

JACKIE KENNEDY'S PRESIDENTIAL PERSONA: (RE)ASSESSING HER RHETORICAL  
INFLUENCE

by

COURTNEY ALEXSIS CAUDLE

(Under the Direction of Edward Panetta)

ABSTRACT

In rhetorical studies, much has been written on the role of first lady and the women whom enacted this position. Scholars in several fields (history, rhetoric, popular culture) have examined First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy: however, this thesis supplements existing research both in first lady scholarship generally and on Jackie's specific performance as first lady. I contend that Jackie's performance remains unique because she carved a celebrity space both inimitable in the 1960s yet available to subsequent first ladies. I examine mediated texts (both visual and written) from 1961-1963 to (re)examine her enactment of the role during (1) President Kennedy's Inauguration, (2) her televised tour of the White House, and (3) President Kennedy's funeral. Ultimately, I argue she was integral to historical and contemporary public memory of his presidential persona and legacy.

INDEX WORDS: Jacqueline Kennedy, First Ladies, Rhetoric, Visual analysis, Mediated communication, Gender, Celebrity, Cultural Studies

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COURTNEY ALEXSIS CAUDLE

Major Professor: Edward Panetta

Committee: Thomas Lessl  
Roger Stahl

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
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## CHAPTER 1

## (RE)ASSESSING FIRST LADY JACQUELINE KENNEDY

The American public writ large long has admired Jacqueline Kennedy's beauty, glamour, and fashion sense. Dozens of books have hailed her style, extolled her elegance, and commended her contribution to the youthful presidential persona of the Kennedy administration. For example, her longtime designer Oleg Cassini writes: "[Jackie and I] spoke of how fashion is a mirror of history: we discussed the message her clothes would send—simple, youthful, elegant—and how she would reinforce the image of her husband's administration through her presence."<sup>1</sup> Thus, Jackie saw herself as an influential reassertion of the administration's presidential persona. She was not a passive bystander but an active participant in American and foreign perception of her husband's presidency.

Jackie was thirty-one years old when President John F. Kennedy took the oath of office, and almost immediately, media projected her to the most photographed woman in the world (only in the 1990s did the late Princess Diana of Wales surpass her in number of photographs circulated).<sup>2</sup> In *Looking For Jackie: American Fashion Icons*, Kathleen Craughwell-Varda offers important insight into Jackie's "immense" cultural and rhetorical legacy: "She . . . redefined the role of First Lady, ensuring that every woman who followed her in the White House would have to carve out her own public image."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oleg Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic* (New York: Rizzoli International Publication, Inc., 1995), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth J. Natalle, "Jacqueline Kennedy: The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot," in *Leading Ladies of the White House*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 41-42.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Craughwell-Varda, *Looking for Jackie: American Fashion Icons* (New York: Hearst Books, 1999), 35.



Yet, Jackie also “had an intense interest in the substantive [policy] issues faced by the Administration; she kept this covert, however, believing that public knowledge of her views would distract from the uncontroversial historic and arts projects she adopted.”<sup>4</sup> Jackie, therefore, remains an important object of scholarship, for she influenced both political *and* popular culture in the 1960s (and, in terms of the latter, her significance persists to the present).

No doubt, Jackie Kennedy played an integral role in shaping public perception (both foreign and domestic) of her husband’s presidency. Upon becoming first lady, Jackie issued a statement articulating her “primary” role as taking “care of the President and his children.”<sup>5</sup> Jackie also declared openly that “her priorities were her young children and maintaining her family’s privacy.” Biographer C. David Heymann writes:

J.B. West, recipient of more intra-house memos from Jackie than anyone else, received a number of notes concerning the privacy of her children while playing on the South Lawn. Jackie had personally researched the subject and discovered the exact point through the high fence surrounding the White House where tourists and news photographers could take pictures of Caroline and John Jr. at play.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, with increased visibility of the Presidency because of television, Jackie arguably set precedent for privatization of the First Couple’s children. Indeed, even in modern campaigns and presidencies, children generally remain “off-limits” to the media.

