures would have to combat additional scepticism from the public and the press.¹⁹²

Those who testified hoped that WSI would put an end to the war – that faced with the "slaughter of innocents" and the waste of American lives, Americans would "simply demand an end to the slaughter."¹⁹³ For three days, inside a Howard Johnson's in Detroit, veterans testified; inside, the rooms were "packed with people – sitting on the floor, lining the aisles, even listening out in the hallways." Over 100 veterans testified, while "another 500 to 700 veterans from all over the United States came to listen and share." In addition to the disclosures of atrocities, the inquiry marked "the first public testimony about the potential toxicity of Agent Orange," given by Dr. Pfeiffer of the University of Montana¹⁹⁴ Outside the hotel, "a band of American neo-Nazis march[ed] through the snow... carrying banners that read: "HOWARD JOHNSON'S HARBORS REDS," and "JANE FONDA IS A COMMUNIST."¹⁹⁵

Despite all the testimony inside the inquiry, and the circus outside, the Winter Soldier Investigation was largely ignored by the media. One of the most substantive pieces on the inquiry was a sarcastic piece in the *Chicago Tribune*, titled "Viet Nam 'Crimes' Told at Mock Probe," that questioned whether those giving testimony actually served in Vietnam.¹⁹⁶ A CBS television crew that attended "were themselves deeply impressed, but none of their footage made it to the

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Hunt, 66, 67; Neil Sheehan, "Conversations With Americans," *New York Times*, December 27, 1970.

¹⁹³ Nicosia, 86.

¹⁹⁴ Nicosia, 87, 88.

¹⁹⁵ Nicosia, 86.

¹⁹⁶ "Viet Nam 'Crimes' Told at Mock Probe," *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1971.

nightly news.”¹⁹⁷ However, based on the WSI testimonies, the Pentagon, in May of that year, launched an investigation into the alleged atrocities and “violations of the Geneva Conventions.”¹⁹⁸ Jane Fonda’s first major contribution to the antiwar movement – providing the necessary funding for a grassroots veterans hearing – was legitimized, by May of that year, by no less than the United States Congress.

¹⁹⁷ Nicosia, 87.

¹⁹⁸ A transcript of the inquiry was placed in the Congressional Record by Senator Mark Hatfield, who petitioned both the State and Defense Departments to further investigate the allegations presented at the inquiry. George C. Wilson, “Viet Atrocity Probe Spurred by Veterans,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1971.

Chapter IV: “Fun, Travel and Adventure”

“From the beginning, the intention had been to try to bring the FTA show to South Vietnam as an alternative to Bob Hope’s pro-war, testosterone-driven tour. I wrote to President Nixon asking permission to go to South Vietnam for Christmas. I wasn’t holding my breath for a Dear-Jane-sure-come-on-over-we’d-love-the-troops-to-see-you-Love-Dick letter, but I wanted to be able to say that I’d at least tried.” – Jane Fonda

“We was just, you know, glad she was there, and shocked that someone that safe and that glamorous could be there. And we really appreciated it... I mean, she didn’t have to worry about Vietnam. She wasn’t going. Her daddy was too old and her brother was too rich.”
– Dick Gregory, on Jane Fonda

*[On the United States’ bombing raids of North Vietnam]:
“the best slum clearance projects they ever had.”* – Bob Hope, on a USO Tour¹⁹⁹

Fonda’s second major contribution to the antiwar movement was her involvement with FTA – a troupe of actors and singers she had enlisted to tour military bases performing “political vaudeville with an antiwar, pro-soldier theme.”²⁰⁰ The show consisted of “two hours of songs, sketches, dances [and] readings,” performed by Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Peter Boyle, Barbara Dane, singers Holly Near and Rita Martinson, and comedians Paul Mooney and Dick Gregory²⁰¹ The idea for the troupe came from the famous GI movement leader, Howard Levy, who suggested to Fonda and Donald Sutherland, “Why not put together an antiwar alternative to Bob

¹⁹⁹ The Jane Fonda quote appears in *My Life So Far*, Fonda, 274. The Dick Gregory quote is from *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda*, 1988, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTPJC4FS9_0 (accessed June 27, 2011). The Bob Hope quote appeared in *Newsweek*: “Hope Reminiscent,” *Newsweek*, January 10, 1966, 41.

²⁰⁰ Fonda, 273, 272.

²⁰¹ Other performers, at different times, included poet Pamela Donegan, actor Michael Alaimo and singer Len Chandler. Vivian Gornick, “Jane Fonda’s political vaudeville show,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1972; Fonda, 273, 274.

Hope's traditional pro-war entertainment?" The name FTA, "Fuck the Army" was already "a popular acronym among GIs." It was a spoof of the military's recruitment slogan, "Fun, Travel, and Adventure." The FTA troupe unofficially shared the GI's name; officially, however, it called itself "Free the Army." The show was characterized by contemporaries as both GI-friendly and wildly popular. Newspapers that covered the show led with headlines such as "GI Movement: A Show to Call Its Own."²⁰² A journalist who saw one of the three sold-out shows in Fayetteville described soldiers "swarming to the coffeehouse" to catch the "counter-USO show," and noted that, "even the Pentagon had to admit" that the Bob Hope show "was panned by the GIs."²⁰³

However, not all contemporaries were amused; one *New York Times* article proved sharply critical of Fonda and of the GIs who went to see FTA, suggesting that many in the audience "[seemed] stoned."²⁰⁴ Some on the Left saw FTA as a "vehicle for personal publicity" for Fonda.²⁰⁵ However, those who worked with Fonda on the show were not of that impression. Dick Gregory has praised Fonda's selfless concern for GIs and insisted "she legitimized the antiwar movement to a lot of Americans." Holly Near has said of Fonda, "Jane could have had the spotlight in a million other ways;" the GI movement was "a heart issue for her."²⁰⁶ Even more than the far Left, those on the Right were critical of both Fonda and FTA, which they dismissed as "the political pablum of a poor little rich girl."²⁰⁷ However, the GIs who came to see the show were less critical; according to one journalist, "at a civic auditorium 4,500 people rose as one,

²⁰² Michael Kernan, "GI Movement: A Show to Call Its Own," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1971.

²⁰³ This article also included quotes from GIs who attended the show, many of whom had seen combat. One GI said "I was super-straight until I came into the service... if I had it to do over, I would have gone to Canada." Another expressed anger over the war, over the number of GIs currently in the stockade on base, and asserted "90 per cent of the returnees feel this way." The article also noted the extent to which the GI movement had grown in the last year, with 26 coffeehouses and 75 underground GI newspapers in operation, suggesting that the FTA show was responding to a need. Michael Kernan, "GI Movement: A Show to Call Its Own."

²⁰⁴ Leticia Kent, "It's Not Just 'Fonda and Company,'" *New York Times*, March 21, 1971.

²⁰⁵ Gornick, "Jane Fonda's political vaudeville show."

²⁰⁶ *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda*, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTPJC4FS9_0 (accessed June 27, 2011).

²⁰⁷ Gornick, "Jane Fonda's political vaudeville show."

applauding wildly as the FTA performed.” After all, most of FTA’s material came from “stories and articles appearing in the underground GI newspapers.”²⁰⁸

The show’s popularity is notable, considering the fact that “it wasn’t easy” for active-duty military personnel to attend FTA. Military authorities routinely “put out misinformation about the time and place,” and GIs had to travel at their own expense (though the show itself was free). They also risked being photographed and harassed; Fonda recalls that the CID, “the military equivalent of the CIA, was always around taking snapshots.”²⁰⁹ The show was frequently denigrated in articles that covered Bob Hope’s pro-war USO show, which came directly to military bases. One such article touted the “pretty girls onstage” who received whistles, characterized the show of “crusader Jane Fonda” as “drudge” that “doesn’t qualify as entertainment,” and asserted that “boys” in the military “aren’t interested in politicking, philosophizing, or proselytizing.”²¹⁰ Yet, GIs attended the FTA show by the tens of thousands. Like Fonda and the other performers, Holly Near stressed that the show was “a response to something that already existed,” and was intended “to be like a cheerleader for them [antiwar GIs].”²¹¹ The show first toured the U.S. in the fall of 1971, “performing for some fifteen thousand GIs near major U.S. military bases.”²¹² Before Christmas, the troupe flew to Southeast Asia, where they performed 21 times for an estimated 64,000 troops in “Hawaii, the Philippines, Japan and Okinawa.”²¹³ According to a friend of Fonda’s who visited the Philippines and Japan “right after FTA had been there, bootlegged audiotapes of the show were ‘selling like hotcakes’

²⁰⁸ Gornick, “Jane Fonda’s political vaudeville show.”

²⁰⁹ Fonda, 275; Gary Arnold, “‘F.T.A.’: The Fonda Way,” *The Washington Post*, June 28, 1972.

²¹⁰ Norma Lee Browning, “Bob Hope Still GI’s Favorite, Writer Finds,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1971.

²¹¹ *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda*, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTPJC4FS9_0 (accessed June 27, 2011).

²¹² Fonda, 275.

²¹³ Arnold, “‘F.T.A.’: The Fonda Way.”

among the soldiers and were even circulated in Vietnam.”²¹⁴ Footage of the performances was turned into a documentary, *F.T.A.* and released the following year. The film version contained post-performance footage of GIs expressing their frustrations about the military mission in Vietnam. According to a *Washington Post* reviewer who attended a screening of the film, the black humor in *F.T.A.* had Vietnam veterans “laughing harder than anyone.”²¹⁵

The FTA tour, along with Fonda’s work with VVAW, tends to be overlooked by critics in the post-Vietnam era. Rather than being recognized for her work with veterans and in support of antiwar GIs – who were being repressed by the government and ignored by the larger antiwar movement – Fonda is depicted as an extremist antiwar figure. Her popularity amongst active-duty soldiers and veterans has been conveniently forgotten. FTA and VVAW, both of which took priority in Fonda’s life for months at a time, and both of which were specifically pro-GI endeavours, have been rendered obsolete footnotes in the tale of antiwar Fonda, better known as “Hanoi Jane.”

²¹⁴ Fonda, 275.

²¹⁵ Tom Zito, “‘The FTA Show’: Moving,” *Washington Post*, July 19, 1972.

Chapter V: Hanoi

*“This is Jane Fonda speaking from Hanoi...”*²¹⁶

In July 1972, Jane Fonda accepted an invitation from the “Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People” to visit North Vietnam.²¹⁷ The day Fonda left for Vietnam, the *Chicago Tribune* carried the heading “Jane Fonda Takes Letters to POWs” on its front page. The *Tribune* reported that Fonda would be observing “the effects of United States bombing raids,” and was “carrying several hundred letters written to American prisoners of war by their families.”²¹⁸ For the next week, Fonda’s exploits in Vietnam went unreported; then, on July 15, the *New York Times* carried a story about a broadcast Fonda had made the day before over “the Voice of Vietnam Radio.”²¹⁹ The *New York Times*, in its coverage of Fonda’s broadcasts and the reaction to them, is representative of the major U.S. papers. The *Times* article of July 15, using information released from the North Vietnamese press agency, reported that Fonda had visited a bombed village and a region of Vietnam where the dikes had been damaged. The article also contained a quote from the broadcast, where Fonda said there were “no military targets” in the areas that had been bombed by U.S. airmen.²²⁰ Anyone familiar with the potency of “Hanoi Jane” three decades later would likely be surprised by the response of readers and op-ed writers: for more than a week after this report, the *New York Times* carried not a single item about Fonda. The

²¹⁶ Excerpt from one of Fonda’s broadcasts over Radio Hanoi. The transcripts can be accessed in “Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas,” *Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security*, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress., 2nd Sess., September 19 and 25, 1972 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 7644-72, available at http://www.archive.org/stream/hearingsregardin1972unit/hearingsregardin1972unit_djvu.txt (accessed June 28, 2011), 7648.

²¹⁷ “N. Viets Ordered: Hold Until Death,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1972.

²¹⁸ “Jane Fonda Takes Letters to POWs,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1972, A1.

²¹⁹ “Jane Fonda Appeal Reported By Hanoi,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1972.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

next Fonda news item appeared a full ten days later. It was not the response of an outraged American citizen writing to the editor, nor was it a rebuke of Fonda from political quarters; instead, Fonda appeared in the news of her own accord, in an article titled, “Jane Fonda Accuses Nixon.” The article quotes Fonda, who calls President Nixon a “traitor... someone who is committing the most heinous crimes I think have ever been committed.”²²¹

Once again, what follows in the venerable flagship newspaper is an absence of commentary, from both the *Times*’ writers and readership. The follow-up story, four days later, is another Fonda-friendly piece. In “Jane Fonda, Here, Explains Plea to Pilots From Hanoi,” Fonda does just that; “horrified” by the damage she encountered in North Vietnam, Fonda explains that she spoke on Vietnam radio to urge American pilots to consider what they were doing.²²² Like the *New York Times*, other major American newspapers responded rather calmly to Fonda’s exploits.²²³ Neither the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, nor *The Washington Post* evinced an uproar over Fonda’s actions. On July 15 – the day the Hanoi news broke – *The Washington Post* carried a story titled “State Dept. Reprimands Jane Fonda.” This article quotes a State Department spokesman, who lamented that any American citizen would “[lend] their voice” to the government of North Vietnam. However, the article also notes that, while the State Department has “tried to suspend the passports of American citizens traveling to North Vietnam” it is not legally authorized to do so. Thanks to court decisions barring such action, the *Washington Post* reported, “large numbers of Americans have visited Hanoi.”²²⁴

Indeed, as the coverage by the nation’s leading newspapers suggests, Fonda’s visit to North Vietnam was, in many ways, unremarkable. “Despite the federal government’s efforts... to

²²¹ “Jane Fonda Accuses Nixon,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1972.

²²² “Jane Fonda, Here, Explains Plea to Pilots from Hanoi,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1972.

²²³ An article in the *Chicago Tribune* on July 15 is much the same as the one that appeared in the *New York Times* on the same day. “Hanoi Radio Cited,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 15, 1972.

²²⁴ “State Dept. Reprimands Jane Fonda,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1972.

prevent [activists] from expressing dissent in Vietnam by manipulating passport laws,” notes historian Amy Scott, “by the end of the war three hundred Americans had gone to see for themselves what was happening in North Vietnam.”²²⁵ Scott has observed that these American travellers saw themselves as “patriots for peace”; they believed that the actions of their government “did not represent peace-loving Americans.”²²⁶ The first Americans from the peace movement to visit Hanoi did so in 1965, after the U.S. had begun bombing North Vietnam. The envoy consisted of two members of Women Strike for Peace (WSP), an organization founded in 1961 by Washington housewives who had first joined together in support of an atmospheric nuclear test ban treaty, and later made the Vietnam War their top priority.²²⁷ This organization, though hardly composed of extremists, had by 1967 released a “Statement of Conscience” which asserted that resisting “the war and the draft is both moral and legal” and that those who send American boys “to kill and be killed... are committing crimes.”²²⁸ Upon returning from Hanoi, Jane Fonda would make a similar assertion, that it was not herself, but those in government, prolonging the war, who had betrayed America.

Travel to Hanoi increased in tandem with the war’s escalation; “by 1969 the Vietnam Peace Committee hosted about one group of Americans per month.”²²⁹ By the time of Fonda’s trip, over two hundred Americans had preceded her, including “religious groups, Vietnam

²²⁵ Amy Scott, “Patriots for peace: People-to-people diplomacy and the anti-war movement,” in *American and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*, ed. Andrew Weist, Mary Kathryn Barbier, Glenn Robins, 131.

²²⁶ Scott, 131.

²²⁷ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, “Women and Antiwar Activism,” in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 426. As a result of attempts by the Pentagon to smuggle contraband to POWs, U.S. mail to POWs was cut off in 1969. WSP, who sent regular delegations to North Vietnam, were “inundated with calls from POW families.” By the time the POWs were released in 1973, WSP “had carried over 7000 letters to the POWs in Hanoi.” Hershberger, 79.

²²⁸ “Women’s Statement of Conscience,” in *Major Problems in the history of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 407.

²²⁹ Scott, 131.

veterans, teachers, lawyers,” and “doctors and biologists from Harvard, Yale and MIT.”²³⁰ Fonda has sought to contextualize her own experiences, writing that

All the travelers had returned with reports about extensive bombing of civilian targets, including churches, hospitals, and schools; reports that the morale of the North seemed undiminished, that the bombing was not having and would not have the desired effect of getting the North Vietnamese government to retreat at the negotiating table.²³¹

In her characterization of American travelers to North Vietnam, Fonda is supported by the similar analyses of professional historians. In his study of the antiwar movement, Charles DeBenedetti notes that visitors to North Vietnam included not only activists, like David Dellinger and Tom Hayden, but also ministers and academics.²³² When Dellinger went to North Vietnam in 1966, he recorded the “widespread civilian devastation.” DeBenedetti writes that while “antiwar visitors tended to overlook the potential for arbitrary rule in Hanoi,” they nonetheless served to document both the “tragic civilian destruction [and] the people’s nationalistic dedication.”²³³ Amy Scott has noted that countless American travelers used writing and photographs to convey to those back home what they had seen – “human carnage, bombed-out villages, defoliated fields, and cities devoid of children.” Activists frequently discovered that Vietnam’s history of colonialism and its culture were “more instructive than Cold War logic in understanding the war aims of the North Vietnamese.”²³⁴

Twenty-first century references to “Hanoi Jane” give the impression that Fonda was the only American to make this trip.²³⁵ Not only was Fonda unremarkable in that she visited Hanoi,

²³⁰ Fonda, 291-2. The most thorough treatment of American visitors in North Vietnam is Mary Hershberger’s *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

²³¹ Fonda, 292.

²³² Charles DeBenedetti has observed that Hayden’s visit to North Vietnam was more concerned with “constructive engagement than protest.” While in North Vietnam, Hayden negotiated for the release of three American POWs; the men were released into his custody and returned home with Hayden. DeBenedetti, 192, 193.

²³³ DeBenedetti, 169.

²³⁴ Scott, 132.

²³⁵ Whether one examines conservatives or centrist news sources; those published in connection with Kerry in 2004,

but her experiences in North Vietnam and her responses to them were neither unique nor extreme. The purpose for Fonda's trip was to document the American bombings of North Vietnam's dike system, which was being vehemently denied by the Nixon Administration. The most complete description of Fonda's trip, and the best window into her mindset, is found in her autobiography, *My Life So Far*. Even if certain experiences have been embellished or glossed over, there is no doubt that Fonda observed extensive destruction, and that her reactions were normal, compared with the American travelers that had preceded her.²³⁶ Furthermore, Fonda convincingly (if not definitively) demonstrates that her responses were based more on evidence and experience than on anti-American sentiments, or on an extremist set of beliefs.

After leaving the United States on July 7, 1972, Fonda flew to Paris, where she caught a second plane, bound for Hanoi. Her arrival in North Vietnam was delayed because American planes were bombing the capital. While in-flight over North Vietnam, she looked out her window to see "the black silhouettes of eight American Phantom jet fighters circling above the city." The loudspeaker then announced that the plane would have to turn around and wait for the bombers

in connection with the release of her memoir in 2005, or more recently, it is almost impossible to find a single article that alludes to the fact that Americans besides Fonda also traveled to Hanoi. The *New York Times* published several substantive articles on Fonda at the time of her memoir's release – all of which mentioned Fonda's trip to Hanoi, none of which mentioned that other Americans had visited Hanoi and made radio broadcasts. A *Washington Times* article published the same month mocked Fonda's apology for appearing to "[thumb her] nose" at the United States: "'Like' she was thumbing her nose? The woman delivered numerous broadcasts on Radio Hanoi claiming tortured POWs were in 'good health'... and accusing American pilots of being 'war criminals.'" With the exception of publications like *The Nation*, the fact that other Americans traveled to Hanoi has gone almost unmentioned. Janet Maslin, "Books of the times; An Actress Reconciling the Many Lives She's Lived," *New York Times*, April 5, 2005; Todd S. Purdum, "And Now for Her Third Act: Jane Fonda Looks Over the First Two," *New York Times*, April 5, 2005; Caryn James, "Where's Jane Fonda? On Yet Another Journey," *New York Times*, March 8, 2005; Maureen Dowd, "'My Life So Far': The Roles of a Lifetime," *New York Times*, April 24, 2005; Michelle Malkin, "Hanoi Jane rides again," *Washington Times*, April 8, 2005, available at

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/apr/8/20050408-091422-1194r/> (accessed July 21, 2011).

