



Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal (Culture, Politics & the Cold War)

Jerry Lembcke

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From Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* to the notorious Mata Hari and the legendary Tokyo Rose, stories of female betrayal during wartime have recurred throughout human history. The myth of Hanoi Jane, Jerry Lembcke argues, is simply the latest variation on this enduring theme. Like most of the iconic femmes fatales who came before, it is based on a real person, Jane Fonda. And also like its predecessors, it combines traces of fact with heavy doses of fiction to create a potent symbol of feminine perfidy?part erotic warrior-woman Barbarella, part savvy antiwar activist, and part powerful entrepreneur.

Hanoi Jane, the book, deconstructs Hanoi Jane, the myth, to locate its origins in the need of Americans to explain defeat in Vietnam through fantasies of home-front betrayal and the emasculation of the national will-to-war. Lembcke shows that the expression "Hanoi Jane" did not reach the eyes and ears of most Americans until five or six years after the end of the war in Vietnam. By then, anxieties about America's declining global status and deteriorating economy were fueling a populist reaction that pointed to the loss of the war as the taproot of those problems. Blaming the antiwar movement for undermining the military's resolve, many found in the imaginary Hanoi Jane the personification of their stab-in-the-back theories.

Ground zero of the myth was the city of Hanoi itself, which Jane Fonda had visited as a peace activist in July 1972. Rumors surrounding Fonda's visits with U.S. POWs and radio broadcasts to troops combined to conjure allegations of treason that had cost American lives. That such tales were more imagined than real did not prevent them from insinuating themselves into public memory, where they have continued to infect American politics and culture.

Hanoi Jane is a book about the making of Hanoi Jane by those who saw a formidable threat in the Jane Fonda who supported soldiers and veterans opposed to the war they fought, in the postcolonial struggle of the Vietnamese people to make their own future, and in the movements of women everywhere for gender equality.

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