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<sup>4</sup> "Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis," <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=36>.

<sup>5</sup> C. David Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie* (New York: Carol Communications, 1989), 266.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

Consider the 2008 campaign: both Senators McCain and Obama openly have criticized the media for its handling of Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin's pregnant daughter, each decrying scrutiny of children. Even children of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush (with the exception of Jenna Bush's underage alcohol possession) largely have been ignored by media, perhaps out of a learned sense of decorum. As early as 1961, therefore, Jackie may have influenced contemporary media norms for the First Family.

In rhetorical studies, much has been written on the role of first lady and the women whom enacted this position. Although scholars in several fields (*e.g.* history, rhetoric, and popular culture) have analyzed Jackie Kennedy, I seek to supplement existing research both in first lady scholarship, generally, and on Jackie's performance as first lady, specifically. I contend that Jackie complicates a common binary established in first lady scholarship between the position either as a reenactment of traditional gender norms or an expansion of women's political roles. Jackie's specific performance remains unique because she submitted to and subverted these roles both in terms of what she did and how she was (re)constructed in media. She carved a celebrity space both inimitable in the 1960s yet available to subsequent first ladies. In the next sections, I review literature on mediated constructions of celebrity and historical roles of first ladies. Then, I propose examining visual, written, and oral texts from 1961-1963 as chapters of my thesis. Finally, I provide James Jasinski's conceptually oriented criticism as theoretical grounds from which to supplement the aforementioned literature (as that literature relates to Jackie Kennedy).

## Literature Review

As a new, *visual* medium for American culture, television augmented Jackie's status and spurred public fascination with presidential personae, constructed in large part by aesthetic appearance. No longer were first ladies relegated only to reinforcement of their husbands' images, but they too could become active participants in the celebritization of politics. Specifically, Craughwell-Varda observes: "[Jackie's] impact on popular culture when she arrived on the public scene in 1960 was instantaneous: the dual American ideals of the sultry blonde and the prim, starched girl next door were immediately replaced by that of a cool, sophisticated brunette."<sup>7</sup> Following First Lady Mamie Eisenhower, however, also arguably set conditions of possibility for Jackie's popularity. Thurston Clarke, for example, documents Jackie's significance at President Kennedy's Inauguration. Based on an interview with her fashion designer, Oleg Cassini, Clarke writes of Jackie's Inaugural outfit: "The minks worn by Mamie Eisenhower, Pat Nixon, Lady Bird Johnson, Bess Truman, and others seated on the presidential stand would appear dark and dour in black-and-white newsprint and television. A beige coat would make her stand out, and its sable collar would mock their furs."<sup>8</sup> The visual contrast between former first ladies (and vice-presidents' wives) was stark. Moreover, Clarke adds:

[Some scholars contend] the inaugural outfit [Cassini] designed for her was a more daring departure from the norm than her husband's address, and that it would make a not insignificant contribution to how the address was received...[for Cassini] sensed he was witnessing a turning point in fashion

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<sup>7</sup> Craughwell-Varda, *Looking for Jackie: American Fashion Icons*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Thurston Clarke, *Ask Not* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 46-47.

history—the celebrization of fashion, and the iconization of Jackie Kennedy—and once her husband began speaking, [Cassini] realized that her outfit perfectly complemented his spare and elegant prose.”<sup>9</sup>

Jackie’s presence at the Inaugural Address, therefore, produced immediate positive public response.

Many scholars have written about first ladies, and these scholars have interpreted Jackie Kennedy’s relative influence on the position differently in different eras.