²³⁶ Of course, it could be argued that the antiwar individuals who went to North Vietnam were not a representative sample; they were predisposed to react sympathetically to the plight of the North Vietnamese. It is worth noting that, unlike some travelers to Hanoi, the purpose of Fonda's trip was not to provide support to the North Vietnamese, but to document an act of war that the U.S. government was denying.

to finish their mission.²³⁷

When Fonda finally disembarked she was carrying crutches (she had fractured her foot running through the airport in Paris), her purse, a camera to document the dike bombings and “a packet of letters from the families of POWs.” Among the few personal items she had brought were clothes that proved to be too hot for outdoor travel in mid-July. As a result, she went to a shop near her hotel and purchased “a pair of loose black pants and rubber sandals,” which she wore for the remainder of her stay. This is the garb she was wearing in the infamous anti-aircraft gun pictures.²³⁸ This attire is frequently cited as “proof” that she identified and sympathized with her Vietnamese hosts. According to Fonda the clothes were practical and worn to keep cool – not to infer where her allegiance lay.²³⁹

Fonda met her Vietnamese hosts and learned that a visit to an anti-aircraft installation remained on the agenda, scheduled for her last day in Vietnam. Fonda claims that she had already indicated, via correspondence, that she was “*not* interested in military installations.” However, the North Vietnamese remained unwilling to remove this item from the agenda.²⁴⁰

When Fonda arrived at her hotel, she encountered a number of Europeans and two American journalists sitting in the lobby; as numerous histories of the war indicate, it was not uncommon to find Americans and other foreign non-communists in Hanoi during these years. During the first of three air raids on Hanoi that night, Fonda entered the hotel’s bunker; it was

²³⁷ Fonda was later told that the targets of the planes she had seen included a factory, hospital and brickyard, all at the height of their working hours. She also writes that after visiting Vietnam, she read that U.S. bombers took advantage of the unwillingness of the North Vietnamese to “fire at them when civilian aircraft were in range.” Fonda, 293, 296.

²³⁸ On Fonda’s last day in North Vietnam, she visited an anti-aircraft site, where she was photographed, wearing a helmet and in peasant garb, sitting on an anti-aircraft gun. As will be explained, these pictures attracted little interest when they were released in 1972 – perhaps because many Americans who visited North Vietnam were similarly taken to military sites. In subsequent years, the pictures have become highly important to the Hanoi Jane myth; they function as the visual proof of Fonda’s “treachery.”

²³⁹ Fonda, 294, 307.

²⁴⁰ Fonda, 295.

full of foreigners, including other Americans. She sat beside John Sullivan, the director of the Quaker peace organization, “the American Friends Service Committee.”²⁴¹ The following day, while having her foot examined by doctors at a hospital, another air raid saw Fonda hurried into a bomb shelter where she was the lone foreigner. In response to the curious gazes of Vietnamese patients, her interpreter told them that she was American; the news, Fonda recalled, “[stirred] up a lot of excitement,” but no hostility.²⁴² A similar experience occurred later that week. Travel by car was a rare sight in North Vietnam, indicating the presence of a VIP. During one car ride, the vehicle carrying Fonda and her guides attracted the attention of teenage boys, who ran alongside the vehicle, shouting a question about Fonda – is she Russian? The driver shouted back, “she’s an American.” To Fonda’s amazement, the boys cheered. She asked herself, “Why? Why don’t they shout at me?.. Don’t [they] understand it is my country that is bombing [them]?”²⁴³ Fonda received an answer to this question while watching a production of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons*. (She was asked, as an actress, to critique the play.) When she asked the director why this play was chosen, his reply unwittingly served to explain why there was so little anger towards Americans in Vietnam:

This play shows that there are bad Americans and good Americans. We must help our people distinguish between the two. We are a small country. We cannot afford to let our people hate the American people. One day the war will be over and we must be friends.²⁴⁴

In this experience, as in others, Fonda’s time in North Vietnam was highly typical of American visitors. As Amy Scott has observed, “after surveying the war-torn landscape of Vietnam, Americans were generally surprised that the North Vietnamese could treat them” with

²⁴¹ Fonda, 296, 297.

²⁴² Fonda, 298.

²⁴³ Fonda, 299, 307.

²⁴⁴ Fonda, 313.

politeness and “refer to them as friends.”²⁴⁵

Among the sites included in Fonda’s trip was Bach Mai Hospital, which was “the largest in North Vietnam,” and had been subjected to numerous bombing raids. Fonda also viewed an exhibit of American weapons, including “twelve-thousand-pound daisy-cutters... cluster bombs, pellet bombs – weaponry [she] had heard described by veterans at the Winter Soldier investigation.” Fonda was told that since Nixon became president, “the weapons have become even more sophisticated and damaging.” Earlier, it had been possible to surgically remove the pellets, but it had since become impossible to do so without causing “even more damage. Some of them now expand once inside the flesh.”²⁴⁶ One doctor who spoke with Fonda was researching the connection between Agent Orange and birth defects; he told her, “you will soon be seeing these things among your own soldiers.”²⁴⁷ It is at this point that Fonda asked her hosts if she could speak on Radio Hanoi. Her reasons for this ostensibly extreme action are explained in her memoir. First, she knew “that other American travelers to Hanoi [had] spoken on Radio Hanoi.” Secondly, thanks to her work with VVAW and FTA, she was “used to talking with soldiers,” and felt she had an “understanding of their realities.” For example, Fonda had heard from Air Force veterans that “the maps they were given of their targets had no Vietnamese names on them – only numbers, remote, impersonal.”²⁴⁸ Fonda claims that her broadcasts, apart from a few scribbled

²⁴⁵ Scott, 133. Fonda’s recurring experience of being in the line of fire from the American Air Force was a common one. A *Washington Post* story dated two months after Fonda’s visit illustrates the fact that patriotic Americans travelled within Vietnam and endured the traumatic experience of being bombed. Reporter Peter Arnett was travelling through North Vietnam with “two American women” and their “relatives freed a few days ago from prisoner of war camps.” The group spent two days touring ruined churches and schools near Hanoi; the experience became a frightening one “when gongs started ringing,” indicating an air alert. The group hid against a wall and prayed; they survived, but the cathedral they had been viewing was partially destroyed, a “large bomb crater” lay in its wake. Peter Arnett, “Freed POWs, Relatives Tour N. Viet Sites,” *Washington Post*, September 23, 1972.

²⁴⁶ Fonda, 300, 303.

²⁴⁷ Fonda, 303. Fonda surely remembered this conversation when she agreed to support the efforts of Waterbury veterans; she helped them raise \$27,000 “for children who had birth defects as a result of their fathers’ exposure to Agent Orange.” Fonda, 333.

²⁴⁸ Fonda, 305, 304. Mary Hershberger has noted that there had been at least 82 previous Radio Hanoi broadcasts

notes, were unrehearsed, and motivated by what she had witnessed on the ground.²⁴⁹

The text of Fonda's broadcasts, according to CIA transcripts, do indeed reflect her experiences in Vietnam.²⁵⁰ She spoke of her visit to Bach Mai, where she had seen "a huge bomb crater in the center of the hospital."²⁵¹ She discussed the various types of bombs being dropped on Vietnam, including "shells that contain toxic chemicals." She described the victims of napalm, "deformed" and "forever in physical pain;" women who "[give] birth to deformed babies;" and those who survive an attack only to live the rest of their lives in pain, their bodies full of plastic pellets that cannot be removed.²⁵² She addressed U.S. servicemen, empathizing with the fact that it must be very hard for them "to understand in concrete human terms" the effects of these bombs. Far from condemning the GIs she says,

I don't know what your officers tell you that you are dropping on this country...
But, one thing that you should know is that these weapons are illegal and that's
not... just rhetoric. They are outlawed... by several conventions of which the
United States was a signatory.²⁵³

To be sure, Fonda's broadcast included statements that could be construed as extreme. She called the Vietnam war "the most terrible crime that has ever been created against humanity," and she described the Vietnamese in glowing terms, asserting that they were "truly at peace... with each other"; that one could see "people holding hands... hugging each other" in the streets, and "working together in the fields." She also asked those listening why they "follow orders

from Americans. Hershberger, 118.

²⁴⁹ One CIA employee testified before the House that her broadcasts were "so concise and professional a job" that he "most strongly doubt[ed]" that she wrote them herself. She must "have been working on it with the enemy." He went on to say, paradoxically, that Fonda's "utterances disclose skilled indoctrination – a brainwashed mind – but even so, her work in Hanoi could not have been an unassisted effort." The Committee chair agreed, stating that Fonda "used a lot of military terms that wouldn't be within [her] knowledge." Fonda suggests, that these men were, evidently, "unaware of the time [she] had spent with soldiers."

"Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas," 7598; Fonda, 305.

²⁵⁰ As historians have previously noted, there are two types of transcripts: one set was broadcast over Radio Hanoi and was transcribed directly by the CIA. The other set was translated into Vietnamese for the broadcast, then translated back into English by the CIA; this twice-translated set of transcripts should not be considered reliable.

²⁵¹ "Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas," 7650.

²⁵² "Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas," 7648, 7650.

²⁵³ "Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas," 7649.

telling [them] to destroy a hospital or bomb the schools?”²⁵⁴ Though Fonda questioned the military chain of command and the rationale for the war, she did not directly ask soldiers to disobey orders – only to think for themselves about what they were doing and why – nor did she urge them to desert or mutiny.

Fonda made additional broadcasts after visiting the dikes in the region of Nam Sach. She traveled there at night, in order to avoid “strafing by U.S. planes.”²⁵⁵ The day before her visit, “twenty foreign correspondents” who had come to observe the damage already done to the dikes had been “witness to a second attack.”²⁵⁶ In her autobiography, Fonda’s account of her visit to Nam Sach is detailed; she describes the dikes and the extent to which they are crucial to the lives of thousands of Vietnamese.²⁵⁷ She also describes standing atop the dike, looking in all directions. Fonda writes that she saw “no visible military targets, no industry, no communication lines – just rice fields.” Then, she looked down and saw bomb craters, “on both sides of the dike – gaping holes, some ten meters across and eight meters deep.” She was told that the dikes at Nam Sach had been attacked eight times in the previous two months. Although the planes were expected to return, Fonda saw “people all around, knee- and elbow-deep in mud... carrying huge baskets of earth to repair the dikes.”²⁵⁸ She was also informed that American planes had dropped antipersonnel bombs, which “enter the dike on an angle, lodging underneath and exploding later,” making repairs to the dikes extremely dangerous.²⁵⁹

When Fonda returned to Hanoi, she made another broadcast, which was clearly infused

²⁵⁴ “Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas,” 7649, 7650.

²⁵⁵ Strafing is the act of attacking personnel (such as ground troops) with bombs or machine gun fire, from a low-flying aircraft.

²⁵⁶ Fonda, 308-9.

²⁵⁷ She writes, the dikes rise “eight or ten meters above the fields” and are “built entirely of earth.” The particular spot Fonda visited was “the most strategic, for here the dike must hold back the waters of six converging rivers. These rivers will be raging down the mountains in about two weeks.” This spot had been attacked, for the second time, the previous morning. Fonda, 309.

²⁵⁸ Fonda, 309.

²⁵⁹ Fonda, 310.

with what she has witnessed in Nam Sach. According to the transcript of the broadcast, Fonda, again addressing American servicemen, asked them to “consider what you are doing.” She informed listeners that the area she visited contained only “peasants,” who “grow rice and... rear pigs.” She compared these people to hard-working Americans and noted that, though she expected hostility, she saw only curiosity in the eyes of Vietnamese men and women. Fonda also argued that “it was easy to see” that the dike region contained “no military targets.... no important highway... no heavy industry.” She told listeners that “without these dikes 15 million people” would be endangered, falling victim to drowning and starvation. She cited a *New York Times* article, which noted that bombing of the dikes had been rejected by the Johnson Administration because the dikes were not military targets, and bombing them would constitute a “terrorist tactic,” not worthy of “American people and American flags.” Fonda went on to bear witness to the fact that “American Phantom jets are bombing strategic points in the dike networks.” She repeatedly asked pilots and sailors to “please think what you are doing [sic],” to consider *why* they were fighting, and if the Vietnamese people were truly their enemy.²⁶⁰

Notably, it was Fonda’s broadcasts – not any photos – that first made news back in the United States. Equally notable, none of her broadcasts called American GIs war criminals or asked them to go AWOL. Fonda did call those giving the orders to deploy illegal weapons “war criminals” – a charge that reflected the fact that she had viewed such weapons in Hanoi and had seen the bombed dikes. She did not say anything that was anti-soldier or anti-American. Her comments were antiwar, anti-military and anti-Nixon – none of which are akin to treason.

As previously noted, the initial coverage of Fonda’s trip was neither extensive nor overwhelmingly negative; by no means did the reaction to her visit provide sufficient fodder for what would become a movement to defame her character decades later. Part of the reason for the

²⁶⁰ “Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas,” 7646, 7647.

lack of contemporary outrage may be that the infamous footage of Fonda at the antiaircraft site did not emerge until later that month.²⁶¹ However, when the photos did emerge, there was little public reaction to them. Perhaps the reason few Americans expressed anger over Fonda's broadcasts is the fact that Fonda's words – for which she is labeled a traitor in the “Hanoi Jane” discourse – were neither remarkable, in the discourse of 1972, *nor* treasonous.

Fonda's purpose for going to Vietnam was to document the bombing damage to Vietnam's “2000 mile dike system.” Countless foreign visitors had observed and criticized America's bombing of the dikes, which the Nixon Administration continued to deny. It was well known that, were the dikes to fail, up to 15 million lives would have been endangered.²⁶² Fonda's first action after leaving Vietnam was to hold a press conference in Paris where she showed footage of the dike system. Fonda pointed out “over fifty bomb craters” at one site.²⁶³ After Fonda returned to the U.S. and held a second press conference in New York, three U.S. Senators, including Ted Kennedy, “[accused] the administration of a ‘deliberate, if not calculated, policy of bombing the dikes of North Viet Nam.’”²⁶⁴ These Senators were in good company; foreign correspondents, numerous antiwar activists, the Secretary General of the United Nations and “the president of the World Council of Churches” all accused the Administration of deliberate bombing of the dikes.²⁶⁵ After the war, it became well-known that the Nixon Administration had, deliberately, bombed the dikes.

²⁶¹ One of the first mentions of the anti-aircraft gun images can be found in a letter to the editor in the *Washington Post* on August 1, 1972, accusing Fonda of treason. The letter states, “last week in a newsreel Miss Fonda is shown laughing with the Viet Cong and amusing herself with a machine gun.” M.J. Smith, “Jane Fonda In North Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1972.

²⁶² “N. Viet Dikes Their Symbol,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1972.

²⁶³ Fonda's filming also contained footage of her meeting with American POWs. The footage shown in Paris was silent – en route from Hanoi to Paris, the boxes containing the sound went missing. After Fonda arrived in New York, the footage itself also disappeared. Hershberger, 104, 107.

²⁶⁴ “Keeping the Dike Issue Alive,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1972.

²⁶⁵ “N. Viet Dikes Their Symbol”; Art Buchwald, “Both Sides, Now,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 1972. In addition, “Sweden's ambassador to North Vietnam... told international reporters that he had seen the bomb-damaged dikes himself,” and a journalist for *Le Monde* (considered the French newspaper of record), “reported that American planes had dive-bombed a dike system while he was standing on it.” Hershberger, 81.

The dikes were the reason Fonda went to Vietnam, and in her broadcasts she repeatedly conveyed and condemned what she had seen. Since the United States *was* bombing the dikes and the president was denying it, Fonda's traveling to Vietnam in order to obtain photographic proof was pragmatic, not extremist. However, the comments that seemed to inflame her critics were not those that charged the government with deception and war crimes; instead, it was Fonda's appeals to servicemen that saw her accused of treason. Fonda did not urge American GIs to desert. Since the earliest reports of her broadcasts, this has been alleged, but, according to multiple government agencies, nothing she said could be characterized as such.²⁶⁶

In August 1972, the House Internal Security Committee rejected a request by Representative Fletcher Thompson (R) to subpoena Fonda; instead, the Committee voted to ask the Justice Department for a report on Fonda's trip to Hanoi.²⁶⁷ Later that month, Attorney General Richard Kleindienst said that it was unlikely that the Justice Department would move to prosecute Fonda, since there was "no evidence of any wrongdoing."²⁶⁸ Two days later, the *Washington Post* reported that Justice Department lawyers had concluded that Fonda had not violated "any statutes," including those prohibiting Americans from attempting "to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty by any member of the military." The *Post* article is somewhat ambivalent in its characterization of both Fonda and those who would seek her prosecution. For example, it accuses the committee of trying to "revive the Fonda controversy," by releasing "selected quotations" from the transcripts of Fonda's broadcasts. Interestingly, the article also foreshadows later critiques of Fonda as it compares her to the

²⁶⁶ A caption in the *Washington Post* on July 17, 1972, reads "Miss Fonda made a speech last week from Hanoi urging American soldiers to defect." No excerpts from her speeches are included. "Jane Fonda in Hanoi," *Washington Post*, July 17, 1972.

²⁶⁷ "House Committee Refuses to Subpoena Jane Fonda," *New York Times*, August 11, 1972.

²⁶⁸ "Kleindienst Doubts Action on Clark or Miss Fonda," *New York Times*, August 24, 1972.

infamous “Tokyo Rose” of World War II.²⁶⁹ This article thus manages to capture the already-coalescing, polarized discourse surrounding Fonda: on the one hand, there are those who believe she did nothing worthy of prosecution; conversely, others view Fonda as traitor, akin to one of the most notorious figures of the American WWII experience.

If the press was ambivalent about the legality of Fonda’s words, government agencies were not. The Attorney General provided a lucid explanation for not prosecuting Fonda:

I felt and I think most of us shared this view in the Administration, that the damage was slight and the interest in favor of free expression very high... I thought the interests in favor of free speech in an election year far outweighed any specific advantage of prosecuting a young girl like that who was in Vietnam acting rather foolish.²⁷⁰

The Attorney General was not alone in his characterization of Fonda as no worse than a “foolish” citizen exercising her right to free speech. Secretary of State William Rogers similarly downplayed the threat Fonda posed when he contrasted her actions with those of former Attorney General Ramsey Clark. According to Rogers, “two types of Americans” go to Vietnam. “One is the Jane Fonda type, and I think people understand the Jane Fonda types. Ramsey Clark is different.” Rogers went on to condemn Clark, who, as a member of President Johnson’s Administration, had been involved in decisions to escalate the war. In Rogers’ view, the sum total of Fonda’s words and actions were very small compared to similar statements coming from a former government official.²⁷¹ A former Supreme Court Justice also weighed in when it appeared Fonda might be prosecuted. Arthur Goldberg telephoned a reporter and said, “I’m a great believer in the First Amendment, of free speech... and it doesn’t stop at the boundary’s edge. Miss Fonda hasn’t said anything [in Hanoi] that she hasn’t said in this country.”²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Sanford J. Ungar, “U.S. Won’t Prosecute Jane Fonda,” *Washington Post*, August 26, 1972.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Fonda, 322-323.

²⁷¹ Tim O’Brien, “Ramsey Clark Airings Called ‘Contemptible,’” *Washington Post*, August 12, 1972.

²⁷² “People,” *United Press International*, August 28, 1972, cited in Hershberger.

Fonda has examined her own FBI files carefully, and includes information from these files as well as other declassified government documents in her memoir. She notes that two months after she returned from Hanoi, President Nixon received a briefing paper stating that, according to the broadcast transcripts Congress had studied, “Fonda used her Hanoi radio time to pose questions to the U.S. GIs, but limited her advice to pleas for ending the bombing, and didn’t urge defections.”²⁷³ Another congressional report quoted a representative of the Justice Department, who concluded that Fonda “had asked the military ‘to do nothing other than to think.’”²⁷⁴ According to FBI documents, the Bureau gave her file to three in-house reviewers, asking them to determine whether the “clandestine investigation” should continue. “All three determined that it should be discontinued,” and one opined,

there are more dangerous characters around needing our attention. Unless the [Department of Justice] orders us to continue, these investigations should be closed. The basis for investigation appears to be – pick someone you dislike and start investigating.²⁷⁵

It is significant that the Justice Department, State Department and the FBI all concluded that Fonda was neither guilty of treason nor a genuinely dangerous figure. This is particularly noteworthy, given the political climate of the early 1970s, when the Nixon Administration proved willing to use extralegal means in order to neutralize its opponents. In 1970 the government had indicted activists on the charge that they had plotted to “destroy the heating systems of federal buildings and kidnap Henry Kissinger.” The defendants in this trial included a reverend and several pacifists.²⁷⁶ The same year that Fonda went to Hanoi, eight leaders of VVAW were charged with “conspiring to disrupt the 1972 Republican convention.” As the Watergate scandal unfolded, these defendants, emboldened by the disclosure of “illegal surveillance and harassment

²⁷³ Fonda, 323.

²⁷⁴ Fonda, 324.

²⁷⁵ Fonda, 323.

²⁷⁶ DeBenedetti, 303, 326.

by the CIA, FBI, and IRS,” challenged their trial “on the grounds that two FBI agents had been found sitting with... surveillance devices in a closet” adjacent to their attorney’s office. “This was the eighth major antiwar conspiracy case brought to trial and lost by the Justice Department’s Internal Security Division.”²⁷⁷ Presumably, if the Nixon Administration had felt there was sufficient evidence to prosecute Fonda, it would not have hesitated to do so.

This is not to say that there was no hostility towards Fonda after she returned from Hanoi. If, for example, the *New York Times* declined to criticize Fonda when she returned in July, by August, it was willing to publish a letter to the editor titled “Jane Fonda Duped,” that alleged Fonda had been fooled by North Vietnamese propaganda.²⁷⁸ Other papers around the nation were less circumspect. A local California paper, the *Pasadena Star News*, published a piece by a retired Marine Corps Colonel that criticized both the Justice department – for failing to prosecute Fonda – and Fonda herself, for calling on soldiers “to disobey their officers and their orders.” This particular article is notable for two reasons; first, it compares Fonda to two infamous females – Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose – thereby providing a mythic paradigm in which readers can understand Fonda. Second, this article appears to be the original source of the name, “Hanoi Jane.” The name appears in the title in quotation marks, and its in-text usage suggests that it has not previously been coined: Col. Robert Heintz Sr. Asks readers to consider how “the actions of Jane Fonda – Hanoi Jane, if you will – differ from [those of] Tokyo Rose.”²⁷⁹ A similar article, titled “Axis Sally, Tokyo Rose and Hanoi Jane,” appeared a week later in a local Pennsylvania paper, accusing Fonda of urging “mutiny” and posturing as a military expert.²⁸⁰ The article refers

²⁷⁷ DeBenedetti, 361. This trend did not originate with Nixon. In 1968 the Justice Department of Lyndon Johnson indicted a number of activists, including Dr. Benjamin Spock, on “charges of conspiring to counsel young men to violate federal draft laws.” DeBenedetti, 208.

²⁷⁸ I. Roy Psaty, “Jane Fonda Duped,” *New York Times*, August 6, 1972.

²⁷⁹ Col. Robert Heintz Sr., “Why Does ‘Hanoi Jane’ Get Away With It All?” *Pasadena Star News*, August 14, 1972.

²⁸⁰ The article mocks her “expert knowledge of medical technology” in relation to plastic pellets and deformed babies. Ralph de Tolendano, “Axis Sally, Tokyo Rose And Hanoi Jane,” *Lebanon Daily News*, August 31, 1972.

to Fonda as a “spoiled sex [symbol];” under her picture, the caption reads – not Jane Fonda, but “Hanoi Jane.” This article is among the first to espouse a paradoxical depiction of Fonda, as both a sexualized female, not to be taken seriously, and a treasonous, mutiny-inciting danger to American society. The former characterization had, until then, been *the* view of Fonda, articulated by conservatives and in the press, and would remain dominant for several years. Notably, while the themes of these two articles *anticipate* the Hanoi Jane myth, they do not, in 1972, generate further discussion. The major papers report that Fonda will not be prosecuted, and while they print a small number of letters to the editor, the Fonda-as-traitor theme fails to catch on. Similarly, few groups condemned Fonda, and those that did frequently included Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General, in their denunciations. Clark traveled to Hanoi shortly after Fonda. He also met with POWs and spoke publicly about the bombing of the dikes. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, offended by critiques of American bombing, accused Fonda and Clark of being “traitorous meddlers.” Both V.F.W. and the American Legion urged that Fonda be investigated.²⁸¹ Apart from veterans’ organizations, there is little evidence that many Americans were concerned by Fonda’s actions in Hanoi.

Both before and after Hanoi, Fonda usually encountered receptive audiences, but this was not always the case. Two months after Hanoi, in a “conservative, working class” neighbourhood in Philadelphia, she was reportedly “hissed and booed” by the crowd. Notably, nearly every comment from onlookers, as reported by the *Chicago Tribune*, had sexist overtones. One man said, “I didn’t even recognize her with her clothes on... I don’t think she should be allowed to come around and disrupt communities like this. She should be content to go home and be a housewife.” Another man was quoted as saying, “I liked her in ‘Barbarella.’ She was a lot prettier

²⁸¹ “V.F.W. Urges Prosecution Of Clark and Miss Fonda,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1972; Frank Blatchford, “Legion Urges Investigation of U.S. Visitors to Hanoi,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 1972.

then.” One female onlooker suggested that Fonda “should be at home with her baby.”²⁸² Evident in these comments is a gendered animosity towards females with ambivalent identities. In Fonda’s case, there seems to be unease, in some quarters, regarding her transition from the role of a sex symbol (and wife and mother) to a political activist.

In the eyes of the law, Fonda, at the height of her “treasonous” acts, was considered – not a dangerous extremist – but a sometimes foolish, publicity-garnering, though generally harmless “girl.” In the opinion of key institutions of American government – including the Congress, Justice Department, FBI and State Department, Fonda was not a threat, and, judging by the written and verbal assessments of her, she was seen less as an extremist than an activist, utterly unremarkable apart from her Hollywood credentials.

If Fonda was not considered an extremist by high-ranking officials who monitored and studied her words, can she, nevertheless, be considered an extremist in retrospect? To answer this question fairly, one must look beyond the Radio Hanoi transcripts – the focus of government assessments in 1972 – to Fonda’s *actions* in Hanoi and her words a year later, regarding American prisoners of war.

Fonda committed her most notorious act when, on her last day in Vietnam, she paid a visit to an antiaircraft site. While the photos elicited little outcry when they were made public, these images have become increasingly important with the passage of time; they provide the visual “evidence” for the myth of an extremist, traitorous “Hanoi Jane.”²⁸³

²⁸² “Jane Fonda Speech Jeered,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1972.

²⁸³ As Fonda recalls in *My Life So Far*, the trip, as a whole, “wasn’t a big story.” There was “nothing on television,”

According to Fonda, despite her stated preference to avoid military sites, she was escorted, along with “a horde of photographers and journalists,” to an anti-aircraft site outside of Hanoi. All visitors to the site were “required to wear a helmet.”²⁸⁴ While at the site, soldiers sang for her and then asked her to sing; she had learned a short Vietnamese song, which she sang for them. While still laughing and applauding, someone led her toward the gun and she sat down. Fonda stresses that “the gun was inactive [and] there were no planes overhead.”²⁸⁵ She continues,

I hardly even think about where I am sitting. The cameras flash. I get up, and as I start to walk back to the car with the translator, the implication of what has just happened hits me. *Oh my God. It's going to look like I was trying to shoot down U.S. planes!* I plead with him, ‘You have to be sure those photographs are not published.’ ... I am assured it will be taken care of. I don’t know what else to do.²⁸⁶

Today, Fonda acknowledges the possibility that her North Vietnamese hosts had planned and staged the visit expressly for the purpose of having such photographs taken. She also accepts responsibility for having appeared “to be thumbing” her nose at a country in which she has enjoyed the privileges of fame and fortune.²⁸⁷ Though Fonda has apologized numerous times for the hurt she caused to soldiers and their families and has acknowledged the foolishness and thoughtlessness of these moments, her words have done little to pacify her critics. As memory of Fonda’s activism has receded, these photos, along with the Radio Hanoi transcripts, have fuelled a myth in which Fonda is guilty of treason. Despite two years of “working with GIs and Vietnam veterans,” speaking to “hundreds of thousands of antiwar protesters, telling them that... men in uniform *aren't* the enemy” and supporting antiwar GIs overseas, she nevertheless appeared in

and once the Justice Department announced there would be no prosecution, “what flap there was seemed to evaporate.” Fonda, 325.

²⁸⁴ Fonda, 315, 316.

²⁸⁵ Fonda, 318. Video footage does not clearly show Fonda being led to the gun. She does appear distracted by those around her and not focused on where she is sitting, as she laughs over her shoulder at comments made from off-screen.

²⁸⁶ Fonda, 316.

²⁸⁷ Fonda, 318.

these photographs “to be their enemy.”²⁸⁸

In the Hanoi Jane myth, the powerful image of Fonda on an anti-aircraft gun serves as an emotive, visual illustration. The pictures, though striking, are not enough to indict her for treason. Those who make substantive arguments against Fonda inevitably refer back to her broadcasts in order to build their case against her.²⁸⁹ It is her broadcasts that are said to have given “aid and comfort” to the enemy, her broadcasts that demoralized American servicemen and urged them to desert and, crucially, her broadcasts that were allegedly piped into the cells of American POWs, who heard this iconic American female betray the country in whose service they had fought and were now imprisoned.

This is the essence of the Hanoi Jane myth: that Fonda committed treasonous acts by criticizing American soldiers, thereby contributing – alongside other antiwar subversives – to the American defeat in Vietnam. Despite the centrality of Fonda’s broadcasts to the Hanoi Jane myth, the notion of Fonda as an enemy of the American soldier first received national attention – not in July 1972, but in February 1973. This month marked the homecoming of American POWs, who were received with all the fanfare worthy of the name “Operation Homecoming.” As part of the homecoming, select, high-ranking POWs were chosen to “travel the national media circuit,” telling of torture. Fonda notes that their stories were fast becoming the “official narrative, the universal ‘POW story,’ giving the impression that *all* [POWs] had been subjected to systematic

²⁸⁸ Fonda, 318.

²⁸⁹ Fonda recalls in *My Life So Far* that she was informed, on the day of her departure from Vietnam, that United States congressmen sought to put her on trial for treason – for her Radio broadcasts. The anti-aircraft photo had not yet appeared in the American press. Fonda, 318. Her memory of the charges is backed up by newspaper reports on the accusations of “treason,” which are invariably concerned with the broadcasts. More recently, the 2002 indictment of Fonda “*Aid and Comfort*”: *Jane Fonda in North Vietnam*, builds a case against Fonda based on her Radio Hanoi transcripts. Henry Mark Holzer and Erika Holzer, “*Aid and Comfort*”: *Jane Fonda in North Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2002).

torture.”²⁹⁰

In response to these torture stories, Fonda spoke out, asserting that the POWs had not been tortured. The implication of her comments was that these American “heroes” were liars. According to the *New York Times*, Fonda called the POWs “hypocrites and liars.” These initial comments received a great deal of criticism, and Fonda agreed to a televised interview in which she elaborated on her previous comments. Conceding that “some” American POWs were probably tortured, Fonda appeared unsympathetic when she reminded viewers that, “these men were bombing and strafing and napalming the country.” In a *New York Times* article, “Jane Fonda Grants Some P.O.W. Torture,” she is quoted as saying that pilots “were probably beaten... by the people whose home and families they were bombing and napalming.” Responding to the claim from POWs that such torture was “systematic,” Fonda replied, “I believe that’s a lie.”²⁹¹

In contrast to the public apathy that greeted news of Fonda’s broadcast from Hanoi, the public response to this story appeared swiftly. A single edition of the *New York Times* featured several letters that addressed the POW stories and two that were concerned with Fonda’s comments. One writer defended Fonda’s activism, but ignored her inflammatory comments.²⁹² Another writer put the case more forcefully, blasting the “antiwar zealots, like George McGovern, Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark and Dr. Benjamin Spock,” whose “antiwar activities protracted rather than shortened this war.” This letter pointedly criticizes these activists, who lack

²⁹⁰ Fonda, 325-6. The vast majority of POWs were pilots who had been shot down. They tended to be higher-class than the “grunts” who fought on the ground. Fonda’s activism had been almost entirely concerned with these lower-ranking and lower-class servicemen. These soldiers saw the most combat, tended to have the strongest antiwar sympathies, and, upon returning home, received medical care that was, by all accounts, inadequate. Fonda notes that these lower-ranking servicemen, with whom she had worked in VVAW and performed for in FTA, had received no such ‘Welcome Home.’

²⁹¹ “Jane Fonda Grants Some P.O.W. Torture,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1973. Fonda was not the first American public figure to empathize with the Vietnamese who had been bombed. *New York Times* journalist Anthony Lewis, who had likewise visited North Vietnam, wrote “With sympathy for the men who fly American planes, and for their wives and families, one has to recognize the greater courage of the North Vietnamese people who have been their targets.” Anthony Lewis, “At Home and Abroad,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1973.

²⁹² Jane C. Fulton, “Letters to the Editor,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1973.

“the courage and the conscience to listen” to the POW stories of “incredibly cruel and brutal torture by their fiendish Communist captors.”²⁹³

Evidently, Fonda believed that POWs had not been tortured; however, given the respect typically granted to POWs, her comments suggest that she was either an extremist in her antipathy for American pilots, or an idealist (and, perhaps, a traitor) in her sympathy for their counterparts in the North Vietnamese Army. However, a closer examination reveals the impetus behind Fonda’s public comments.²⁹⁴ One of the most vocal POWs was Lieutenant Commander David Hoffman, one of the seven POWs who had met with Fonda – and, later, Ramsey Clark – in North Vietnam. As he travelled the media circuit, Hoffman charged that Fonda and Clark were responsible for the torture he allegedly endured at the hands of the North Vietnamese. Hoffman claimed that torture was used to coerce him into meeting with Clark and Fonda; he also declared that he rejected “everything” he had said at the meetings. Hoffman stated, “I had a broken arm... It was in a cast. I was hung by that broken arm several times and allowed to drop at the end of a rope.” On the heels of these accusations, Fonda was hanged in effigy at the University of Southern California. Notably, Hoffman was the only POW, at this time, to claim that he had been tortured into meeting with Clark and Fonda.²⁹⁵

In 1972, when Fonda returned from Vietnam, she had told the press that the POWs appeared healthy. Fonda’s recollection of their meeting is recounted in detail in her autobiography. She notes that, of the seven POWs she met, one had been a prisoner since 1967,

²⁹³ Robert Hohl, “Letters to the Editor,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1973.

²⁹⁴ While some would argue that the ongoing, Vietnamized war was none of Fonda’s business, she was committed to the cause of ending the hostilities in Vietnam. In 1973, the war itself was not over. “Vietnamization” had allowed most American troops to return home, but the people of Vietnam were still fighting and dying – the South Vietnamese still equipped with American weapons. Fonda had founded the Indochina Peace Campaign (IPC) in 1972 with Tom Hayden. The organization was committed to bringing peace to Vietnam, not just ending American casualties. Having seen the destruction and suffering in North Vietnam the year before, it is not surprising that Fonda was concerned with the Administration’s efforts to use POWs to distract Americans from the ongoing war.

²⁹⁵ “ExPOW: Fonda Blind on Torture,” *Washington Post*, April 13, 1973.

one since 1971, while the rest had been shot down earlier that year.²⁹⁶ Most sources agree that torture in North Vietnam ceased in 1969, making it extremely unlikely that all but one of the POWs had ever been tortured.²⁹⁷ Hoffman had been shot down on December 30, 1971.²⁹⁸

Fonda notes correctly that “many American visitors” before her had met with POWs. The seven POWs she met had “called publicly for an end to the war and signed a powerful antiwar letter that they sent out with a previous American delegation to Hanoi.”²⁹⁹ This letter stated the POW’s belief that bombing North Vietnam, “only serves to turn world opinion more strongly against the United States, and risks the death and capture of many more Americans, as well as endangering the lives of those already held captive.” The letter went on to “appeal to the American people to exercise your rights and responsibilities, and demand an end to the war,” and to Congress, “to take firm, positive action... Bring us home now!”³⁰⁰ Consistent with this earlier letter, some of the POWs Fonda met with told her they hoped Nixon would be defeated in ‘72 and expressed “their fear that if he [was] reelected, the war [would] go on... and that bombs

²⁹⁶ Fonda, 314.

²⁹⁷ In “The American POW Experience,” an essay highly sympathetic to American POWs and critical of the North Vietnamese, its author, having reviewed numerous POW memoirs, concludes that after 1969 systematic “torture came to an end.” For POWs in North Vietnam, “the final years of captivity were primarily years of waiting.” Glenn Robbins, “The American POW Experience,” in *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*, ed. Andrew Weist, Mary Kathryn Barbier, Glenn Robins (New York: Routledge, 2010), 182, 183. In addition, the official homepage for Vietnam POWs (via the organization Nam-POWs), states that POWs were held in Vietnam “during the period 1961-1973.” It also states that “of the 802 Southeast Asia POWs... 472 were tortured and imprisoned in North Vietnam, some longer than eight years, 263 in the South Vietnam jungle POW camps for as long as nine years, 31 in Laos, 31 in Cambodia and 5 in China.” Though Nam-POWs does not directly assert that torture in the North ended in 1969, the statistics suggest that torture went on no more than nine years in the North. This corroborates other sources, which suggest torture began in the early 1960s and ceased in 1969. See <http://www.nampows.org/> (accessed July 21, 2011). See also footnote 317 below.

²⁹⁸ “Clark denies knowledge of tortures,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 1973.

²⁹⁹ Fonda, 314.

³⁰⁰ “Text of Letter from Eight U.S. Pilots Detained in North Vietnam, May 1972,” cited in Hershberger, 99. Hershberger has noted that, by 1970, antiwar sentiment in the POW camps “was rising to levels approaching that of the general American population.” This was partly due to the fact that the North Vietnam took the POWs to villages to see bandaged children, partly because pilots shot down after 1970 were frequently less supportive of the war to begin with, and partly because they were provided with reading materials like the *Pentagon Papers* and books by American authors, including Howard Zinn, who were critical of the American war effort. It is thus not inconceivable that the POWs Fonda met were indeed antiwar. Hershberger, 96.

might land on their prison.”³⁰¹ It seems likely that this is what the POWs told Fonda; in a broadcast over Radio Hanoi on July 20, Fonda stated,

This is Jane Fonda speaking from Hanoi. Yesterday evening, July 19, I had the opportunity of meeting seven U.S. pilots... They told me that the pilots believe they are bombing military targets. They told me that the pilots are told that they are bombing to free their buddies down below, but, of course, we all know that every bomb that falls on North Vietnam endangers the lives of the American prisoners.³⁰²

Fonda had previously heard similar fears of being bombed, “from former POW George Smith and from POW families who [had] received letters.” She was asked by the POWs “to convey their hopes that their families will vote for George McGovern.”³⁰³ The historical record supports Fonda’s recollections; this is exactly what she told the American media upon her return in 1972.³⁰⁴

In recalling her meeting with the seven POWs, Fonda’s memory of one particular POW is as follows:

David Hoffman proudly raises his arm up and down over his head and says, ‘Please, when you go back, let my wife know that my arm has healed.’ He tells me that the arm had been broken when he was ejected from his plane. I assure him I will let his wife know (and I do, as soon as I get back.)³⁰⁵

Fonda allows that “though they [seemed] genuine... the men could have been lying to protect themselves.” Yet, she maintains that she “certainly [saw] no signs in any of the seven that they [had] been tortured, at least not recently.”³⁰⁶ Though Fonda’s comments were based on her own experiences as an eyewitness in North Vietnam, she was widely criticized for her comments. The reaction was so strong that she was labelled “antisoldier.” This charge had not previously

³⁰¹ Fonda, 315.

³⁰² The remainder of the broadcast regarding the POWs is entirely consistent with Fonda’s later telling of her meetings with the POWs. “Hearings Regarding H.R. 16742: Restraints on Travel to Hostile Areas,” 7670.

³⁰³ Fonda, 315.

³⁰⁴ The *Washington Post* quoted Fonda as saying that some of the POWs had “asked her to tell their parents and friends” to vote for McGovern. Fonda explained that they feared, “if Nixon stays in office they will be prisoners forever.” “Jane Fonda Says POWs Fear Nixon,” *Washington Post*, July 26, 1972.

³⁰⁵ Fonda, 315.

³⁰⁶ Fonda, 315.

been levied against Fonda – not even when she returned from Hanoi – and it was at odds with her years of activism on behalf of antiwar GIs. Fonda, who wrote that “little fuss was made” in the press over her trip to Hanoi, states that with the POW incident, she “became a lightning rod.”³⁰⁷

Not surprisingly, Fonda has thoroughly researched Hoffman’s story. She notes that,

In Vietnam in 1973 Hoffman appeared *six times* at meetings with antiwar visitors, more than almost any other POW. Film footage taken by US delegations at several of these meetings... shows Hoffman appearing healthy and unusually verbal in his opposition to the war. He also signed antiwar statements. He has never claimed he was tortured to attend *those other* meetings or to sign those statements. But the visits with Ramsey Clark and with me were widely publicized, and I suppose he needed the allegation of torture to explain his attendance at them. Perhaps more important, the government needed a way to malign Ramsey Clark and me.³⁰⁸

Mary Hershberger has concluded that, “many more pilots wanted to meet with her than were able.” Former POW Edison Miller has said, “the entire camp that I was in when Jane Fonda visited wanted to see her.”³⁰⁹ Fonda has personally spoken with numerous POWs from Hoffman’s camp. One, Lieutenant Col. Miller, told Fonda “visits with delegations were strictly volunteer... I know of only two or three guys out of one hundred who didn’t want to meet with you.” Another stated that he “never saw or heard of any torture” in the camp. Finally, “Hoffman’s roommate said there was no torture.”³¹⁰ Fonda goes on to note that “a handwritten note from President Nixon to H. R. Haldeman” stated ““the POW’s need to have the worst quotes of R. Clark and Fonda”” for their TV appearances, but this information ““shouldn’t come from the White House.”” Crucially, Fonda was not the only one to question the veracity of the POWs’ torture stories. *Newsweek* wrote, “The [torture] stories seem incongruent with the men telling them – a trim, trig lot who, given a few pounds more flesh, might have stepped right out of a

³⁰⁷ Fonda, 325, 327.

³⁰⁸ Fonda, 326.

³⁰⁹ Hershberger, 100.