Analyzing her self- and media-constructed performance *in* the 1960s becomes important for assessing Jackie’s enduring influence within both the political arena and popular culture. For instance, in Marianne Means’ *The Women in the White House: The Lives, Times, and Influence of Twelve Notable First Ladies*, published in 1963, Means writes: “Fortunately, the nation has approved of [Jackie] because she dares to be different from the popular image of the average American housewife; paradoxically, just as it had approved of Mrs. Eisenhower because she was typical.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, First Lady Jackie *in* the 1960s “meant” differently than First Lady Jackie now. Means continues:

When she became First Lady, Mrs. Kennedy determined to be her own kind of First Lady—to carry out her official responsibilities and to try to set an example for excellence in everything connected with the White House, but to change her private living habits as little as possible—despite the warnings of politicians who worried that average American families might not accept a President’s wife who

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 47, 176.

<sup>10</sup> Marianne Means, *The Women in the White House: The Lives, Times, and Influence of Twelve Notable First Ladies* (New York: Random House, 1963), 268.

neither cooked nor sewed, who was especially fond of French cuisine and haute couture, who rode to the hounds and read Carlyle...”<sup>11</sup>

For Means, Jackie potentially could have been rejected by “average” Americans (then) because of her regality (which juxtaposed against Mamie Eisenhower’s “ordinariness”): instead, she “determined to be her own kind of First Lady” by setting a public “example for excellence” while likewise maintaining her privacy in an increasingly mediated society. For women writing in the 1960s, Jackie’s performance likely was novel and progressive. Therefore, examining specific ways in which Jackie submitted to and subverted her expected performance of first lady *at that time* may allow scholars to reassess her influence more judiciously.

Jackie’s persona, albeit high culture, consistently was commodified into middle-class America. As soon as a few days after Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, *The Washington Post* published an article dedicated specifically to Jackie. Entitled “Washington Stores Reject the ‘Jackie Look,’” author Ruth Wagner describes a national movement among clothing stores to display Jackie-esque mannequins wearing Jackie-esque clothing (although Washington D.C. did not).<sup>12</sup> *New York Times* published an article entitled “Flattering Maternity Styles Take Cue From the Current Fashions.” Covering a full newspaper-sized page, the article depicts both Jackie and, presumably, a Jackie “knock-off.” At first glance, the woman pictured on the left side of the page strongly resembles the new First Lady (pictured on the right side of the page). Both women have similar hairstyles, and both wear flowing dresses cinched at the waist. The

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ruth Wagner, “Washington Stores Reject the ‘Jackie Look’” (*Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 27, 1961), B7.

differences between the two pictures, however, are telling. Jackie's formal dress places her at a public event. Conversely, the other woman's casual dress, coupled with her placement in the home, conveys an ordinary, middle class housewife.<sup>13</sup>

In *Presidential Wives*, Patrick Boller alludes to Jackie's significance within Kennedy's administration and as a celebrity *per se*. Quoting from a biography written about President Kennedy, Boller recounts:

'They were so much alike,' their friend Lem Billings insisted. 'Even the names— Jack and Jackie: two halves of a single whole. They were both actors and I think they appreciated each other's performances. It was unbelievable to watch them work a party. Jackie would be sitting with some old guy who's almost nodded off and suddenly ask a question so filled with implied indiscretion that this old guy's eyes would almost pop out of his head. And for the remainder of the conversation he'd practically be married to her in intimacy. Jack was exactly the same way. Both of them had the ability to make you feel that there was no place on earth you'd rather be than sitting there in intimate conversation with them.'<sup>14</sup>

Herein, theater metaphors commonly are invoked (figuratively) to explain Jackie's influence on the position of first lady. Yet, often in scholarship on Jackie, she becomes a "movie star;"<sup>15</sup> she enacts a "role;"<sup>16</sup> she "outshines" her husband;<sup>17</sup> she steps onto the

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<sup>13</sup> "Flattering Maternity Styles Take Cue" (*The New York Times*, May 13, 1963), 49.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick F. Boller, Jr., *Presidential Wives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 79.