³¹⁰ Fonda, 327.

recruiting poster.”³¹¹

Indeed, a *Washington Post* article from 1973 notes that “others were saying it [that the implication that torture was national policy in North Vietnam was a lie], but they could not command the audience... she could. Nor would they attract the intense anger that [came] her way.”³¹² Ramsey Clark also voiced his doubts about the torture claims.³¹³ According to historian Charles DeBenedetti, “the issue was not really the veracity of accounts of torture; at stake was the unblemished heroism of the POWs.” He goes on to quote the *Christian Century*, which stated, in March of 1973, that the POWs “provided the nation with a much needed ‘expiation of guilt.’”³¹⁴

The media was ambivalent about the POW homecoming. On the one hand, there was the celebratory mood the Administration had hoped for. *Time* published an article titled “A Celebration of Men Redeemed,” while *Newsweek* suggested that the POWs, “who had become symbols of American sacrifice in Indochina might help the country heal the lingering wounds of war.” However, the same *Newsweek* edition included a sidebar on “The Permanent War Prisoners,” that discussed the plight of disabled veterans.³¹⁵ The following week *Time* printed three letters that illustrate that Americans were even more ambivalent about the POWs than the media. One letter stated, “Surely there is not a dry eye left in the country. The return of the POWs is a fantastically moving event.” Another asked “Is nothing sacred?” The writer lamented the fact that as POWs were being honored, *Time* felt it necessary to point out that the POWs “dealt in death and presumably understood the odds and consequences.” This letter writer concluded, “they [the POWs] have preserved the very freedom of this country.” Another writer articulated a

³¹¹ *Newsweek*, April 16, 1973.

³¹² Leroy F. Aarons, “Jane Fonda Looking Back: Fantasy to Radicalism,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1973.

³¹³ Clark was quoted as saying, “I had no knowledge of torture [when visiting Hanoi the previous year]... I’d like the full story to come out.” “Clark denies knowledge of tortures,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 1973.

³¹⁴ DeBenedetti, 348.

³¹⁵ Quoted in Lembcke, 127.

different perspective, writing,

Sir: As an ex-grunt I feel a certain churlish resentment about the solicitous attention the returning P.O.W.s are receiving. It seems to me that the draftees who faced the war 24 hours every day on the ground are deserving of somewhat more than a veto of the VA hospital appropriations bill and a dismal employment rate. Why were we sneaked back into our society? So our country can more easily forget the crimes we committed in its name?³¹⁶

Similarly, VVAW's newspaper, *Winter Soldier*, noted that it was the ground troops who had "fought a dirty war," "slept on the ground," and "ate out of cans" while the pilots "killed from thousands of feet up" and at night "went back to their bases to eat steak and sleep between the sheets."³¹⁷

Fonda believed that it was the Nixon Administration's manipulation of the POW story and its blaming her for torture, together with her "unfortunate reaction," that led to an upsurge of attacks against her. "These, as well as a wave of inflammatory stories about [her] trip to Hanoi, are what launched the myth of 'Hanoi Jane.'"³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Maude Ann Pluta; Jane A. Van Pelt; Sam Bunge, "Letters," *Time*, March 12, 1973.

³¹⁷ The *Newsweek* and *Winter Soldier* excerpts are taken from Jerry Lembcke's *Hanoi Jane*. Lembcke has done extensive research on the POW homecoming. He has forcefully challenged the allegations of torture from POWs who arrived in the camps after 1970, and has scrutinized other POW myths, noting that it is unclear whether POWs actually heard any of Fonda's broadcasts. He notes that "of several POW memoirs published by 1988, only two mention Fonda and one of those is a positive mention." Lembcke, 127, 135.

³¹⁸ Fonda, 327.

Chapter VI: Repatriation

“I’m still here. The last government’s in jail.”
– Jane Fonda³¹⁹

The mainstream media, which had reported approvingly on Fonda’s looks and film work in the 1960s, and had been ambivalent about her activism in the early 1970s, was decidedly critical of Fonda in the wake of her POW comments. For the remainder of 1973 and the early part of 1974, articles and news items about Fonda were notably more critical of her than they had been after her 1972 trip to Hanoi.³²⁰

The longest, and perhaps most widely read article from this time period appeared in the *New York Times* in February, 1974. Headlined, “Fonda: a person of many parts; A restless yawning between extremes,” it depicted Fonda more negatively than any previous *Times* piece and, for the first time, characterized her as an extremist. Reflecting the importance of the POW incident of the previous year, journalist Martin Kasindorf noted that Fonda had received “death threats... in recent months from people who didn’t like her calling some returned American POWs hypocrites and war criminals.”³²¹ The article quotes husband Tom Hayden’s recollection of “the nationwide flap over her POW comments” the previous year: “Maryland state legislators... quarrelled over whether [an] appropriate penalty... should be execution or the removal of her tongue.” Kasindorf’s article is not intended to redeem the fallen American

³¹⁹ Quoted in Hershberger, 174.

³²⁰ Smaller publications could be even less-forgiving. In some papers, the tone towards Fonda in the aftermath of her POW comments was violent. The publisher of Maine’s *Union-Leader* said Fonda “should be tried for treason. She should be shot if a verdict of guilty comes in.” Quoted in Leroy F. Aarons, “Jane Fonda: Looking Back with Understanding,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1973.

³²¹ Kasindorf, “Fonda: A person of many parts; A restless yawning between extremes,” *New York Times*, February 3, 1974.

sweetheart. He repeatedly describes the Haydens' run-down and sparsely furnished home, noting that their "mattress rests on the bare bedroom floor." He is similarly unflattering in describing the Jane Fonda of old, who, in her heyday, was first "boy-crazy," then a "[drop] out," and then the sort of woman who "[ran] around with the top playboys." According to Kasindorf, she was never even that attractive. His use of a quote from movie mogul Jack Warner seems intended to insult Fonda; Warner had said that young Jane Fonda could be made attractive enough if she would only "dye her hair blonde, break her jaw and reshape it, and get... some silicone shots or falsies."³²²

Mary Hershberger has noted that, "almost all of the columnists and reporters who wrote contemptuous reports [about Fonda] were male." They tended to focus on her appearance, "and seldom on her ideas or the issues she raised." They frequently described her as "shrill," and accused her of haranguing, not smiling enough, and not having "a sense of humor."³²³

Notably, articles critical of Fonda, whether written in 1970 or 1973, relied on gender stereotypes to denigrate Fonda. What changed after the POW incident of 1973 was not the reliance on gendered insults by anti-Fonda reporters, but the shift from ambivalent commentary to almost uniformly negative coverage of Fonda. Thus, it was not until the POW incident that national publications printed decidedly negative articles and letters about Fonda. This should not obscure the fact that throughout Fonda's years of activism, in national and local papers alike, commentators that disapproved of Fonda relied on gendered language in order to deride her. Fonda was consistently subjected to a sexist discourse regarding her activism; in 1973 she simply became less popular and had fewer defenders. One example of the sexist pre-POW (and pre-Hanoi) commentary is a *Miami Herald* editorial from 1970 that suggested Fonda "let somebody

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Hershberger, 125.

else handle the heavy oratory.” The good news, the columnist added, “is that Fonda looks 27 instead of 35, chestnut hair flowing, figure lithe as a fawn.”³²⁴ Fonda was described in equally dismissive terms that same year by the widely read William F. Buckley, who wrote disapprovingly of her looks, “She must never even look into the mirror anymore.”³²⁵

Hershberger has noted that “ordinary women who responded to Fonda often admired her courage and related what Fonda was doing to their own widening realization of the world.”³²⁶ This observation echoes one made by Tessa Perkins, who pointed out, “Fonda’s political rite of passage paralleled that of many feminists. This shared experience constituted an important element in feminists’ identification with Fonda.”³²⁷ The tendency for women to identify with Fonda and be more inclined to defend her activism has not diminished with time. For example, in the wake of the Fonda-Kerry photo controversy, *The Nation* ran two stories about Fonda, and subsequently received a large number of letters to the editor. The magazine’s editors noted that nearly a third of the letters “came from veterans, who were evenly divided over whether to love or hate Fonda.”³²⁸ One veteran wrote, “For thirty years I’ve wanted to thank [Fonda] for her courage and sacrifice with regard to her antiwar commitment. Tell her this Vietnam veteran said ‘Thanks.’”³²⁹ Another veteran made an important and frequently overlooked point: “Please advise your authors to preface their comments about veterans with the word ‘some.’ Veterans are individuals... The only universal that can be applied to veterans is that we all had military experience.”³³⁰ The editors note that, overall, the positive letters they received outnumbered

³²⁴ “Un-Plain Jane’s Solutions to Practically Everything,” editorial, *Miami Herald*, November 18, 1970.

³²⁵ Quoted in Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 521.

³²⁶ “In response to an attack on Fonda, a letter-writer to the *Washington Evening Star* said simply: ‘Jane Fonda is doing what everyone should be doing... She is one of millions who would like to see the war ended.’” Hershberger, 127.

³²⁷ Perkins, 139.

³²⁸ The Editors, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

³²⁹ Stephen J. Cull, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

³³⁰ Arnold Steiber, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

negative letters “two to one.” Even more significantly, “Of women who wrote in, 100 percent supported Fonda, then and now.”³³¹ A female reader wrote, “Maybe you have to be a woman of a certain age to take offense at the pillorying of Jane Fonda... I have never seen any public male attacked the way Fonda was. Nor, for that matter, any other woman. The sexist root of the attacks on her have always been apparent to me.”³³² Another woman suggested that Fonda was hated largely because “she acted on her own outside patriarchal control.”³³³ Indeed, countless Fonda critics have stated rather indignantly that Jane Fonda’s actions were “not what you’d expect from Henry Fonda’s daughter.”

Since the early 1970s, Fonda has consistently evoked a more positive, empathetic response from women than from men. The POW comments did not alter this dynamic; Fonda’s most outspoken critics still tended to be men, and often used gendered language in their attacks against Fonda. Fonda’s POW comments did not ignite a sexist discourse – *that* already existed. What her comments did was create an impression, in the minds of many Americans, that Fonda was an anti-soldier figure; her work with the GI and veterans movements was largely forgotten. These comments effectively sowed the seeds for the Hanoi Jane myth that would flash across the national stage fifteen years later in Waterbury, eventually becoming part of the received knowledge about the Vietnam War.

In 1974, at her lowest point of popularity, Fonda was about to be granted a new lease as a public figure. The previous October she had sued Richard Nixon for \$2.8 million.³³⁴ At the time, this story received minimal attention. A relatively short news item in the *New York Times*, titled

³³¹ The Editors, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

³³² Dona Taylor, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

³³³ Mary L. Wentworth, “Letters,” *The Nation*, April 26, 2004, 2.

³³⁴ “Jane Fonda Sues Nixon, Alleging U.S. Harassment,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1973.

“Jane Fonda Sues Nixon, Alleging U.S. Harassment,” contained no journalistic commentary and generated no letters. Given the actress’ POW comments months earlier, it is little wonder that her accusations of U.S. government “harassment” generated little public outcry.³³⁵

Over the next year, Fonda’s POW comments receded from the public discourse, as her conflict with POWs was eclipsed by a much larger scandal: Watergate. No one could foresee this when Fonda launched her suit; though its timing – October, 1973 – fell well after the Watergate story broke, Nixon was still nearly a year away from being forced to resign, and the scandal was not yet at its height. As Watergate unfolded and Fonda was seen to be attacking the Nixon administration – not American POWs – the media’s treatment of Fonda became more positive. By July 1974, Fonda was depicted favourably in a *New York Times* article “Jane Fonda wins bid to get names.” This story applauds her victory vis-à-vis the Nixon White House in attaining information on the President’s tacit authorization of such activities as domestic wiretapping and the surveillance of leftist groups.³³⁶ Following Nixon’s resignation, and presumable wrongdoing, Fonda’s accusations received greater and more favorable coverage in the nation’s major publications.

In early 1975, the *Chicago Tribune* featured a detailed article about the government’s illegal actions against Fonda, including “the CIA’s practice of intercepting Miss Fonda’s mail,” the FBI’s accessing of Fonda’s bank account records without a warrant, and that agency’s eavesdropping on “more than 400” of Fonda’s phone conversations.³³⁷ Later that year, the *New York Times* described illegal actions taken against Fonda by “President Nixon, several Watergate figures, the F.B.I. [and the C.I.A.]” The article explores a sordid attempt by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to discredit Fonda by sending an FBI-authored letter to a gossip columnist. The fake

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ “Jane Fonda Wins Bid To Get Names” *New York Times*, July 23, 1974.

³³⁷ “Sued by Jane Fonda, U.S. Admits opening her letters,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 19, 1975.

letter contained a false eyewitness account of an antiwar rally, claiming to have heard Fonda leading a refrain about killing President Nixon.³³⁸ Fonda is clearly depicted in this *New York Times* article as the ‘good guy’ vis-à-vis crooked establishment men. The article is sympathetic to Fonda’s allegation of a “campaign to discredit her when she was active in the antiwar movement;” a “systematic attempt to make [her] seem like a foul-mouthed, violent radical person.”³³⁹

A survey of Jane Fonda stories in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Time* magazine reveals an overall shift to more positive coverage after Nixon’s political decline. Fonda, who was sharply criticized in 1973 and 1974 for her POW comments, saw many of her arguments – ranging from bombing dikes to personal harassment – vindicated after Nixon left office.

Until the end of American involvement in Vietnam in 1975, Fonda was active in the Indochina Peace Campaign, an organization she and Hayden founded to help inform Americans about the ongoing costs of American aid to South Vietnam and to put political pressure on Congress to cut off funding for the South Vietnamese government and to “honor the terms of [the peace] agreement.”³⁴⁰ In 1976, Hayden challenged a sitting United States Senator in the Democratic primaries, finishing second. Fonda busily campaigned for him, and the two founded the Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED), which promoted solar energy, environmental protection, and rent-control policies, and, in its first decade, helped elect over 50 progressive candidates throughout California.³⁴¹

³³⁸ According to an FBI memo, the never-spoken refrain, which Fonda was to be accused of leading, should go, “we will kill President Nixon and any other [obscenity] who stands in our way.” “Effort by Hoover to Discredit Jane Fonda Described in Memo,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1975.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Leroy F. Aarons, “Jane Fonda Looking Back: Fantasy to Radicalism,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1973.

³⁴¹ Hayden was elected to the California State Assembly in 1982; he served there until being elected to the State Senate in 1992, a seat he held for eight years. Tom Hayden, *Reunion: a memoir* (New York: Random House,

The media's coverage of Fonda during these years turned increasingly positive. In a *Chicago Tribune* article from late 1974, titled "Women who've left glamorous lives," criticism of Fonda is notably absent. The article applauds the "pretty... witty... sexy... bright" women who have moved from "one walk of life into another." The article mentions Fonda in the context of women who have committed themselves to the "far left," but this is not intended as a slight, for the article also noted that "most people think [politics is] eminently worthwhile."³⁴² This piece is a far cry from those published in the *Tribune* the previous year, one of which alleged that POWs had been "[stabbed] in the back," by "the Jane Fondas, David Dellingers... [and] the Ramsey Clarks."³⁴³ The new *People* magazine, unconstrained by former stances on Fonda, published a 1975 article, "Hayden and Fonda Rejoin the System: See Tom and Jane Run – for the US Senate," that celebrates Fonda's return to the mainstream.³⁴⁴ The article notes that the popular Henry Fonda had "hosted a fundraiser for Hayden," and its characterization of Fonda's wartime controversies suggests that perceptions of Fonda had shifted demonstrably since 1973. "Jane," according to *People*, "whom overheated hawks dubbed 'Hanoi Hannah,' evolves into a latter-day Eleanor Roosevelt."³⁴⁵

In 1977, Fonda made her Hollywood "comeback" in *Fun with Dick and Jane*, a comedy that lightly pokes fun at the American ethos of "keeping up with the Joneses." Of her successful return to the big screen, seasoned film producer "Swifty" Lazar said, "she is truly someone that the vast public likes in spite of... her being foolishly involved in the Vietnam matter."³⁴⁶ Reviews

1988), 471.

³⁴² Bruce Vilanch, Marilyn Preston, "Women who've left glamorous lives," *Chicago Tribune*, December 8, 1974.

³⁴³ "Tortured and resentful POWs," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1973.

³⁴⁴ *People* magazine debuted in March, 1974. Robert Windeler, "Jane's New Cause: Hayden and Fonda Rejoin the System: See Tom and Jane Run – for the U.S. Senate," *People*, Vol. 3, No. 24, June 23, 1975.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda.*

hailed Fonda's return to comedy in "her first unqualified hit" in years.³⁴⁷ That same year Fonda starred in the female-friendship drama *Julia*, as playwright Lillian Hellman. Upon the film's release, a *Time* magazine article, "Growing Fonda of Jane," recalled Fonda's controversial activism only to say, "Now the fires have cooled on both sides." The article notes that Fonda is still political; that she and Hayden are busy promoting "economic democracy," but that Fonda has been welcomed back to Hollywood, having served as one of the hosts of that year's Academy Awards. The article contains none of the condescension characteristic of Fonda coverage during the Vietnam era: it notes approvingly that she lived modestly in a \$40,000 home in Santa Monica, and it quotes her, without added commentary, on various issues. For example, of the women's movement, Fonda says, "The movement to me is not as the media tend to portray it. It's not a bra-burning, down-with-men kind of movement."³⁴⁸

At year's end, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Fonda had been awarded the "female star of the year" award from the Hollywood Women's Press Club, and that she was given "a standing ovation by the crowd of 1,000," when she accepted the award. No less a patriotic icon than actor John Wayne presented the award to Fonda, praising the actress' "total dedication to her craft."³⁴⁹

If media outlets, from the *Chicago Tribune* to *Time* to *People* magazine are any indication, by 1977, Fonda was hardly being "punished" for her activism of the previous eight years. Instead, the coverage of her was more balanced than ever before. These mid-1970s articles permitted Fonda to talk politics and simultaneously promote her films, and snide journalistic comments are few and far between. In all likelihood, this was partly due to the fact that Fonda was a more experienced speaker and made fewer missteps than in her early activism, and partly

³⁴⁷ Quoted in Andersen, 202.

³⁴⁸ "Show Business: Growing Fonda of Jane," *Time*, October 3, 1977.

³⁴⁹ "Jane Fonda's promoted from lemon to peach," *Chicago Tribune*, December 12, 1977.

because by the late 1970s sexist commentary was increasingly regarded as inappropriate. However, it is no less apparent that Fonda's career and public image were not irreparably tarnished by her antiwar activism. The suggestion, voiced frequently in the twenty-first century, that to "be like Jane Fonda" is to sacrifice one's career, is rooted in myth, not in Fonda's own post-Vietnam War career. Within a year of the war's end, Fonda was back to making movies, and her most successful decade, professionally and as a public figure, was ahead of her.

The following year Fonda starred in three films, including *Coming Home*, a pro-veteran film that was a critical and box office success. Fonda won an Academy Award for Best Actress, co-star Jon Voight won for Best Actor, and the film was nominated for Best Picture. In 1979 Fonda was briefly in the news for having her appointment to the California Arts Council rejected by the State Senate. The *New York Times* covered the story in an article headlined, "Rejection of Jane Fonda Deplored." In solidarity with the actress, "280 actors, actresses, writers, producers and directors" endorsed a full-page ad in the *Los Angeles Times*. The ad asserted that the rejection by the State Senate was not merely an attack on the "civil liberties" of Fonda, but that it conjured up memories of "McCarthyism." The signatories included Alan Alda, Woody Allen, Francis Coppola, Jack Lemmon, Jack Nicholson, Sidney Poitier, John Travolta, and Joanne Woodward.³⁵⁰

A week later, the *New York Times* ran another piece that again invoked the "bitter memories of McCarthyism" and noted the widespread sympathy towards Fonda in Hollywood. In this article, "Political Views of 2 Actresses Divide Industry," Fonda is, notably, not the more controversial figure. The same week that Fonda was rejected by the California Senate, it was announced that Vanessa Redgrave, "defender of the Palestinians" was to star as a "Jewish survivor of a Nazi death camp in a television movie." While "the Screen Actors Guild passed a

³⁵⁰ "Rejection of Jane Fonda Deplored," *New York Times*, August 9, 1979.

resolution supporting Miss Fonda,” such support for Redgrave was not forthcoming. In fact, “some of the same people who had signed the advertisement defending Miss Fonda agreed to sign a protest urging CBS to rescind the casting of Miss Redgrave.”³⁵¹ While there is much in this story that merits analysis, one thing that is clear in this industry squabble is that Fonda was defended, not blacklisted, within the film community; her career had not been irreparably damaged by her wartime activism, and amongst celebrity activists, she was not considered the most extreme.

Later that year Fonda starred in *The China Syndrome*, a prescient film about the dangers of nuclear energy; it was released weeks before the Three Mile Island accident and soon became a runaway hit at the box office. Fonda was again nominated for a Best Actress Oscar. Fonda’s production company, IPC Films, produced both *Coming Home* and *The China Syndrome*. In 1980, IPC produced *9 to 5*, which would become its highest grossing film to date. Fonda did extensive research prior to the film’s release, generating publicity about “the pay and working conditions of the millions of female clerical workers throughout the country.” A *Chicago Tribune* article, occasioned by Fonda’s research, noted that that the average pay for clerical workers was “only slightly above the current poverty threshold,” and that female clerical workers are forced to cope with “the galling nonprofessional demands of some male bosses,” and scant opportunities for promotion.³⁵² The film was a box office and critical success. The following year Fonda starred alongside her beloved father in *On Golden Pond*, for which he earned his first and only Best Actor Oscar. *On Golden Pond* was Jane Fonda’s highest grossing film ever; it earned more than \$119, 200, 000 in the United States – nearly two hundred times the domestic gross of *Barbarella* thirteen years before.

³⁵¹ Robert Lindsey, “Political Views of 2 Actresses Divide Industry,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1979.