<sup>15</sup> Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Craughwell-Varda, *Looking for Jackie*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Maurine H. Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 76.

public “scene.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this extended metaphor, used often in popular memory of her, demonstrates Jackie’s particular enactment as a cultural (in addition to political) celebrity.

American society always has been fascinated with celebrity. Since the 1960s, however, television has increased visibility of politics and provides new ways in which celebrity can be enacted in that arena. Thurston Clarke writes that “Americans had been more fascinated and excited by politics during the 1960 election than at any other time in the century.”<sup>19</sup> Yet, in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, Joshua Gamson writes: “[Celebrities] occupy a large space in Americans’ daily lives, and that space has been for the most part unexplored.”<sup>20</sup> Gamson locates entertainment (as opposed to political) celebrity within the perspectival juncture of text, producers, and audiences. He studies “contradictory celebrity story lines and narrative resolutions; the producers for their practical celebrity-seeking activities, [and in particular] the roots of their negotiations and compromises over the control of celebrity images.”<sup>21</sup>

Although Gamson’s overall analysis largely excludes assessment of political celebrity, his conclusion offers insight into the role. He writes:

[Politics] is a strange world, one in which ‘the oppositions that traditionally organized both social life and social critique, oppositions between surface and depth, the authentic and inauthentic, the imaginary and the real, the signifier and

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<sup>18</sup> Craughwell-Varda, *Looking for Jackie*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Clarke, *Ask Not*, 171.

<sup>20</sup> Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

the signified, seem to have broken down.’ It’s a cynical world as well, one in which people are commodified for financial or ideological profit.<sup>22</sup>

In this passage, Gamson illuminates much of the tensions present in rhetorical construction of Jackie Kennedy. Indeed, the advent of television in the 1960s altered the stage on which the presidency (and the role of first lady) was acted, blurring the lines between “surface and depth, the authentic and inauthentic, the imaginary and the real, the signifier and the signified:” “commodifying” Jackie Kennedy’s persona in novel ways.

In “Celebrity’s Drive,” Jodi Dean examines the ways in which technology influences how celebrity functions as a form of subjectivity that presupposes and reproduces the ideology of publicity. Advents in technology, for Dean, increase the “spectacle” of modern capitalist society.<sup>23</sup> Gamson concurs:

In the name of democratic society, [the nostalgia of social criticism] longs for an aristocracy of the naturally deserving. [In contrast,] the nostalgia of the glamour seeker craves the time when celebrity manufacture was more centralized and controlled. When artifice was done right...each nostalgia also expresses profound ambivalence about power in public life: who should have it, on what basis? They bring out as well anxieties about the relationship of commercial publicity apparatus to power: who controls it, to what end?<sup>24</sup>

Jackie Kennedy, in the 1960s, occupied both aforementioned spaces: she sought to construct herself visually as reinforcement of her husband’s persona, which contributed to his international presence politically, and merged fame with merit in ways analogous

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>23</sup> Jodi Dean, *Publicity’s Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes in Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 114.

<sup>24</sup> Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, 195.



to social critics' calls for such. Yet, her persona also was mediated in particular (and sometimes contradictory) ways, begging questions of *why* she attained such "power in public life"—should she have, "and on what basis?" Her persona in the 1960s also implicates "the relationship of commercial publicity apparatus to power: who controls it, to what end?"<sup>25</sup>

Gamson calls on readers to "keep alive the conflict-ridden questions of power, role playing, equality, and authority, to dwell in a cultural conversation that is elsewhere distorted or given up."<sup>26</sup> Yet, although Gamson's text traces in great depth *how* celebrity has been performed historically in largely non-political contexts, rhetorical scholars Robert Hariman and John Lucaites also long have examined closely the impact of iconic (celebritized) images on publics. More specifically, their work examines *political* import of celebrity figures. After all, Jackie was perhaps the seminal first lady to achieve celebrity status in the way she did. In "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" the authors posit: "A relationship that is hard to imagine is in need of images, and the iconic image acquires public appeal and normative power as it provides embodied depictions of important abstractions...operative within the public discourse of an historical period."<sup>27</sup> By using the infamous Napalm photograph of Vietnam, Hariman and Lucaites then conceptualize how *and* why people become celebrities, surmising: "The celebrity is the widely recognized stranger, that is, a stranger whose image is [and was] in wide circulation . . .

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2003, 58.

[celebrities are] within but not fully of the social group [and are] related to the viewer abstractly rather than through more organic ties . . . at once both far and near.”<sup>28</sup>

Audiences saw (and see) Jackie as a “stranger whose image is in wide circulation” but related to her through “the impersonal process of circulation in signs of private, personal expressiveness.” Her mediated image conveyed both intimacy and distance to the American public in the 1960s, placing her “at once both far and near.”<sup>29</sup> An analysis of her particular celebrity performance (the ways in which she acted and was acted upon), therefore, extends existing scholarship on the role of first lady.

In an article on the rhetorical role of first lady, Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair contend: “The first lady pulpit can act as a site for the performance of archetypal femininity; it can also function as a location of feminist advancement that challenges gender stereotypes, expanding women’s political space.”<sup>30</sup> The authors then examine comprehensively well-known first ladies such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Mamie Eisenhower and less well-known first ladies such as Grace Coolidge and Florence Harding to assess their influence either as submitting to or subverting their gendered positions. The aforementioned binary permeates much scholarship on first ladies, and Parry-Giles and Blair mention Jackie specifically as a “performance of archetypal femininity.”<sup>31</sup> They write:

Certain first ladies articulated commitments to a more traditional conception of motherhood and domesticity, locating women’s power within the privacy of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2002, 567.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

home...Reminiscent of the nineteenth century's cult of domesticity, Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy (1961-63) told a Saturday Evening Post reporter that what she really wanted was 'to be behind him [her husband] and to be a good wife and mother.'<sup>32</sup>

Herein, the authors emphasize Jackie's role in the private sphere of domesticity. Their perspective provides immense insight into the ways in which the first lady "pulpit" has been performed historically; yet, I argue that understanding Jackie's rhetorical force as first lady may be more complex than focusing on her *politically motivated* articulation of the role.

Additionally, Parry-Giles and Blair identify first ladies that moved "beyond their predecessors' consumption of news" and expanded "their husband's or their own image-making strategies."<sup>33</sup> As examples of these types of first ladies, the authors provide Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson, Betty Ford, Rosalynn Carter, Barbara Bush, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Laura Bush. Perhaps by more closely examining Jackie's particular performance, however, we can illuminate how and why she influenced both John Kennedy's presidential persona and the role of first lady in American politics and popular culture.

(Re)examining Jackie beyond her "performance of archetypal femininity" also may advance heretofore unseen ways in which her performance subverted traditional gender norms, thereby "expand[ing] women's political space."<sup>34</sup> In *The President's Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century*, Myra Gutin complements first lady

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 577.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 576.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 577.

scholarship by examining “First Ladies’ perceptions of their responsibilities as communicators or the impact of their actions.”<sup>35</sup> Grouping historical first ladies (through Nancy Reagan) as “White Housekeepers, Emerging Spokeswomen, or Political Surrogates and Independent Advocates,” Gutin’s book traces the evolution of the role from the 1920s (the first major thrust of the Women’s Suffrage movement) to the 1990s, and she uses written and oral communication as the dominant perspective from which to better understand this role. Yet, Gutin also underscores Jackie’s performance as (normatively) feminine. She writes:

Jacqueline Kennedy did nothing to advance the cause of women. In her unique position of not just creating news but being news, she might have altered the perception of ‘women as decoration’ held by most Americans at the time (most notably her husband). Instead, she reinforced the view that women’s predominant concerns were ‘taste, fashion, superficial culture and ceremony.’<sup>36</sup>