³⁵² Ann Crittenden, “Fonda’s new barricade is the office of America,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1979.

At the same time, Fonda was setting her own records on the *New York Times* best-seller list: *Jane Fonda's Workout Book* debuted on the best-seller list in January of 1982. In March, it hit number one, where it remained for four months. The book remained in the top four for the next year, and on the list for two consecutive years; it did not permanently leave the list until April, 1985.³⁵³ In the meantime, the VHS, *Jane Fonda's Workout*, had topped "Billboard magazine's chart of best-selling cassettes."³⁵⁴

An article from 1981 epitomizes the mainstream coverage of Fonda in the early 1980s. A *New York Times* journalist wrote that, "watching Jane Fonda today... it would seem that the rebel of the 60's and early 70's has mellowed." No longer a "revolutionary woman," Fonda is described as "a democrat with a small 'd,' dedicated to working through the system."³⁵⁵ Fonda was so "mellow" that in 1984 "World Almanac listed her as the country's third most influential woman, just ahead of Nancy Reagan and... Sandra Day O'Connor."³⁵⁶ Within the mainstream, Fonda had clearly been rehabilitated – whether gauged by box office numbers, accolades from Hollywood, the millions of women who "did Jane" and wrote to her for advice on nutrition and fitness, or the journalists and editors of America's major newspapers. Fonda, in the 1980s, was commercially successfully, and her image – part fitness icon, part Hollywood actress – was extremely popular.³⁵⁷

³⁵³ This information comes from weekly *New York Times* Best Seller lists from 1982 through 1985 available via a *New York Times* Archive search. New York Times, <http://query.nytimes.com/search/alternate/> (accessed March 15, 2011).

³⁵⁴ Jane Wollman, "Instructional Tapes for Home TV Use," *New York Times*, February 3, 1983.

³⁵⁵ Michiko Kakutani, "Jane Fonda of the 80's Mellowed But Still an Activist," *New York Times*, March 30, 1981.

³⁵⁶ Lembcke, 3.

³⁵⁷ Though Fonda never topped *On Golden Pond* in terms of Box Office numbers, she was listed throughout the 1980s as a most-admired female. In addition to previously cited Gallup and *Ladies Home Journal* polls, Fonda won the People's Choice Award for Favourite Motion Picture Actress in 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983, and was nominated again in 1987. Some of her films during these years bombed at the Box Office, including *Rollover* (1981), which grossed \$10, 217, 873 and *Old Gringo* (1989), which grossed a mere \$3,574,256. *Agnes of God* (1985) and *The Morning After* (1986), fared slightly better, grossing \$25 million each. Fonda earned an Emmy for her role in the Television Special *The Dollmaker* (1984) and was nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for *The*

After a blockbuster decade, in 1989, Fonda and Hayden announced their separation. Divorcing Hayden seemed to sever Fonda's strongest tie to her movement past. Two years later, Fonda moved further away from her radical past when she wed media mogul and preeminent capitalist Ted Turner. As Lembcke notes, "Fonda's separation from the leftist Hayden and marriage to one of the country's richest and most powerful men," should have solidified her place in "the mainstream of American respectability."³⁵⁸ Yet, by the late 1990s, Internet fables about "Hanoi Jane" were proliferating and parading as truth online. By 2002 – prior to the Fonda-Kerry hubbub, and, arguably, heightening the potency of such linkages with Fonda – a Google search for "Hanoi Jane" yielded 11,800 entries.³⁵⁹ That year the most vitriolic anti-Fonda book was published, "*Aid and Comfort*": *Jane Fonda in North Vietnam*, which argued that Fonda was a traitor and could (and should) have been tried as such.³⁶⁰ What had happened to transform the uber-popular Fonda of the 1980s, who married no less an American success story than Ted Turner, into a notorious figure, depicted as worthy of prosecution *30 years* after the fact, and potent enough to steal the spotlight during a presidential campaign?

Morning After. Fonda was much more successful in the mid-1980s with her *Workout* franchise. Her first workout video, *Jane Fonda's Workout* (1982), based on her best-selling book, remains the "best-selling home video of all time." It appeared in the Billboard Top Ten "from 1982 through 1986, remaining at the number one spot for 52 consecutive weeks." In 1984 she released two chart-topping videos, *The Challenge* and *Prime-Time Workout*, and her 1986 release, *Jane Fonda's Low Impact Workout*, topped the Billboard charts through 1988. IMDB, "Jane Fonda Awards," <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000404/awards> (accessed July 22, 2011); "Jane Fonda's Box Office Stats," The Movie Times, <http://www.the-movie-times.com/thrsdir/actress/BO/BO.cgiactor=jfonda&order=byyear&view=all> (accessed July 22, 2011); Jane Fonda Workout, <http://www.jane-fonda.net/workouts/Sites/Original.html>, <http://www.jane-fonda.net/workouts/Sites/advanced.html>, <http://www.janefonda.net/workouts/Sites/Gentle.html>, <http://www.jane-fonda.net/workouts/Sites/beginners.html> (accessed July 22, 2011).

³⁵⁸ Lembcke, 7.

³⁵⁹ Lembcke, 148.

³⁶⁰ Lembcke, 145.

Chapter VII: Introducing Hanoi Jane

The name “Hanoi Jane” did not begin appearing in articles in the flagship press until the 1980s.³⁶¹ It had previously appeared in local papers in 1972 and in a 1973 John Birch Society newsletter. Though California protestors greeted the campaigning Fonda and Hayden with signs that read “Go Home, ‘Hanoi Jane’” in 1979, the myth did not register on the national radar until the Waterbury anti-Fonda campaign of 1988.³⁶² The leader in Waterbury was Guy Russo, a World War II veteran who soon found himself in the vanguard of “a nationwide anti-Jane Fonda movement.” It all began when Russo heard that Jane Fonda was scheduled to film in Waterbury. Russo wrote an angry letter to his local newspaper and had 250 bumper stickers printed that read “I’m Not Fond’a Hanoi Jane.” Later that week the Associated Press picked up the story, which “touched off a barrage of letters and telephone calls from around the nation.” While the national media descended on Waterbury, residents insisted that “the outcry” was “not indicative of how most people in the city [felt]” and that the media was blowing Russo’s campaign “out of proportion.”³⁶³ The editor of Waterbury’s two newspapers noted that while “he had received 96 letters against Ms. Fonda and 20 in favor... only 35 to 40 of those letters [were] from residents of the area.” Similarly, though Russo sold over 3000 bumper stickers, only a third were “sold locally.” A telephone poll of 402 Waterbury residents indicated that a majority, 54 percent, “liked Ms. Fonda,” while “37 percent did not.” A full “73 percent were in favor of Ms. Fonda’s coming to town for the movie,” with just 13 percent opposed. In addition, both local newspapers

³⁶¹ For example, the *New York Times* first used the moniker in 1980, in Gail Sheehy, “Hers,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1980.

³⁶² Lembcke, 135.

³⁶³ One Waterbury official marvelled at how the “story has fed on itself... One letter to the editor and now all this.” Nick Ravo, “Wary Waterbury Waits for ‘Hanoi Jane’ Fonda,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1987.

“editorialized in favor of her coming to town.”³⁶⁴

By the time filming commenced on the Fonda film, *Stanley and Iris*, the following June, the furor had died down considerably. In the passing months, Russo had asserted that Fonda should be “executed,” the Ku Klux Klan had appeared at anti-Fonda meetings and rallies, and one alarmed pastor, who attended a rally wearing a sign that said “Forgive” was spat upon and called “a son of a bitch.”³⁶⁵ In response, several Waterbury residents mobilized, some forming a “Welcome Jane Committee,” and Fonda herself made two important moves.³⁶⁶ First, she went on *20/20* and told Barbara Walters that she believed America had yet to “[resolve] what the war meant. There are still festering wounds and a lot of pain. And for some, I’ve become a lightning rod.” For the first time, Fonda apologized for anything “thoughtless and careless” she had done that had hurt soldiers in Vietnam “and their families.” Of the POW controversy, she said, “whether or not all of the POWs were tortured is beside the point... they suffered, they suffered enough. They didn’t need to hear it from me.”³⁶⁷

Fonda also organized a meeting with Vietnam veterans in Waterbury; only *Vietnam* veterans were invited. When Fonda arrived, several were in uniform and wore “HANOI JANE and TRAITOR” buttons. Fonda suggested they listen to each other’s stories about the war. She listened to all the veterans in the room, and, in turn, shared with them why she had gone to North Vietnam and what she had been trying to accomplish.³⁶⁸ By the end of the meeting, reporters had found out about the meeting and arrived, expecting to interview angry veterans.³⁶⁹ Instead, several veterans hugged Fonda as they left; one told reporters that Fonda had said, “she was sorry

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Richard Hanley, “Russo Regrets Jane ‘Should Be Executed’ Remark,” *Waterbury Republican*, April 24, 1988; “Klan Says It Has Taken Part in Anti-Fonda Protests,” *Waterbury Republican*, July 20, 1988; Jack Goldberg, “Aldermen Reject Anti-Fonda Stand,” *Waterbury Republican*, April 26, 1988.

³⁶⁶ “Poll Shows Support for Fonda Film,” *Waterbury Republican*, January 15, 1988.

³⁶⁷ Jane Fonda, interview with Barbara Walters, *ABC News 20/20*, June 17, 1988.

³⁶⁸ Fonda, 329-332.

³⁶⁹ Dominic Bencivenga, “Fonda Meets Viet Vets in Naugatuck,” *Waterbury Republican*, June 19, 1988.

for the hurt that she caused to veterans and their families,” and that he thought “this was really a positive thing tonight.”³⁷⁰ Some of the veterans from this meeting organized the charity event for victims of Agent Orange that Fonda took part in later that summer.³⁷¹

During filming, the Waterbury protests against Fonda were confined to a half-dozen participants.³⁷² However, the national media coverage from the previous year was not without consequences. Television news had broadcast the opinions of the most virulent anti-Fonda residents, such as one man who said, “I think its great for Waterbury that they, uh, they, uh, picked Waterbury for the movie, but Jane Fonda – I wish they coulda picked somebody better. She’s a bitch.”³⁷³ Other residents were equally vocal in their opposition to the anti-Fonda campaign. One wrote, “give me a break... perhaps these people have forgotten that it was people like Jane Fonda who actively protested that unnecessary war that helped stop the killing of our men.” A female resident called Fonda “a very courageous person,” and noted that Fonda had risked losing her career; “she was using her reputation as an actor in something that is the highest form of democracy.”³⁷⁴ Despite the fact that the anti-Fonda campaign was supported by a tiny minority within the city, Waterbury nevertheless gained a reputation “as an almost-maniacal hotbed of God-fearing flag-wavers who believe in America right or wrong, love it or leave it.”³⁷⁵

Jerry Lembcke has conducted extensive research on the “Hanoi Jane” myth and its origins. Curious as to why the protests happened in 1988 but not earlier – Fonda had made *On Golden Pond* in 1981 in the more-conservative state of New Hampshire, without protest – Lembcke journeyed to Waterbury where he spoke with both anti- and pro-Fonda locals, including

³⁷⁰ *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda.*

³⁷¹ Nick Ravo, “Jane Fonda Finds Peace in her Time,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1988.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda.*

³⁷⁴ Quoted in Hershberger, 177.

³⁷⁵ Nick Ravo, “Wary Waterbury Waits for ‘Hanoi Jane’ Fonda.”

Guy Russo.³⁷⁶ Lembcke discovered that in the Vietnam era, a Minutemen-style group existed in Waterbury.³⁷⁷ Guy Russo had been a member of this militia-style organization.³⁷⁸ He had also been a leading figure in the pro-war, anti-peace movement reaction during the Vietnam War.³⁷⁹ Lembcke also discovered materials saved from 1988, including a dossier labeled “Evidence File for Case Against: Jane Fonda/Tom Hayden.” The fact that it had been distributed by the National Security Center, based in Washington, D.C, suggested to Lembcke that “there had been more than local involvement in the Waterbury movement.” A background check on the National Security Center revealed that the organization was associated with the John Birch Society.³⁸⁰

Lembcke believes that in 1972, after Fonda returned from Hanoi, and the Justice Department rejected calls to prosecute her for treason, the John Birch Society seized upon the opportunity. They capitalized on pro-war, anti-Fonda sentiments that had been rejected by the Attorney General, and began singling Fonda out as a “communist” enemy of patriotic Americans. Lembcke concludes that, with the help of the Birchers, “Hanoi Jane” entered “the annals of

³⁷⁶ Lembcke, 137. Lembcke is a professor of sociology. He has previously written on the myth of antiwar protestors spitting on returning veterans in his book *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. Lembcke is a Vietnam veteran.

³⁷⁷ The Minutemen was an armed, far-right organization that was militantly anti-communist. The group had its highest membership in the early 1960s. Organized in local cells, Minutemen practised drills and hid weapons to prepare for the day communists invaded the United States. Their goal was “to be able to live off the land and fight back as guerillas if the U.S. is invaded.” In one sample drill, California Minutemen spent two days “silently [stalking] one another through the desert brush, [tossing] Molotov cocktails made from 10-02. beer bottles filled with gasoline and stuffed with kerosene rags.” Within two years of the organization’s founding, Minutemen in California had “buried medicine, supplies and 10,000 rounds of ammunition up and down the state.” “Organizations: The Minutemen,” *Time*, November 3, 1961, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,897872-1,00.html> (accessed July 24, 2011).

³⁷⁸ The Waterbury branch was called the “Defense Survival Force.” They trained to stop communists should they “come up the Naugatuck River valley from Long Island Sound.” Lembcke, 137.

³⁷⁹ Russo had shown up at one antiwar meeting in Waterbury. He shouted that an American flag was displayed incorrectly, then lunged across a literature table at a volunteer, saying “I’m going to kill you.” Lembcke, 137, 138.

³⁸⁰ Lembcke, 138. The John Birch Society is a far-right organization, founded in 1959. Birchers fear “conspiratorial” internationalists. They believe that, “if left unexposed, the traitors inside the U.S. government would betray the country’s sovereignty to the United Nations for a collectivist new world order.” During the Cold War, Birchers held that “liberals provide the cover for the gradual process of collectivism,” and that many liberals were “secret communist traitors whose ultimate goal [was] to replace the nations of western civilization with one-world socialist government.” “John Birch Society,” Political Research Associates, <http://www.publiceye.org/tooclose/jbs.html> (accessed July 24, 2011).

postwar myth and legend.”³⁸¹

Lembcke tracks the Bircher-affiliates who helped to fuel the myth at each stage. An early figure in this feat was Fletcher Thompson, a Republican representative running for the Senate in 1972. Thompson was the one member of the House Internal Security Committee who sought to subpoena Fonda, and was resoundingly out-voted by his fellow Committee members.³⁸² It was Thompson who referred to Fonda as “Hanoi Hannah,” the epithet used by mainstream journalists before “Hanoi Jane” caught on. In 1971, Thompson had co-authored an article about communist subversion within the peace movement. The other author was John G. Schmitz – who would be the John Birch Society’s presidential candidate in 1972.³⁸³ Lembcke argues that Fonda was a perfect target for the Birchers and other extremists on the Right; not only had she protested the war, she was also a highly visible female – one who embraced an ambiguous female identity in the 1970s – *and*, as a wealthy celebrity, was seen a member of the nation’s “elite.” As Fonda moved on to new projects, the anti-Fonda torch passed from one right-winger to another. (Thompson was defeated in his 1972 Senate race.) After Fonda came out against nuclear energy and starred in *The China Syndrome* (1979), anti-Fonda sentiments were readily exploited by conspiracy theorist and perennial presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, who appealed to “misogynist, pro-war, and anti-environmentalist” constituencies with bumper stickers that read, “Feed Jane Fonda to the Whales” and – designed specifically for the nuclear industry – “Don’t Let Jane Fonda Pull Down Your Plants.”³⁸⁴

Lembcke notes that, “even before the [Vietnam] war was over, politicians and pundits began the search for scapegoats.” Fonda’s “celebrity status made her an easy target for their

³⁸¹ Lembcke, 139.

³⁸² “House Committee Refuses to Subpoena Jane Fonda,” *New York Times*, August 11, 1972.

³⁸³ Lembcke, 140, 139.

³⁸⁴ Lembcke, 142, 143.

vitriol,” and the fact that her activism continued after the war’s end solidified her status as an object of right-wing antipathy.³⁸⁵ This explains why Fonda, rather than Ramsey Clark or Joan Baez, has, for pro-war groups, come to represent the antiwar movement; Fonda’s ongoing celebrity status and popularity with mainstream Americans, ironically, made her an ideal target. Just as, during the war, Fonda’s status as a public figure and a wealthy Hollywood actress opened her up to personal ridicule and sharper criticisms than less-famous activists, in the post-war years, Fonda’s ongoing relevancy and enviable professional successes made her a galvanizing figure. Over time, Fonda would cease to be merely a shorthand for the antiwar movement, and would instead become a nearly singular target of pro-war groups.

Mary Hershberger has noted that in the 1970s, protestors “turned up occasionally when Fonda spoke,” but, like Guy Russo, they were older men, “who said they were members of the American Legion or VFW.” She also notes that, “newspaper accounts and even FBI informants regularly reported that [Fonda’s] audiences were large and receptive, and gave her thunderous applause.”³⁸⁶ This illustrates the fact that in the decade after the war, anti-Fonda sentiments were contained in right-leaning organizations and failed to permeate the mainstream. Indeed, prominent publications did not begin to refer to Fonda as “Hanoi Jane” until the late 1970s. Although the media increasingly used the name “Hanoi Jane” in the 1980s, this decade also saw Fonda’s activist image eclipsed by her roles as a Hollywood actress and fitness personality. Although mentions of “Hanoi Jane” increased during the 1980s, Fonda’s visibility, and, importantly – visibility in a positive light – increased much faster.

The uproar in Waterbury – much of it fuelled by Americans who lived far from Connecticut and

³⁸⁵ Lembcke, 3.

³⁸⁶ Hershberger, 136.

ordered their bumper stickers by mail – marked an important turning point in Fonda’s story. The national media coverage of the Waterbury protests was important for two reasons: it revealed the existence of a network of individuals who harbored an intense hatred of Hanoi Jane – individuals who had not been persuaded to embrace Fonda as either an actress or a fitness personality of the 1980s. Secondly, the media’s attention to Waterbury marked the beginning of a trend of mainstreaming Hanoi Jane. The following decades would see Hanoi Jane become so normalized in the public discourse that journalists would use that name interchangeably with Fonda’s, and the image of Hanoi Jane would virtually erase the public’s memory of Fonda’s professional success in the 1970s and 1980s, not to mention her pro-GI activism during the war. Since Waterbury, antiwar Americans have been told by journalists and pundits that activism put them at risk for ending up “like Jane Fonda.” This is a false warning, for it ignores the fact that Fonda’s most successful decade – professionally and as an “admired” public figure – unfolded *after* her antiwar activism.

Chapter VIII: Reincarnating Hanoi Jane

The revival and growth of Hanoi Jane transpired in the wake of a wave of literary and cinematic revisionism about the war in Vietnam. As Mary Hershberger has noted, POW accounts of their captivity evolved over time. The first collection of POW memoirs, *P.O.W.: A Definitive History of the American Prisoner of War Experience in Vietnam, 1964-73*, was composed mainly of the accounts of hardline POWs who had never entertained antiwar thoughts. In this collection, Jane Fonda is not mentioned, save to say that the POWs considered Ramsey Clark's visit to Hanoi more serious than Fonda's. A decade later, as more memoirs were published, each account vying to outdo the last "in the severity of torture they describe," the memoirs only "seldom include Fonda."³⁸⁷ Hershberger believes that "Jane Fonda was first firmly introduced into the POW torture narrative" in 1987, with the release of the film *The Hanoi Hilton*. This film was faithful to the *P.O.W.: A Definitive History* book, except that the screenwriters wrote into the script, "the role of an actress obviously understood to be Jane Fonda." In the film, several unwilling POWs meet 'Fonda,' who "lectures them shrilly about their obligation to 'apologize' to the Vietnamese people for bombing civilians." The POWs all obviously loathe her, and an African-American POW, "who is supposed to represent Fred Cherry (who never met Fonda) angrily stalks out on her." Others tell her that they are being tortured and that the prison food is terrible. 'Fonda' then "betrays them to torture by telling the camp commander" about their complaints.³⁸⁸ Hershberger goes on to note that while the film had limited popular appeal, "it was widely shown to veterans groups." Those who saw the film but had not met with Fonda,

³⁸⁷ Hershberger, 175, 176.