Gutin contends that Jackie created news, yet because she fails (in Gutin’s opinion) to alter “the perception of ‘woman as decoration’ ... [perpetuated by John Kennedy]” and thereby create the type of “news” that Gutin deems advances “the cause of women,” Jackie necessarily reinforces “the view that women’s predominant concerns were ‘taste, fashion, superficial culture and ceremony.’”<sup>37</sup> Gutin’s perspective, for example, overlooks Jackie’s assistance with foreign diplomats (she was multilingual, speaking both French and Spanish to these country’s respective leaders). Indeed, this display of intellectual and political savvy may defy perception of “women as decoration” and

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<sup>35</sup> Myra C. Gutin, *The President’s Partner: The First Lady in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 60.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.

instead advance “the cause of women.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Gutin’s observation that Jackie was “not just creating news but...[was] news”<sup>39</sup> depicts Jackie’s performance solely as self-constructed. Although scholars like Gutin may contend that strengthening President Kennedy’s persona necessarily diminishes a feminist agenda, I argue that Jackie’s increased visibility allows subsequent first ladies opportunity to “expand women’s space”<sup>40</sup> both culturally and politically. By becoming a celebrity in her own right, and by choosing to articulate her role as first lady as reinforcing her husband’s persona, Jackie achieves her own political goals (*e.g.* renovating the White House and funding for and construction of the National Endowment of the Arts). Thus, perhaps also examining mediated representations of Jackie (both visual images and written texts) provides a more holistic understanding of Jackie’s rhetorical force.

In *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age*, Maurine Beasley studies the ways in which first ladies have interacted with new mediums of media and with the press. Specifically, she contends that television enhanced Jackie’s popularity because she looked “like a queen.”<sup>41</sup> Beasley then acknowledges Jackie’s agency in performing her role and examines the press’s impact on construction of her presidential persona. Beasley writes: “Even at [John Kennedy’s] funeral, [Jackie] was the director and stage manager...she had orchestrated her own Camelot. After her, the position of the first lady would be a more scripted entry.”<sup>42</sup> She also adds that “Jackie Kennedy outshone [John Kennedy’s] lackluster performance at his first superpower

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Parry-Giles and Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady,” 577.

<sup>41</sup> Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 87.

summit.”<sup>43</sup> Beasley’s observations convey particular perspicacity because they not only afford Jackie (positive) agency, but they also implicate the performative aspect so crucial to Jackie’s rhetorical legacy.

Capitalizing on the implications of assessing Jackie’s *visual* rhetorical force, Elizabeth J. Natalie provides several prominent rhetorical strategies of which Jackie used as first lady: fashion diplomacy, protocol (decorum), and astute social prowess.<sup>44</sup> Natalie contends that these strategies manifest in Jackie’s clothes, her transformation of White House entertainment, and her orchestration of Kennedy’s funeral. Most important, Natalie writes: “The dialectical tensions between public and private, imagery and silence, modesty and stardom, intelligence and restraint all characterize this first lady...she used image rather than words to convey messages that allowed public satisfaction while preserving her privacy as an individual...”<sup>45</sup> Her argument, therefore, demonstrates value in analyzing Jackie’s visually enacted performance of first lady. Natalie thus reassesses Jackie’s rhetorical force in novel and helpful ways for my project; yet, an in-depth analysis of *both* written texts and visual images may reveal a more complex construction of Jackie’s role.

#### Overview of Chapters

As data for my examination, therefore, I explore both visual and written texts from three important events that arguably shaped Jackie’s first lady persona: President Kennedy’s Inauguration; her tour of the (renovated) White House, televised on CBS; and President Kennedy’s funeral. Ultimately, I hope to discern “specific modalities of

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>44</sup> Natalie, "Jacqueline Kennedy: The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot," 43.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

discursive possibilities”<sup>46</sup> engendered by multiple constructions of her in and as performance of first lady. The second chapter of my thesis, therefore, focuses upon print media construction of Jackie during President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address. Because the Inaugural Address is an event rich in historical significance, and because the Address is the incoming President’s first articulation as President of his objectives, I look at ways in which Jackie constructed herself and was constructed by media during this time. Specifically, I focus on construction of her aesthetic (fashion choice, hair style, descriptions of her “look”). Although I also might have examined discourse regarding the Inauguration Ball, we expect texts of the time to discuss her fashion choices in that context because the Ball largely is a celebratory “party” in honor of the incoming President. Jackie’s dress, however, should have little relevance to the Inaugural Address. I examine three print media: *New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and *Life* magazine. Because these media are notably different (*i.e.* the newspaper of record versus a weekly news magazine versus a photojournalistic magazine), we can piece together these distinct visual and written discourses to better understand her burgeoning shift from political partner to celebrity icon.

The third chapter of my thesis examines the CBS televised tour of the White House (of which Jackie hosted). This program garnered (at its lowest projection) more than 2 million viewers<sup>47</sup>—still a massive number for the 1960s. For perspective, consider that *Saturday Night Live*’s season opener this year (with Tina Fey’s anticipated portrayal

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<sup>46</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 198.

<sup>47</sup> Natalie, “The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot,” 43.

of Sarah Palin) received 10 million viewers.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in 2008, more than 76 percent of Americans have multiple television sets in their homes, whereas in 1962, a mere 12 to 22 percent had multiple television sets in their homes.<sup>49</sup> Thus, particularly for the 1960s, a president's wife for the first time commanded substantial attention from the nation. In *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson describes the effects of television on contemporary political discourse. She argues that Reagan could “translate other persons’ feelings through himself to a larger audience...[he could express words] as spokesperson for the nation.”<sup>50</sup> In that mode, I examine how Jackie’s visual image on film (her physical appearance and gestures and the connection between her embodied aesthetic and the decorative aesthetic) works with her written speech (what she says and what her speech “does”) to convey a celebrity persona. Additionally, I analyze the “stage” on which she plays her part; for the White House both serves as public property (a national monument—*the people’s* residence) and private home (distinctly as the *Kennedys’* house), which perhaps may illuminate nuances in Jackie’s enactment of her “role”—as public persona and private citizen.

In the fourth chapter of my thesis, I examine coverage of Jackie during President Kennedy’s funeral. Indeed, Anne Norton argues that “as signifier, the President calls up not only the American nation, the government, the executive branch, and the triumphant party...but the mythic and historical associations that attach to the office and to its past

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Seidman, “Saturday Night Live Scores Its Highest-Rated Season Premiere Since 2001,” *TV by the Numbers*, <http://tvbythenumbers.com/2008/09/14/saturday-night-live-scores-its-highest-season-premiere-overnight-ratings-since-2001/5101>.

<sup>49</sup> “1960-2000,” *Television History: The First 75 Years*, [http://www.tvhistory.tv/TV-VCR-Remote-Cable\\_Ownership.JPG](http://www.tvhistory.tv/TV-VCR-Remote-Cable_Ownership.JPG).

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 154.



and present occupants.”<sup>2</sup> First Lady Jackie Kennedy, therefore, also embodied connotative signification—she too was part of the “mythic and historical associations that attach to the office and to its past and present occupants.” Thus, when President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Jackie arguably served as signifier of national order. She, as a sort of incumbent signifier, *showed* the nation how to cope with the loss of their President. I examine both how Jackie sought to construct the Kennedy administration as a modern “Myth of Camelot,” and how print media (re)constructed his administration through *her* myth. I review Jackie’s conceptualization of the funeral and also analyze a photo from *New York Times* with accompanying text, *Life* magazine’s December 1963 cover, and *Look* magazine’s January 1964 cover. In so doing, I seek to understand the ways in which she transgressed the political arena through cultural “meaning-making”<sup>51</sup> of the Kennedy administration.