³⁸⁸ Hershberger, 176.

may well have believed it was an accurate account. The mythical portrait that later became imbedded in Internet Web sites of Jane Fonda in Hanoi as a naive, wilfully ignorant woman who is obviously a traitor, comes straight out of this film.³⁸⁹

Hershberger also notes that individual memoirs evolved to incorporate Fonda. For example, Fred Cherry initially told CBS, upon his release in 1973, that his medical treatment in Hanoi was good and that he, personally, had not suffered. A decade later, he claimed to have been tortured, and wove Fonda into his story, saying that in the middle of “extended torture,” he heard Fonda’s voice over the radio. (He also claimed that this was sometime in 1967, which was at least two years before Fonda became involved in the antiwar movement.)³⁹⁰ Other POWs, like Captain Thomas Moe and Myron Donald gave early accounts that they had made “the best of it;” by the mid-90s, these former POWs claimed to have been tortured to such an extent that they could not possibly have survived. Yet, upon their release in 1973, both men said nothing of torture and “appeared physically healthy.”³⁹¹

One early example of Fonda’s incorporation into the evolving accounts occurred during the Waterbury scandal, when VFW member Dominic Romano claimed that John McCain had been “‘senselessly beaten’ in Hanoi because he refused to meet with Fonda.”³⁹² These stories, which circulated in print in the 1980s, exploded online in the 1990s. Hershberger has observed that this “virtual explosion of Fonda-related mythology... was generated almost entirely within the military and among veterans,” many of whom had, by then, “learned to despise the caricature of her that they believed to be true.”³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Hershberger, 177.

³⁹⁰ Hershberger, 162, 163.

³⁹¹ Hershberger, 163, 164.

³⁹² Hershberger, 178.

³⁹³ Hershberger, 181.

Neither *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987) nor the POW memoirs were topics of national conversation, but they were accessed by POWs themselves, and pro-war organizations like the American Legion. Beginning with Waterbury, national attention was focused on the grievances held by some veterans towards Hanoi Jane. Though Waterbury gained the attention of the national media, the protestors themselves were still seen as extremists, while those who sought to welcome Jane Fonda were depicted as the “average” Americans. This delineation – between extremists who railed against Hanoi Jane, and average Americans who viewed the Vietnam War as long since passed – all but disappeared in 1990. The Gulf War (August 1990 – February 1991) saw Vietnam-era themes revived and formerly “extreme” opinions about antiwar activists become diffused within mainstream journalism.

Even before the Gulf War began, notes Jerry Lembcke, “U.S. peace activists mounted a sizable antiwar movement.” In response, “pro-war pundits and conservative columnists likened the protesters to sixties-era activists whose actions, they said, had demoralized the troops in Vietnam and robbed the nation of victory in Southeast Asia.” Not supporting the war in 1990 was equated with not supporting the troops during the Vietnam era. Among the examples of anti-troop betrayals cited by conservatives were tales of veterans who had been spat upon by antiwar protestors, and among the examples of anti-American betrayers was Hanoi Jane.³⁹⁴ Lembcke notes that the administration of George H. W. Bush used Vietnam-era anxieties for their own ends, with Bush promising that the war “would shake America out of its Vietnam syndrome.”³⁹⁵ Indeed, newspapers printed articles with headlines such as, “Vietnam; Rekindled Interest In the Vietnam War” and, after the war, Bush pronounced an end to the Vietnam syndrome during a

³⁹⁴ Lembcke, 6.

³⁹⁵ Lembcke, 4.

postwar press conference.³⁹⁶

Near the end of the war, journalist Tom Wicker defined the Vietnam syndrome as a derisive term used to characterize “the reluctance of some Americans to commit U.S. troops to foreign wars.” He also made note of a corollary “hangover from that lost war” – “the conservative and military myth that restraints imposed at home made victory in Vietnam impossible.” Though Wicker elaborates on two restraints – Johnson’s insistence on waging a limited war, and negative reporting by the press – a third constraint was surely the antiwar movement, which influenced successive administrations and, in the discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, was increasingly characterized as anti-soldier and unpatriotic. Wicker notes that this line of reasoning is “contrary to the evidence,” for it implies that “the U.S. could have won the war in Vietnam,” had it not been for subversives and defeatists at home. “The war was lost,” Wicker opined, “because it could not be won – not by any military means acceptable to an American public that endured the loss of more than 50,000 lives, untold treasure and its own political innocence.” To deny this is to ignore the facts, whilst encouraging “superpatriot fantasies.”³⁹⁷

This climate was highly conducive to the reemergence of Hanoi Jane myths. Interestingly, Fonda’s recent coupling with Ted Turner may have inadvertently stoked the fires of Hanoi Jane. Lembcke notes that Fonda’s relationship with Turner – as opposed to her former union with Hayden – might have “endeared her to conservatives as the prodigal daughter returned to the fold – of upper-echelon media and entertainment circles into which she was born.”³⁹⁸ However, Turner was not simply a capitalist-extraordinaire, he was also a supporter of liberal causes, like environmentalism, and he was a media elite – a perennial target of the right-wing. As the Gulf

³⁹⁶ Stanley Karnow, “Vietnam...” *New York Times*, September 30, 1990;
Reuters, “After the War: The White House; Excerpts From Bush’s News Conference on Postwar Plans,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1991.

³⁹⁷ Tom Wicker, “In the Nation: Ghosts of Vietnam,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1991.

³⁹⁸ Lembcke, 161.

War kicked into high gear, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein ordered all foreign correspondents to leave his country – save for one Spanish journalist and CNN’s ace war reporter, Peter Arnett. CNN gave Arnett permission to stay and “continue broadcasting amid the falling bombs.” The fact that Arnett had reported critically on the Vietnam war was noted by pundits in the wider media, and no sooner had the right-wing linked Turner and CNN with Vietnam-era themes, than Hanoi Jane was added to the mix, and the allegedly left-wing “Arnett-Vietnam-Turner-Fonda axis” became a favourite foe of conspiratorial-minded commentators on the Right.³⁹⁹

Fonda’s favor with Turner, together with television’s newest cable phenomenon – CNN, ironically worked against her in the early 1990s. Similarly, in the late 1990s, Fonda’s recognition as one of the “most important women” of the century, together with a new medium – the Internet – again heightened the prevalence of Hanoi Jane vis-à-vis Jane Fonda. Following Waterbury and the Gulf War, this was the third moment in Hanoi Jane’s post-Vietnam rise. In this instance, favor was bestowed by the rather traditional *Ladies Home Journal*, which put Fonda on its century’s end “best” list. The much-talked-about article downplayed Fonda’s activism, emphasizing instead her work in popularizing fitness for a mass female audience. Then came a Barbara Walters special on ABC that highlighted Fonda’s recognition by *Ladies’ Home Journal*.⁴⁰⁰

The televised special ignited a reaction online. One particularly shocking email began circulating just after the show aired. Later shown to be false, the email was a compilation of three

³⁹⁹ Lembcke, 6-7.

⁴⁰⁰ According to the magazine’s editor, the list included 100 women who had influenced women and would continue to do so. Lembcke, 7, 8, 143. *Ladies Home Journal* also released a book, *100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century*, described as a “photo-filled celebration of extraordinary 20th-century women [that] highlights women’s contributions in politics, child care, science, education, athletics, literature, entertainment, art, and more.” The book was released in late 1998, complete with a Forward written by Barbara Walters. Her complimentary television special aired the following April. Not to be confused with Fonda’s appearance on *20/20* in 1988, in which she apologized to veterans, this 1999 special was a celebration of women’s achievements, and was billed as a special, featuring “interviews with Oprah Winfrey, Jane Fonda, and Gloria Steinem.” “100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century,” Amazon.ca, available at <http://www.amazon.ca/Most-Important-Women-20th-Century/dp/0696208237> (accessed July 24, 2011).

stories, written by one Jon E. Dougherty.⁴⁰¹ The hero of the first story is Colonel Jerry Driscoll, who allegedly met Fonda during her Hanoi visit, spat at her, and endured a brutal beating in consequence. The second story is attributed to Colonel Larry Carrigan, who, according to the account, had conspired with other POWs to inform Fonda of their treatment by slipping tiny pieces of paper into her hand when they met her in a receiving line. According to the email, Fonda walked down the line, asking questions like “Are you grateful for the humane treatment from your benevolent captors?” Fonda, according to the story, took the papers “without missing a beat. At the end of the line and once the camera stopped rolling, to the shocked disbelief of the POWs, she turned to the officer in charge... and handed him the little pile. Three men died from the subsequent beatings. Col. Carrigan was almost number four.”⁴⁰²

According to David Emery of *Urban Legends*, who personally spoke with Carrigan and Driscoll, both men denied the veracity of the stories; Carrigan, who was shot down in 1967, had “no idea why this story was attributed to him.” “I never met Jane Fonda,” he is quoted as saying. Similarly, Driscoll told Emery that the story was “the product of a very vivid imagination.” The third part of the story, which the writer claims is his own, has since been traced to “Michael Benge, a civilian adviser captured by the Viet Cong in 1968 and held as a POW for 5 years.” Benge has confirmed that the story is his own, and maintains that it is true.⁴⁰³ However, Lembcke notes that Benge’s story had previously been published in a 1990 collection of personal POW

⁴⁰¹ Lembcke, 144. Dougherty, who did not serve in Vietnam, is a conservative journalist and author. He has written extensively on illegal immigrants, and his work has appeared on *CNSNews* (Conservative News Service) and the conservative *WorldNetDaily*. The latter is known for its controversies, among them, blaming the moral depravity of New York for the 9/11 attacks (on September 13, 2001) and publicizing claims that President Obama was not born in the United States. See http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=24670 for WND’s partial-apology for the 9/11 article, and <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?pageId=78258>, for WND’s 2008 article, “What’s Obama hiding from us?” See <http://www.americandaily.com/author/139> for Dougherty’s profile.

⁴⁰² David Emery, “‘Hanoi Jane’ Email Rumors Blend Fact and Fiction; Did Jane Fonda Betray American POWs?” About.com, http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/janefonda/a/hanoi_jane.htm (accessed April 2, 2011).

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

stories; this earlier version made no mention whatsoever of Jane Fonda.⁴⁰⁴

In addition to the fact that the two POWs mentioned by name have denied the stories, Captain Mike McGrath, then-President of the organization NAM-POWs, now its “Director and Historian” has repeatedly tried to set the record straight on Fonda and the POWs.⁴⁰⁵ In 2001, he wrote a letter to Fox News, which the organization published on its website, that attempted to separate truth from myth. According to McGrath, only one of the POWs Fonda met with – David Hoffman – has claimed that he “was tortured to force him to go to the room.”⁴⁰⁶ McGrath, who has spoken with the POWs in question, continues,

Probably the only consequence of her visit to... Radio Hanoi was that her broadcasts were played in the rooms of the POWs... All it did was infuriate the POWs. So, hatred is probably the only thing she brought forth from the POWs. She did not bring torture or other abuse to the POWs... with the one exception. Why one man was picked out for torture of his broken arm is unknown... They (the Viet Cong) quit outright torture and barbarity soon after Ho Chi Minh died in September 1969... Yes, the Carrigan/Driscoll/ strips of paper story is an Internet hoax. It has been around since Nov 1999 or so. And, no, to the best of my knowledge, she never visited the Hanoi Hilton prison. I think they just gave her a royal tour of the best the city had to offer... history, culture, clean rooms, clean hospital rooms, etc. and any bombed-out building they could claim had been churches, schools, etc... I have been swamped with so many e-mails on the subject of the Jane Fonda article... The truth is that none of this ever happened. This is a hoax story.⁴⁰⁷

Evidently, the internet stories, begun in 1999, were still circulating in early 2001, if only on the periphery of veterans forums, email lists, and Fox News. In the meantime, a retired lawyer, Henry Mark Holzer, had decided to capitalize on the reaction to the *20/20* special, and had begun writing a book. In 2002 Holzer, who has a “long resume of legal work for right-wing

⁴⁰⁴ Lembcke, 144.

⁴⁰⁵ McGrath was a POW from 1967 to 1973. See <http://www.nampows.org/>, the “official home page of the Vietnam era Prisoners of War (1961-1973).” The page contains statistics and other information. NAM-POWs is a non-profit veterans organization, with “540 active members,” dedicated to the “801 returning Prisoners of War repatriated from the Southeast Asia conflict.” Accessed April 2, 2011.

⁴⁰⁶ In addition to David Hoffman, Michael Bengé, as mentioned above, maintains that he was tortured *because* of Fonda. However, since Bengé never met with Fonda, his account is somewhat less contentious, for Fonda could not possibly have known about what allegedly happened to Bengé.

⁴⁰⁷ Roger Friedman, “Hanoi Jane: The Direct Word From the POW Organization,” FOXNews.com, January 31, 2001, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,772,00.html> (accessed April 2, 2011).

causes,” wrote *“Aid and Comfort”: Jane Fonda in North Vietnam*. The book is an indictment of both Fonda and what Holzer considers the capitulation of the Nixon administration’s Justice Department. Arguably, *Aid and Comfort* would have passed with little notice, had the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks not raised questions about subversion from within. This point is argued by Lembcke, who notes that after the story broke about “Taliban John” Walker Lindh – an American captured while fighting as an enemy combatant in Afghanistan – Holzer purchased the domain talibanjohn.info. The site featured numerous articles linking Taliban John to Jane Fonda, and a link to Holzer’s sister site, hanoijane.net, “The Official Site for Information about Jane Fonda’s 1972 Trip to Wartime North Vietnam.” The site served as an advertisement for *Aid and Comfort*, complete with reviews by conservatives, such as David Horowitz.⁴⁰⁸ When Holzer appeared on *The O’Reilly Factor*, Bill O’Reilly noted that, “resentment of Jane Fonda was ‘inflamed by the indictment of John Walker.’” Lembcke has concluded that *Aid and Comfort* popularized the Hanoi Jane image more than ever before. The Google search of 2002, which had yielded 11,800 “Hanoi Jane” entries, had expanded nearly tenfold to 113,000 by 2007.⁴⁰⁹

The resurrection of Hanoi Jane was due to a confluence of factors. Most importantly, during the Vietnam War, Fonda *had* been a polarizing figure. Her POW comments made her unpopular with a certain segment of the population in 1973, particularly men and women on the ideological Right, as well as defenders of U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia. Though she was rehabilitated around the time the Nixon Administration unravelled and enjoyed professional success and increased popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, occasional protests still targeted her. Throughout her years as a “most admired woman,” Fonda remained a hated figure amongst groups like the VFW and the John Birch Society. In 1988, this underground apathy came to

⁴⁰⁸ Lembcke, 147.

⁴⁰⁹ Lembcke, 148. By July 2011, the number had risen to 418,000.

public attention with the mobilization of a few committed Hanoi Jane-haters in Waterbury. Since the late 1980s, the myth of Hanoi Jane has spread from far-right groups towards the centre. With the Gulf War, pro-war circles, for the first time since Vietnam, had pressing political motivation to demonize the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era, and, with the passage of time, were able to simplify and signify the movement with powerful images and still-recognizable individuals. Fonda, a “most admired” woman and a household name, fit the bill better than anyone, and the pictures of her in Hanoi, in peasant garb, and atop an antiaircraft gun had become more powerful with time. By the late 1980s Americans were no longer accustomed to images of their countrymen in enemy territory. Hanoi Jane was thus resurrected in the mainstream at the same time the United States was embarking on a war to rid itself of the “Vietnam syndrome.” In the meantime, less-mainstream groups – such as the John Birch Society – had been busy attacking Fonda, and had seen the fruits of their labor in the anti-Fonda demonstrations in Waterbury.

By the time the filming of *Stanley and Iris* had wrapped, Fonda was pulled into presidential politics, when the first President Bush tried to tie his presidential opponent to Fonda in the minds of voters. In August of 1988, it was alleged that Dan Quayle, the running mate of Republican candidate George H.W. Bush, had skirted military duty during the Vietnam War by joining the National Guard. Bush responded by deriding the military credentials of his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis. The chosen attack painted Dukakis as effeminate, while simultaneously linking him, in voters’ minds, with Jane Fonda. While visiting the “Navy town” of San Diego, Bush said, “I will not be surprised if he [Dukakis] thinks a naval exercise is something you find in the Jane Fonda Workout Book.” Journalists immediately picked up on the duality of this hit, noting that Bush had implied Dukakis’ “naivete on the military by referring to

the actress who intensely opposed to the Vietnam War [sic].”⁴¹⁰

This attack came two weeks after Quayle’s non-service in Southeast Asia had made front page news. The *New York Times* carried the headline, “Reopening an Old Wound; Quayle’s Guard Duty in Vietnam War Era Puts the Focus Again on,” and posed the question: Will “the nation ever get over the Vietnam War?” This article makes two salient observations. First, it notes that the Reagan administration had, admirably, emphasized “granting Vietnam veterans the respect the deserved.” Outside the White House, right-wingers were busily using Reagan’s pro-veteran efforts “to the service of their cause,” and films like *Rambo* were serving “as a symbol for a newly assertive America that had shaken off the guilt and anxiety of Vietnam.” Second, the *Times* noted that, despite right-wing claims to the contrary, “the movement to honor veterans” extended well beyond the Right:

Even intense and unreconstructed opponents of the war, like Jane Fonda, have spoken of their admiration for those who fought the war and the terrible way middle-class foes of the war treated those too poor, too patriotic or too unconnected to get out of fighting it.⁴¹¹

This article is significant for several reasons; first, Quayle’s patriotism is being called into question, while *Fonda* is being cited as a veteran-supporter. Second, a story about the legacy of Vietnam was deemed front-page news during a presidential campaign and during peace time. Third, the predicament of Dan Quayle in 1988 was remarkably similar to that of George W. Bush in 2004 – both men served in the national guard, thereby avoiding the draft; and both were on the ticket of the more hawkish party – yet, it was the *Democratic opponent* who had served abroad in the U.S. military, Dukakis stationed in South Korea in the mid-1950s and Kerry as a Swift boat

⁴¹⁰ Gerald M. Boyd, “Bush Cuts Fish and Baits His Opponent,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1988. If Bush was simply trying to feminize Dukakis, he could have easily said “Denise Austin Workout Video,” or, even better, “Richard Simmons.” He did not. Bush repeatedly used the Jane Fonda line in subsequent speeches, and this was widely understood as an effort to link Dukakis with a well-known figure of the antiwar movement.

⁴¹¹ E. J. Dionne Jr., “Reopening an Old Wound; Quayle’s Guard Duty in Vietnam War Era Puts the Focus Again on,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1988, A1.

lieutenant in Vietnam.⁴¹² Though Quayle was a vice presidential candidate, it is nevertheless striking that the Republican campaign's strategy in 1988 – linking the Democratic candidate with Jane Fonda – was overwhelmingly similar to the strategy later employed by anti-Kerry, pro-Bush forces in 2004.

By the time of the Gulf War in 1990, Fonda had been dragged back into the country's post-Vietnam divisions – first, when she filmed in Waterbury, and later, when she was used to defame a presidential candidate. It is little wonder, then, that during wartime, “Hanoi Jane” made a comeback.⁴¹³ The fact that antiwar demonstrations accompanied the war's beginning, and that Fonda could be connected to Peter Arnett, only made Hanoi Jane more useful. Already, Hanoi Jane had risen above comparable Vietnam-era antiwar figures. The John Birch Society had encouraged the singularity and potency of Hanoi Jane as an antiwar symbol, and their efforts had been aided by hawkish groups like the ones that organized the Waterbury protests. The media had been complicit in this rewriting, allowing the dozen protestors in Waterbury to make national news.

In a similar fashion, the American media would play into the hands of pro-war, right-wing attacks in 2004, as they reported on the fake Fonda-Kerry photograph, referred to Fonda, in their own words, as “Hanoi Jane,” and propagated three false characterizations of Fonda. First, Fonda was depicted as an unpatriotic, anti-GI, highly polarizing figure from the Vietnam era; in fact, she had not been anti-GI, had been deeply patriotic to those who consider dissent a “higher patriotism,” and, through the 1970s and 1980s, she was more popular than polarizing.⁴¹⁴ Second,

⁴¹² George H.W. Bush also served in the military; he was a naval aviator in World War II.

⁴¹³ Mentions of “Hanoi Jane” in American newspapers skyrocketed in 1991. In the decade before Waterbury, “Hanoi Jane” appeared in newspapers an average of 5 times per year (according to those newspapers catalogued at www.newspaperarchives.com). In 1987, the year the Waterbury protests began, that number shot to 19; in 1988, when Fonda was filming Stanley and Iris, that number was 52. In 1991, “Hanoi Jane” appeared in print 83 times.

⁴¹⁴ Senators George McGovern and William Fulbright both referred to dissent as a “higher patriotism.”

the media characterized Fonda as a foremost figure of the antiwar movement; in reality, she had joined the movement after its height, and the “movement” continued to be a highly diverse “movement of movements.” Finally, the American media of 2004 effectively erased the distinction between Jane Fonda and Hanoi Jane. The result was that Fonda’s history within the movement was highly distorted, and the right-wing re-writing of the Vietnam era continued apace, with Fonda looming ever larger as a left-wing villain.

This account has sought to correct the impression that Fonda was anti-GI, and that she was a continuously polarizing figure; instead, the argument has been made that Fonda was consistently anti-war but pro-GI, and that her popularity rebounded with the revelations of Watergate and her return to the mainstream. In addition, I have argued that Hanoi Jane and Jane Fonda are not one in the same; that the myth of Hanoi Jane was built over time; the foundation was laid during the POW controversy in 1973, but the myth-making did not accelerate until the late 1980s. A decade later, the myth grew to unprecedented heights: this trajectory began in the wake of the *20/20* special with the legendary torture email, was accelerated by the post-9/11 efforts to link Fonda with another traitorous American – Taliban John, and reached its apex when she headlined as a liability during the presidential election of 2004.

In conclusion, this paper will investigate the lingering impressions left by the media’s coverage in 2004; was Fonda unpatriotic in her dissent? And, crucially – vis-à-vis either American society of the early 1970s *or* the antiwar movement which she allegedly represented – can she fairly be characterized as an extreme figure?

Quoted in Thomas J. Knock, “‘Come Home, America’: The Story of George McGovern,” in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent*, ed. Randall B. Woods (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113; quoted in Randall B. Woods, “Dixie’s Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War, and the American South,” in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent*, ed. Randall B. Woods (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 164.

Chapter IX: Fonda, Wartime Dissent and Postwar Denigration

“Is it treason in a free society to take action to cause your country to desist from intervention and violence and slaughter of hundreds of thousands of foreign people? ... If so, then God help America.”
– Ramsey Clark

“She did something totally immoral... and she ought to understand that the issue of the Vietnam War was hugely complex. I’m not saying we didn’t make mistakes. Of course we made mistakes.”
– Henry Kissinger

She believed very strongly that that war had to be stopped. I think it was a mistake in tactic. I think it hurt her.”
– George McGovern⁴¹⁵

The extent to which Jane Fonda’s dissent might be considered extreme can be gauged by examining the discourse on dissent at the time, as well as the degree to which dissent was widespread in American society. When compared with others, neither Fonda’s words nor the vast majority of her actions seem extreme. This holds true whether one examines activists, including those who went to Hanoi, mainstream journalism, which publicly criticized the American-wrought devastation of Vietnam, or even elected officials, many of whom repeatedly characterized dissent as patriotic. For example, among the first official opponents of the Vietnam War was Alaska Senator Ernest Gruening. Gruening was one of only two senators to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964. As early as 1966 – well before American public opinion turned against the war, Gruening led a 2000-strong protest in Los Angeles, at which he was joined by singer Joan Baez. Gruening “spoke from a platform bearing the sign ‘Shame America’ with red, white and blue bombs falling on a cowering nude woman clutching two infants.”

⁴¹⁵ The Clark, Kissinger and McGovern quotes are taken from *Unauthorized Biography: Jane Fonda*.

Shortly thereafter, he was hung in effigy at Ohio State University.⁴¹⁶ This incident is instructive, for it illustrates how vehement both antiwar activists and their detractors could be. It also provides a contrast to the tone of Fonda's dissent, which typically embraced discussion and avoided tactics that were intended to shock. The exception to this trend was Fonda's sitting on an anti-aircraft gun in North Vietnam, which produced a powerful image of dissent – one that strongly implied a lack of allegiance to her home country. Nevertheless, when examined alongside an antiwar United States senator – one who wilfully endorsed a slogan like “Shame America” and an image of American bombs killing women and children, and has been characterized by historians as “[embracing] the tradition of American dissent,” Fonda's dissent – though at times misguided and unintentionally hurtful – seems considerably less extreme. Indeed, assessing Fonda's activism alongside contemporaries in general – ranging from genuinely radical far-left groups to a fellow actress-activist like Vanessa Redgrave or any number of American travellers to Hanoi – helps to explain why her actions in Hanoi were not widely viewed as treasonous at the time.

Gruening, of course, was only one man, and it is not unheard of for Americans to elect senators of an extremist bent. Crucially, there were other, decidedly non-extreme senators who also embraced dissent. George McGovern, the Democratic nominee for the presidency in 1972, openly expressed the view that dissent was patriotic. According to historian Thomas J. Knock, “without question, [McGovern's] entire career was a testament to the belief that dissent formed the marrow of American citizenship.” McGovern himself had said in 1967 that “the willingness to question and challenge all that we are and all we do” constituted the “higher patriotism.”⁴¹⁷ An

⁴¹⁶ Robert D. Johnson, “The Progressive Dissent: Ernest Gruening and Vietnam,” in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent*, ed. Randall B. Woods (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 59, 78, 79.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas J. Knock, “‘Come Home, America’: The Story of George McGovern,” in *Vietnam and the American*

indisputable ‘establishment’ figure who advocated dissent was Arkansas Senator and the longest-serving chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, J. William Fulbright. As early as 1966 Fulbright embraced “dissent for dissent’s sake.” In an antiwar speech, “A Higher Patriotism,” he “observed with distaste that intolerance of dissent was a typically American characteristic,” and said, of the United States, “I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion.” According to historian Randall B. Woods, “Fulbright insisted that unanimity was tantamount to complacency: in the absence of debate and dissension, errors – the war in Vietnam being the most glaring – were sure to be made”⁴¹⁸

The fact of Jane Fonda’s dissent can hardly be considered extreme, given the establishment figures that openly endorsed dissent. Notably, McGovern and Fulbright stressed its importance not only when dissenters are correct, but simply because dissent is essential for democracy. Some would argue that dissent is one thing, but that Jane Fonda’s words went beyond constructive dissent and veered towards treason. However, in the context of the war’s discourse, Fonda’s words were neither treasonous nor the most extreme. For example, in early 1967 – again, before the American public turned against the war – Martin Luther King, Jr. forcefully declared his opposition to the war in a sermon at New York’s Riverside Church. King named as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today – my own government.” He compared the United States government to the Nazis, asserting that “we test our latest weapons on them [the Vietnamese], just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe.”⁴¹⁹ Fonda’s pleas that pilots “think” pale in comparison to King’s equating of

Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent, ed. Randall B. Woods (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113.

⁴¹⁸ Randall B. Woods, “Dixie’s Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War, and the American South,” in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent*, ed. Randall B. Woods (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 164.

⁴¹⁹ King extended this metaphor, saying, “the concentration camps we call ‘fortified hamlets.’” Like many activists, King called on his government to admit that, in Vietnam, “we have been wrong from the beginning,” to “end all

Lyndon Johnson's government with Hitler's.

In this same speech, King spoke of the efforts to exclude non-'experts' from the discussion of the war. He said of his own experience, that people would say to him, "'Aren't you a Civil Rights leader?'" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace."⁴²⁰ Even a longtime activist like King faced critics who sought to silence him due to his vocation and presumed lack of experience in matters of war and peace.

Histories of the antiwar movement – which comprised 17,000 different groups and countless individuals – provide numerous examples of active and verbal dissent within the movement, as well as expressions of antiwar sentiment from the wider American society. A survey of the literature suggests that Fonda was not extreme – not in her words, her actions, or her sentiments. If anything, Fonda was slow to reach her antiwar conclusions. When she did speak out, American public opinion had already shifted to such an extent that Fonda's disillusionment was more easily characterized as representative than radical.

By the Autumn of 1967, "magazines of the cultural center" were expressing serious doubts about the war and calling for a change in policy. "*Life* conceded that it was time for a bombing halt and the *Saturday Evening Post* termed the war 'a national mistake.'"⁴²¹ It was not just editors and journalists who disagreed with American policy – a *Good Housekeeping* poll showed that women across the country wanted a "quick and final solution." George Gallup agreed; the famous pollster "concluded that the American people wanted out."⁴²²

Polls were hardly the only antiwar items making news. Long before Fonda joined the movement, celebrities were openly dissenting: the "lead singer of Beach Boys was indicted" and

bombing," and to "declare a unilateral cease-fire." Fonda's calls for policy changes were no more radical than King's. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Martin Luther King, Jr., Declares His Opposition to the War, 1967," in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, ed. Robert J. McMahon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 404.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ DeBenedetti, 200; "Changing Views on Vietnam," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 28, 1967, 90.

⁴²² DeBenedetti, 204.

“heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was stripped of his crown and sentenced to a maximum penalty of five years and \$10,000 in fines – both for refusing induction.”⁴²³

Fonda, a latecomer, had also missed the largest spectacle tied to the movement – the protests in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. The Convention of 5,500 delegates had been nearly outnumbered by 5000 demonstrators.⁴²⁴ In a show of the polarization endemic during the war – long before Fonda took to the airwaves – Chicago police “stripped themselves of their badges and attacked the crowds with clubs and mace” and “[attacked] journalists with such abandon that... leaders of the country’s major news organizations protested to City Hall.” The downtown area “was so saturated with tear gas that even Vice-President Humphrey in his twenty-third-floor Hilton suite suffered eye and skin irritation.”⁴²⁵ By the time Fonda joined the antiwar cause in 1970, the movement had undergone a significant shift, moving from the “radical left” towards the centre. Charles DeBenedetti has noted that the goal of antiwar groups of the 1970s was not “revolution but reform, not to transform American society in a revolt over Vietnam, but rather to save the society from the effects of further war.”⁴²⁶ By the Fall of 1969, an estimated two million people took part in the nationwide protests against the war, known as the Peace Moratorium. “In towns and cities throughout the US, students, working men and women, school children, the young and the old, took part in religious services, school seminars, street rallies and meetings.”⁴²⁷ The widespread participation in the peaceful Moratorium was indicative of the fact that the movement’s moderate wing was gaining influence and that the movement itself was gaining greater mainstream acceptance. To the extent that the antiwar movement could

⁴²³ DeBenedetti, 186.

⁴²⁴ DeBenedetti, 226.

⁴²⁵ DeBenedetti, 227, 228.

⁴²⁶ DeBenedetti, 272.

⁴²⁷ “1969: Millions march in US Vietnam Moratorium,” BBC News, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/15/newsid_2533000/2533131.stm (accessed July 25, 2011).

be considered radical, its radical hour was passing by the time Fonda joined the ranks.

In mid-1970, Fonda was back in the United States and in the midst of a cross-country road trip, largely consisting of conversations with GIs at coffeehouses, when the war was expanded into Cambodia. It was this event that spurred Fonda to finally speak publicly against the war. Her outrage over the incident was anything but extreme. As a result of the invasion of Cambodia, “two hundred fifty career officers in the State department and the foreign service sent a joint letter of protest to Secretary of State William Rogers,” and “several National Security Council staff members quit Kissinger’s service in protest.” In addition, “normally apolitical groups, including Nobel science laureates” began voicing their opposition to the war. Congress drafted resolutions to cut off funding for the war by year’s end, the Senate voted to repeal the Tonkin Resolution and “*Life* magazine came out for a total withdrawal by the end of 1971.”⁴²⁸

At the same time that politicians, celebrities and much of the population were turning against the war, anti-antiwar forces were also mobilizing. The groups involved foreshadowed the post-Vietnam efforts to demonize Fonda. Attempting to discredit the antiwar movement, “the American Legion, the John Birch Society, and right-wing organizations charged that the peace symbol was a communist design, an anti-Christian insignia, or a medieval ‘witches’ font.”⁴²⁹ These efforts did not sway a majority of Americans, for the following year (1971), a Harris poll found that “a record 65 percent said that the war was ‘morally wrong.’” That year also saw a continuation of antiwar demonstrations across the country, including “local marches, interfaith prayer vigils, petitions from national church and civic bodies, consumer boycotts [and] referenda.”⁴³⁰

That Fall, Fonda began touring with FTA. While her antiwar show is sometimes

⁴²⁸ DeBenedetti, 284, 286.

⁴²⁹ DeBenedetti, 289.

⁴³⁰ DeBenedetti, 318, 319.

remembered in today's discourse, other antiwar protests of that year are forgotten. In October, during halftime at a University of Michigan football game, "Vietnam Veterans lined the sidelines and a hundred thousand fans stood as the band played 'Taps' and an announcer read a... statement calling for a date-certain end to the war." An even larger expression of public sentiment occurred in San Diego, "where local activists and military personnel organized a referendum on preventing the USS *Constitution* from sailing to its battle station in the Tonkin Gulf." Nearly 80 percent of local citizens voted to keep the ship in port. When the *Constitution* finally departed, "nine crewmen jumped ship and sought sanctuary in a local church. Another thousand sailors from the sister ship *USS Coral Sea* petitioned Congress to prevent their vessel from leaving port."⁴³¹ Jane Fonda, whose political activities that year included performing for antiwar GIs, was neither the most dramatic nor the most newsworthy antiwar story of 1971. Fonda's words were similarly tame. Her most contested statements were those made on Radio Hanoi in 1972 and during Operation Homecoming in 1973. Though Fonda did accuse the war's architects of war crimes and assert that POWs had not been tortured, she did not call soldiers war criminals, nor ask them to desert, nor did she encourage the North Vietnamese in their fight against the United States. With the exception of the POW comments, her words were regarded by most Americans as contentious, not treasonous, and were understood to be antiwar, rather than anti-American.

Other Americans in the public eye, like Fonda, expressed their despair, and even cynicism over the seemingly unending war. One American who went slightly further than Fonda in expressing his disdain for the actions of the American military in Vietnam was the famous Arthur Hoppe, a syndicated columnist who wrote for the *San Francisco Chronicle* for over 40 years. In

⁴³¹ DeBenedetti, 299. This was not the first instance where citizens mobilized; in the late 1960s outrage at the war spread beyond campuses "and into the suburbs and boardrooms of the nation." In California, women succeeded, for seven, hours, at blocking trucks loaded with napalm. Other women boycotted Saran Wrap, which was made by Dow Chemical, "the foremost producer of napalm in the United States." Scott, 129.

March, 1971, in a column titled “Rooting Against,” Hoppe wrote:

Now I root against my own country. This is how far we have come in this hated and endless war... How frighteningly sad this is. My generation was raised to love our country and we loved it unthinkingly. We licked Hitler and Tojo and Mussolini. Those were our shining hours. Those were our days of faith. They were evil: we were good. I have come to hate my country’s role in Vietnam. I hate the massacres, the body counts, the free fire zones, the napalming of civilians, the poisoning of rice crops. I hate being part of My Lai, I hate the fact that we have now dropped more explosives on these scrawny Asian peasants than we did on all our enemies in World War II... I don’t root for the enemy. I doubt they are any better than we. I don’t give a damn any more who wins the war... It is a terrible thing to root against your own country... But I don’t think I am alone. I think many Americans must feel these same sickening emotions I feel. I think they share my guilt. I think they share my rage.⁴³²

Hoppe’s words, in 1971, did not lead to an immediate anti-Hoppe backlash, nor was he blacklisted after the war.⁴³³ As with Fonda’s pleas over Radio Hanoi in 1972, most war-weary Americans understood that the Hoppes and Fonda were not rooting for the enemy, but were despondent about what the American military had done to the Vietnamese, and desperately hoped for an end to the carnage on both sides. In an era when genuinely radical groups, like the Weather Underground, were turning to terrorism, flaunting their disdain for the United States, and openly hoping that America would fail in Southeast Asia, it is little wonder that most Americans were not enraged by the words of journalists like Hoppe or celebrity activists like Fonda.

One might argue that even though Fonda’s words did not rival those of the Weather Underground – nor those of Arthur Hoppe and Dr. King – and even though the movement’s most

⁴³² Arthur Hoppe, “Rooting Against,” *Ada Evening News*, March 3, 1971.

⁴³³ After “Rooting Against,” Hoppe’s column continued to appear in the *Chronicle*, and was syndicated in more than 100 newspapers. In 1996 he was honored by the National Society of Newspaper Columnists when he received its Award for Lifetime Achievement. When Hoppe passed away in 2000, the *Chronicle* called the “Rooting Against” article “a frank, difficult admission.” One *Chronicle* editor described Hoppe as “a writer of tremendous civility and grace... in an age of bombast;” another said he was “the best reporter the *Chronicle* ever had.” Steve Rubenstein, Leah Garchik, Janice Greene, “Chronicle Columnist Art Hoppe Dies: Eloquent satire skewered the pompous and powerful for over 40 years,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 3, 2000, available at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2000/02/03/MN98987.DTL&ao=all> (accessed July 26, 2011).

violent protests predated her involvement, her actions in North Vietnam were sufficient to cast her as the *femme fatale* of the war years. As previously noted, three hundred Americans had traveled to North Vietnam in advance of Fonda. Though she alone was photographed sitting on an anti-aircraft gun, nothing else in her visit was remarkable. Former Attorney General, Ramsey Clark visited North Vietnam shortly after and agreed “that the bombing should be halted immediately.” Like Fonda, he was castigated for his remarks by the White House, which “dismissed him as a fool or a communist stooge,” and by the veterans of Foreign Wars, which urged the government to charge both him and Fonda as “traitorous meddlers in official government security.”⁴³⁴ Unlike Fonda, Clark and other American travelers to Hanoi have subsequently disappeared from the discourse surrounding Fonda and her trip to Hanoi, and the context they would provide has been absent from debates about Fonda’s actions.

Fonda was not alone in her characterization of the dikes, the bombing, or the devastating effects of U.S. military policy. Neither was she the first to document the destruction in the North. David Dellinger had done precisely that when he visited Vietnam early in the war, and the *New York Times*, as early as 1966, had printed a series of reports that “detailed the damage done to civilian areas” and “contended that American air attacks were only strengthening Hanoi’s determination to fight on.” It was not just the *New York Times* that took issue with the government’s version of events and exercised its right to dissent. The same year *Ladies’ Home Journal* “printed eyewitness accounts that exposed the military’s use of napalm on Vietnamese villages.”⁴³⁵

Even if Fonda’s words were not extreme, and if her documentation of the devastation was routine, there are those, like Holzer, who argue Fonda betrayed the United States while in Hanoi

⁴³⁴ “V.F.W. Urges Prosecution of Clark and Miss Fonda,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1972.

⁴³⁵ Cited in DeBenedetti, 168, Scott, 129.

by giving “aid and comfort” to the enemy. Yet, when the activities of other Americans in Hanoi are examined, Fonda appears to do little by way of aiding or comforting the Vietnamese. In 1965, when the American public largely supported the war, ten Women Strike for Peace activists had traveled to Southeast Asia “to meet with women from the North Vietnam Peace Committee and the National Liberation Front.”⁴³⁶ Over the next decade, nearly 300 antiwar activists would travel to Hanoi for similar meetings; almost none had been involved in pro-GI activities as Fonda had. If the WSP visitors did not “comfort” the enemy, other groups of Americans surely did. Early in the war, “A Quaker Action Group... notified the White House of its intentions to send aid directly to North Vietnam.” By 1967, this “Quaker underground... was sending about \$1,000 per week in aid to the North Vietnamese.” In addition, the “Quaker Navy” made three humanitarian voyages to Vietnam; one vessel carried \$30,000 worth of medical supplies directly to Haiphong Harbor, North Vietnam’s main port.⁴³⁷

Unless Quakers, Washington housewives, a former Attorney General and America’s most lionized African American are all to be labelled treasonous, it is difficult to see why Fonda deserves to be singled out as a traitor. Even her antiwar *sentiments* cannot be construed as extreme. Antiwar movement historian Charles DeBenedetti has noted that many critics of the war evinced “a concern for the people of Indochina, even when they argued mainly that the war effort hurt the United States.”⁴³⁸ DeBenedetti also argues that the radical elements of the movement had ceded to moderate activists by 1970, and that the movement in general was portrayed as “more

⁴³⁶ Scott, 130.

⁴³⁷ Scott, 134.

⁴³⁸ When viewed within the context of public figures objecting to American foreign policy, Fonda’s dissent is much less remarkable than today’s anti-Hanoi Jane forces acknowledge. Among those who “challenged official accounts of the effects of nuclear testing” and the war in Vietnam were the nation’s foremost “journalists and academics,” including Walter Lippmann, Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, George Kennan, Noam Chomsky, John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Among the artists who joined Fonda in dissenting were singers Peter, Paul, and Mary; the composer, Leonard Bernstein; the poet, Alan Ginsberg and the singer, Bob Dylan. DeBenedetti, 5, 347, 377.

confrontational than it actually was... The Nixon White House deliberately heightened and exploited confrontation.”⁴³⁹ Indeed, Nixon wrote in his memoirs that antiwar dissidents were “going to be lost souls... they basically are haters, they are frustrated, they are alienated – they don’t know what to do with their lives.”⁴⁴⁰

This right-of-centre view of antiwar activists hints at why those on the Right may have found it necessary to attack Fonda in the years since the war. As the war’s apologists attempted to re-cast the Vietnam War as a righteous cause, hampered by political constraints and antiwar “bums” at home, framing Jane Fonda as a traitor may have seemed necessary, for while Americans might be persuaded that some activists were indeed alienated lost souls, few would believe this of Fonda. It is noteworthy that the rise of the political Right through the 1980s coincided with Fonda’s most successful decade.⁴⁴¹ The Right’s efforts to paint the Vietnam War as an honorable cause, endorsed by U.S. soldiers and opposed only by “bums” and radicals was problematized by the fact that Fonda, an unrepentant former activist, was viewed as both all-American and extremely popular by much of the public. Characterizations of Fonda as “most admired” in women’s magazines concurrent with articles in newspapers like the *New York Times*

⁴³⁹ DeBenedetti, 392.

⁴⁴⁰ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 685. It should be noted that there were efforts to demonize Fonda during the war. Conservative commentators, politicians who sought to prosecute Fonda, and the FBI all sought to ruin Fonda’s reputation. However, with the exception of Fonda’s POW comments during Operation Homecoming, the American public was not persuaded of Fonda’s wrongdoing, and the attacks from the Right were not sustained through the mid-1970s, as the Nixon Administration unravelled and Fonda’s popularity rebounded. In contrast to today’s right-wing mud-slinging at Fonda and routine characterizations of her as Hanoi Jane, for more than a decade after the war Fonda was better known as an actress and fitness personality than as Hanoi Jane. Since the late 1980s, right-wing attacks on Fonda have proliferated to the point that, today, mainstream publications frequently refer to her as Hanoi Jane.

⁴⁴¹ Emblematic of the rise of the political Right were Ronald Reagan’s two terms as president. First elected in 1980, Reagan carried 44 states and the Republicans captured the Senate for the first time since 1952. Reagan won by a landslide four years later, carrying 49 states and receiving the most electoral votes “of any presidential candidate” in U.S. history. “The Reagan Presidency,” Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/pressketch.html> (accessed July 27, 2011). This era also saw the conservative conversion of former leftists like Horowitz and Collier, who would go on to co-author such titles as *Second Thoughts: Former Radicals Look Back at the Sixties* and *The Anti-Chomsky Reader*. Horowitz has penned several more anti-Left monographs, including *Left Illusions: An Intellectual Odyssey* and *Indoctrination U: The Left’s War Against Academic Freedom*.

that recalled Fonda's pro-GI activism and, by extension, the prevalence of antiwar sentiments amongst GIs, would have made Fonda a key opponent of right-wing revisionists.⁴⁴² It would have been unconvincing to characterize Fonda – a two-time Academy Award-winning actress and record-breaking entrepreneur – as either a “bum” or an alienated “hater.” In the late 1980s, as in the 1970s, Fonda possessed significant cultural and economic capital. Certain organizations, such as the FBI, had tried to disarm Fonda during the war, but these efforts were exposed when the Nixon Administration fell apart. After the war, certain civilian groups, like the John Birch Society, castigated Fonda as a traitor, and this message reached a broader audience with the release of the *Hanoi Hilton* (1987) and POW memoirs that began to incorporate Fonda. With the Internet as a medium of distribution in the 1990s, anti-Hanoi Jane tales were circulated to an ever wider audience. That Fonda was a frequent subject of right-wing emails, and that the Internet was readily used to propagate such material is evinced in Mike McGrath's letter to FOX News, in which he confirmed that the Fonda-POW-torture email had been circulating since 1999 and stated, “I have been swamped with so many e-mails on the subject of... Jane Fonda.”⁴⁴³ Equally compelling is the speed with which the Fonda-Kerry photo was circulated online in 2004, and the strong negative reaction it provoked from letter-writing Americans who had already come to associate Fonda with treason.

In contrast to the reaction Fonda provoked in 2004, during the Vietnam War, she was by no means the most important antiwar figure. At the time, Ramsey Clark's visit to Hanoi generated a great deal more attention than Fonda's. In the two months encompassing their visits, Clark's

⁴⁴² During the 1988 presidential election, the *New York Times* pointed out, on its front page, that “even intense and unreconstructed opponents of the war, like Jane Fonda, have spoken of their admiration for those who fought the war and the terrible way middle-class foes of the war treated those too poor, too patriotic or too unconnected to get out of fighting it.” E. J. Dionne Jr., “Reopening an Old Wound; Quayle's Guard Duty in Vietnam War Era Puts the Focus Again on,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1988, A1.

⁴⁴³ Roger Friedman, “Hanoi Jane: The Direct Word From the POW Organization,” FOXNews.com, January 31, 2001, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,772,00.html> (accessed April 2, 2011).

visit triggered 22 *New York Times* letters and articles to Fonda's 12. Lembcke argues that Fonda's gender is the primary reason for her post-Vietnam importance – and vilification. Gender, he asserts, is “why we do not remember the loss of the war through a male figure like Ramsey Clark.”⁴⁴⁴ Indeed, over time, Fonda has been subjected to greater criticism than comparable male antiwar activists, such as Tom Hayden, who also went to Hanoi and was a prominent antiwar protestor; Donald Sutherland, who was, like Fonda, a celebrity and a vocal opponent of the war, and who worked alongside Fonda on the FTA tours; and Ramsey Clark, another public figure who visited Hanoi, made broadcasts, and generated buzz at the time, but failed to remain a hate-able figure in the public imagination. Notably, none of these men went on to acquire the cultural influence that Fonda could claim in the 1980s. In addition to the difference of gender, the fact that Fonda was such a popular figure in the 1980s was of great importance in right-wingers setting their sites on her.

Lembcke has also observed that “the specter of purse strings pulled by duplicitous figures has sustained conspiracist themes... for centuries,” and that throughout Fonda's movement years, there was a strong suspicion on the Right that her money made a difference.⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, even after the war, Fonda not only refused to recant her wartime activism, increased her cultural influence, and made political films – she also used the profits from the *Workout* to fund Hayden's political organization, Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED). In the 1980s, the *Workout* made \$17 million for CED. Lembcke has also observed that, wealth “[comes] with gender-specific connotations in a patriarchal society. Wealth brings independence, but the same independence considered a virtue for men can quickly be recast as vice when it is exercised by women.”⁴⁴⁶ This was particularly true in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. As

⁴⁴⁴ Lembcke, 132.

⁴⁴⁵ Lembcke, 130.

⁴⁴⁶ Lembcke, 130, 132.

Lembcke notes, Susan Faludi's "study of post-9/11 American life," *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, found that attacks on certain women in the news media and popular culture were being used to reestablish "women as the protected gender."⁴⁴⁷

In this light, it is not surprising that the same post-9/11 discourse that valorized policemen and firemen was accompanied by punditry that simultaneously propagated and vilified Hanoi Jane, a symbolic female figure who rejected the protection of the American soldier and appeared to embrace the enemy. The post-9/11 "spike in Hanoi Jane's popularity"⁴⁴⁸ resulted from an intersection of several factors. First, it represented a wishful re-remembering of another distressful time in American history. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the patriotic and hawkish mood of the country, combined with the release of Holzer's *Aid and Comfort*, and the subsequent linking of Taliban John with Hanoi Jane, Fonda was cast as an enemy of the American soldier.⁴⁴⁹ Second, the Internet allowed Hanoi Jane myths to circulate to a wide audience. Finally, by 2003, two wars had been added to the mix – wars that saw the government and many news outlets mobilize in unison, encouraging full-fledged civilian support.

In recent years, facts that might help contextualize Fonda's antiwar dissent have been either forgotten or deliberately left out of the discourse surrounding Fonda's activism. Much of Fonda's activism, including her role in setting up the GI Office, has been forgotten, and important factors that influenced her actions – such as the bombing of the dikes – have consistently gone

⁴⁴⁷ Lembcke, 132.

⁴⁴⁸ Lembcke, 10.

⁴⁴⁹ The message of *Aid and Comfort* reached many who did not read the book itself, thanks to an appearance on Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*, which featured the book's author, Henry Mark Holzer, and Fonda's ex-husband, Tom Hayden. During the segment, O'Reilly himself asserted, "she did give aid and comfort to the enemy at that time. So if you're going to prosecute John Walker, who did the same thing to the Taliban, same thing..." O'Reilly was interrupted by Hayden, who distinguished between the two, noting, "Jane Fonda did not move to Vietnam. She did not join a foreign army. Her behavior was within the First Amendment. That's why they [the Justice Department] thought they would not be able to win the case." A partial transcript is available at "Traitor Jane?" FOXNews.com, <http://www.clanfowler.com/articles/Traitor%20Jane.htm> (accessed July 28, 2011).

unmentioned in mainstream and right-wing publications alike. As articles from 2004 illustrate, while right-wing outlets like *National Review* and the *Washington Times* laced their reports with disdain for Fonda and shied away from criticizing her detractors, centrist publications, like the *New York Times*, incorporated the name Hanoi Jane into their accounts, neglected to contextualize Fonda's Hanoi trip, and failed to mention her work with VVAW or the GI Office.

The skewed representations of Fonda's wartime activism have not moderated since the 2004 incident. Fonda was recently scheduled to appear on the shopping channel, QVC, but her appearance was abruptly cancelled. According to Fonda, QVC informed her that they had been receiving "'a lot of calls' from viewers criticizing her opposition to the Vietnam War and threatening to boycott the show if she was allowed to appear."⁴⁵⁰ In their article covering the cancellation, the *New York Times* reported,

Fonda was dubbed 'Hanoi Jane' nearly 40 years ago after visiting the North Vietnamese capital, where she made radio broadcasts critical of U.S. war policy. While there, she was photographed sitting on an anti-aircraft gun laughing and clapping. Though she still defends her anti-war activism, Fonda has acknowledged that the photo incident was 'a betrayal' of American forces.⁴⁵¹

As with previous articles, the *New York Times* neglects to enlighten its readers as to why Fonda made the trip to North Vietnam; the pro-GI efforts that comprised much of Fonda's activism are similarly omitted.

The *Washington Times*' coverage of the same incident – reprinted on FOXNews.com – was not merely critical, but scathing. Columnist Jeffrey T. Kuhner asserts that Fonda, "actively aided and abetted the enemy... [S]he was a traitor who openly supported the North Vietnamese

⁴⁵⁰ The Associated Press, "Jane Fonda: QVC Axed My Appearance Over Politics," *New York Times*, July 18, 2011, available at http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2011/07/18/arts/AP-US-TV-QVC-Fonda.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=Jane%20Fonda&st=cse (accessed July 26, 2011).

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

communists... She cheered the murder of Americans.”⁴⁵² He also blames Fonda, personally, for the upheaval in Southeast Asia after the war, asserting that because Fonda “urged U.S. withdrawal,” she “bears significant responsibility” for the later Khmer Rouge massacre of Cambodians. Following this highly dubious charge, Kuhner blasts Fonda for her post-war success. He writes,

she went on to become a Hollywood actress and sell millions of workout videos. Like most new leftists, she gorged on American capitalism while simultaneously demonizing it. She mouthed revolutionary socialism but made millions catering to shallow consumerism.⁴⁵³

This condemnation of Fonda – not only for her failure to support the American war effort but also for her success as a post-Vietnam American capitalist – suggests that those on the Right are still aware of, and unnerved by, Fonda’s success as an entrepreneur and her influence as a cultural figure.

This paper has sought to demonstrate the vast differences between the words and actions of Jane Fonda and those attributed to Hanoi Jane, and to show that Hanoi Jane was constructed, by various actors, and over a period of time. Lembcke has noted that myths like Hanoi Jane are “kept in use by [those] for whom they serve identifiable purposes.” The myth that Hanoi Jane betrayed POWs in Hanoi is important to Americans who need to believe in POWs as an “idealized” form of “masculinity and... Americanism.”⁴⁵⁴

Distinct from Hanoi Jane, Jane Fonda was not an extreme figure within the antiwar movement. The one thing she did that had not been done before was sitting on the anti-aircraft

⁴⁵² Jeffrey T. Kuhner, “KUHNER: Humbling Hanoi Jane; Fonda whines when dissed by capitalist system she once condemned,” *Washington Times*, July 19, 2011, available at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jul/19/humbling-hanoi-jane/> (accessed July 24, 2011); reprinted at <http://nation.foxnews.com/jane-fonda/2011/07/20/humbling-hanoi-jane> (accessed July 24, 2011).

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Lembcke, 11, 162.

gun while cameras were flashing. It is this moment that ties Fonda to Hanoi Jane, providing the visual, documentary “proof” for a fantastic legend. Fonda herself was less astounding. Her words and actions were neither unusual nor radical compared to others within the movement, and in her desire to end the war, she was not even remarkable compared to most Americans.

In Hanoi, Fonda accomplished her goal of documenting the bombing of the dikes, and her use of Radio Hanoi was not unprecedented. Nothing that she did in Vietnam – or the United States – was unlawful. Whether talking to GIs in Southeast Asia or to Americans back home, Fonda used her words to encourage antiwar GIs and their civilian counterparts. Notably, when the system opened up – when Fonda was no longer being harassed by the government – she and Hayden successfully worked within the system. Her message was consistently antiwar, not anti-American, and at no point did Fonda utilize or encourage violence. Though she veered towards a black and white view of the war, which saw the North Vietnamese as victims and the Americans as aggressors, this tendency was never absolute. Even when Fonda spoke out against her government, she was a reformer, not a revolutionary. She and Hayden, within IPC, worked to elect Senator George McGovern in 1972, and she never painted the entire military with one brush. Fonda consistently made a distinction between soldiers who may not have been fully aware of what they were doing, and their superiors in the military and in government who were waging the war. Even Fonda’s rhetoric was not extremist. Though she claimed that POWs were not tortured, many mainstream publications voiced similar beliefs, and though she called Nixon a “war criminal,” the United States was, in fact, in violation of international law. By all measures, Jane Fonda has never been a political extremist. Hanoi Jane, however – who not only sat on the fateful gun, but chastised soldiers, urged them to defect, was responsible for their being beaten, and hoped for a North Vietnamese victory – was most certainly an extremist. She went outside the channels prescribed by democracy, had an anti-American, Manichean worldview, and

violated a cherished societal norm – and written law – that Americans are not to give aid and comfort to the enemy.

It is not surprising, given the antiwar mood of American society in the early 1970s, and given the very real duplicity of the Nixon Administration, that Fonda was criticized considerably less after it was revealed that the Nixon Administration and the FBI had acted unlawfully towards her. These revelations aided Fonda's return to mainstream popularity in the late 1970s. Notably, the antiwar – but decidedly *un*-shrill – 1978 film *Coming Home* was a success at both the box office and in critical reviews.

From the perspective of the early 1970s, aside from her fame and the platform it afforded her, Jane Fonda was not unique vis-à-vis the wider antiwar movement, and she was not, at any time, the most extreme antiwar voice in American society. The criticism she levied had previously and frequently been articulated by voices as wide-ranging as Martin Luther King Jr. and *Life* magazine. The widespread dissemination of antiwar criticism helps explain why Fonda was not a polarizing figure in the decade after the war.

From the mid-1970s through the late 1980s, Fonda was consistently able to portray herself – and have the media discuss her – in terms of her work as an actress and fitness guru, *not* as an extremist. However, while Fonda was re-embraced by mainstream America – and especially American *women* – the American right-wing continued to view Fonda through the lens of Hanoi. A notable example occurred in 1983, with NASA's launching of the Challenger – and America's first female astronaut. NASA's director of public affairs, Brian Duff, had invited Fonda to the launching. She, along with “several hundred prominent women... were honored at a pre-liftoff reception.” Controversy followed, costing the official his post. NASA Administrator and Duff's former superior admitted that the Reagan White House had “made it clear they weren't happy.” The White House reportedly instructed NASA to “limit its launching guest lists

to... ‘the right kind of people.’”⁴⁵⁵ This incident suggests that while extremist groups on the Right – like the John Birch Society – were the main sources of Hanoi Jane propagation, they received occasional help from mainstream conservatives who derided Fonda, ever so subtly, as a Vietnam-era leftist. This early mainstreaming of anti-Fonda sentiments was evident in both the NASA episode of 1983 and the 1988 Bush-Dukakis presidential election.

While the 1988 “naval exercise” attacks received mild coverage, the 2004 pairing of Fonda and Kerry proved to be a far more significant news item. Aside from the obvious difference – that one campaign involved mere rhetoric while the other produced photographic “evidence,” there are other reasons for the differing reactions to the Fonda-Kerry insinuations of 2004 and statements made by George H. W. Bush in the campaign of 1988. In the first place, the country was at war in 2004; any antiwar figure was sure to be more polarizing during wartime. Also, in 1988, “Hanoi Jane” was still a fledgling myth. It had only recently come to the attention of a wider American audience with the Waterbury protests of 1987-88, whereas the 2004 story fed off of a decade and a half of anti-Fonda-ism, not only in fringe organizations, but on immoderate and highly accessible websites. Since the 1990s, right-wing websites have served as incubators for angry anti-Fonda and anti-antiwar sentiments.⁴⁵⁶ The internet played a significant role in enabling legends about Hanoi Jane to circulate and in providing a forum where certain veterans and certain conservatives could openly abuse Fonda; this level of hostility both enabled

⁴⁵⁵ The controversy kicked off when one newspaper quoted Duff as saying, “I’m particularly pleased that Jane Fonda is coming; she’s considered to be a role model by a lot of young women.” After Duff’s departure, Jane Fonda told the press that the “guests were a diverse group and even included Dr. Edward Teller, the physicist,” who, Fonda noted, has “his own strong point of view.” She also shot back at the Reagan Administration, saying “Just because the White House has a ‘gender gap’ is no reason for NASA to have one too.” John Noble Wilford, “Controversy Over Jane Fonda Costs NASA Official His Post,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1983; “Jane Fonda Chides the White House,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1983.

⁴⁵⁶ For a sample of websites with anti-Hanoi Jane themes, see “Hanoi Jane Fonda Tries to Justify and Excuse Her Treason & Betrayal of America,” One Old Vet, <http://oneoldvet.com/?p=30687>; “Jane ‘the traitor’ Fonda--- AGAIN,” Leatherneck, <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?p=172967>; “Traitor: ‘Hanoi Jane’ Fonda,” The Patriot Post, <http://patriotpost.us/reference/hanoi-jane/> (accessed July 28, 2011).

and was fed by the Bush campaign attacks of 2004.

Lembcke has noted that “with Fonda’s trip, there is a striking disparity between how little attention was paid to it in the newspapers of the day and how large it looms in the American memory of the war decades later.”⁴⁵⁷ It should be noted that retrospective judgement of Fonda is not, in itself, illegitimate. If, for example, Fonda’s actions had been re-assessed by historians as treasonous or unlawful; or if new facts had come to light incriminating Fonda, then it would be of little consequence that Fonda had not been vilified in her own time.⁴⁵⁸ The process by which commentators, biographers and historians of subsequent eras reexamine historical personalities has yielded important reassessments of public figures.⁴⁵⁹ However, the revisionist view of Fonda as “Hanoi Jane” does not simply rely on a reassessment of Fonda’s activism. Instead, the Hanoi Jane narrative consists of selective remembering of Fonda’s activism and of highly contentious and mostly refuted tales of POWs who suffered, indirectly, because of Fonda. Crucially, the Hanoi Jane reading of Fonda ignores the years of antiwar activism in which she actively supported veterans and GIs. The Hanoi Jane myth is not the product of objective historical analysis but highly selective and subjective re-imagining.

For pro-war Vietnam veterans who never met Fonda, but believe the stories about her, Fonda seems to serve a cathartic function, symbolizing antiwar Americans who neglected to show their appreciation for the sacrifices made by American GIs in Vietnam. For non-veterans, particularly those with ideological motives, it seems Fonda is viewed as exemplifying the antiwar

⁴⁵⁷ Lembcke, 17-18.

⁴⁵⁸ Crucially, no new evidence has been introduced to suggest that Fonda acted unlawfully. The Radio Hanoi transcripts were poured over by the CIA and passed on to Congress and the Justice Department, and her POW comments the following year were a matter of public record.

⁴⁵⁹ In American history, examples include pro-slavery presidents, isolationist politicians in the period leading up to U.S. entry into World War II, and the then-beloved president who signed the “Indian Removal Act,” Andrew Jackson. More recently, Senator Joseph McCarthy, who was, during his heyday, a polarizing figure, both praised and reviled, is now viewed as a lying, scurrilous man, whose tactics have been nearly universally condemned.

Left; her legacy is in direct opposition to the agenda of those on the Right who favor hawkish policies. Spinning Fonda's antiwar activism so that she appears un-American not only undercuts her personal influence – it also serves to stain the Left as unpatriotic and, at opportune times, undercut specific liberals, such as John Kerry.

The impact of the 2004 mudslinging can be seen in today's coverage of Fonda. Whereas in 1979, seven years after "Hanoi," Fonda was rarely identified and contextualized by the Hanoi Jane image in the mainstream media, today, seven years after the 2004 campaign, the words "Hanoi Jane" appear frequently in news articles and the incident figures prominently in biographical sketches of Fonda by American journalists.

It must be noted, Fonda has repeatedly attempted to refute these mischaracterizations. In her 2005 autobiography she discussed the rewriting of history – her own, that of the antiwar movement, and specifically, VVAW: "with a Ramboesque sleight of hand... all information about the GIs and Vietnam veterans who opposed the war... has been disappeared, and history has been conveniently rewritten. I want to help reverse this abracadabra."⁴⁶⁰

As Fonda suggests, since the 1980s, the American Right has sought to rehabilitate the legacy of America's war in Vietnam, both through cultural representations, like the *Rambo* films, and political commentary. This has not been a victimless exercise; the rewriting and romanticization has come at the expense of the antiwar movement. Jane Fonda has been a key component of this re-imagining of the Vietnam era. Unlike other former leftists, Fonda has refused to disown her actions and the wider antiwar movement. While her gender and her ongoing fame have made her an irresistible target of right-wing revisionists, it is the larger

⁴⁶⁰ Fonda also compares the two administrations that most forcefully attacked her, noting that the "supporters of George W. Bush's Administration, like those of Nixon at the time, have tried to portray the Winter soldiers [those who testified at the VVAW hearing] as frauds." Fonda, 259, 266. More recently, Fonda responded to the QVC cancellation and subsequent reportage with a detailed piece, titled "The Truth About My Trip to Hanoi," which she posted on her blog. Jane Fonda, "The Truth About My Trip to Hanoi," JaneFonda.com, available at <http://janefonda.com/the-truth-about-my-trip-to-hanoi/> (accessed July 27, 2011).

project of deriding the antiwar movement that has made possible the rising star of “Hanoi Jane.” Much as the antiwar movement has, of late, been re-imagined as unpatriotic and un-American, so too has Jane Fonda been mischaracterized as a traitor and an extremist – as Hanoi Jane.

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