In the concluding chapter of my thesis, I (re)assess Jackie’s rhetorical influence, using Andy Warhol’s “Jackie Prints” as concrete means by which to illustrate (one interpretation of) the impact of her *presidential* persona on her *iconic* legacy. Using neo-Lacanian theory to inform my image analysis, I argue that Jackie perhaps served as “placeholder” for “appropriate” female sexuality. With President Kennedy’s death, however, the “meaning” of her mediated image ruptures; transitioning her from classy, restrained First Lady to commodified, eroticized “Jackie O.” Thus, I contend her subsequent effect on American culture draws from her *affect* as first lady, as celebrity, as complicated performance of gender, and as heroine of an impossible romance.

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<sup>51</sup> Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, “‘Sighting’ the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 2004, 395-396.

### Critical/Theoretical Perspective

Writing in a special edition of the *Western Journal of Communication*, James Jasinski proposed that rhetorical studies move toward a “conceptually oriented criticism.”<sup>52</sup> Using an essay written by Robert Hariman on the relationship between style, decorum, and power as exemplar, Jasinski writes:

The concept[s] remain essentially works in progress; our understanding of the concept[s] evolves through the back and forth movement between concept and object. Similarly, the critic’s understanding of the object grows or develops as conceptual thickening helps illuminate its diverse qualities...[c]onceptually oriented criticism proceeds through the constant interaction of careful reading and rigorous conceptual reflection.<sup>53</sup>

Simply put, “conceptually oriented criticism” allows scholars the opportunity to employ different modes of critical practice deemed best tailored to their theoretical and critical purposes. For a project seeking to illuminate Jackie Kennedy’s holistic rhetorical force as first lady (with both visual and written texts), Jasinski’s “conceptually oriented criticism” provides an apt overarching theoretical framework. Therefore, depending on particular texts or images used in my thesis chapters, I propose using several theoretical perspectives to enhance my “understanding of the object” (Jackie Kennedy) and to “illuminate [her] diverse qualities... through the constant interaction of careful reading and rigorous conceptual reflection.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> James Jasinski, “The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism,” *Western Journal of Communication*, 2001, 256.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, several constructs may be particularly applicable for different chapters of my project. For the second chapter, devoted to Inaugural coverage of Jackie, Judith Butler's theory of gender performance largely informs my analysis of 1961 print media texts. Butler observes astutely: "As historically specific organizations of language, discourses present themselves in the plural, coexisting within temporal frames, and instituting unpredictable and inadvertent convergences from which specific modalities of discursive possibilities are engendered."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Jackie Kennedy's persona as first lady largely was constructed by "discourses...in the plural [that instituted] unpredictable and inadvertent convergences"<sup>56</sup> (although I also argue these discourses institute discontinuities).

In their article on the rhetorical role of first lady, Parry-Giles and Blair write: "The discourse of these influential [first ladies] must be contextualized within the gender ideology of their time, revealing how some women were constrained in their rhetorical performances as others defied and expanded such gender conventions."<sup>57</sup> The authors add: "The institutional memory of the position arguably combines with gender ideologies to impose added constraints on women's political performances. Those who moved beyond such safe limits of the role, though, also toiled to expand its confines and should be appropriately credited with such precedent-setting trends."<sup>58</sup> Yet, perhaps rather than adhering to the "safe limits of the role" or "expand[ing] its confines...[with] precedent-

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<sup>55</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 198.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Parry-Giles and Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady," 565.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

setting trends;”<sup>59</sup> Jackie complicated that binary. Butler’s conceptualization of performance allows Jackie potential to inhabit both performances of the (gendered) role.

Butler provides:

The performativity of gender revolves around...the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of the body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.<sup>60</sup>

Understanding gender as “performative”<sup>61</sup> provides productive possibilities for marginalized figures. Butlerian performativity offers useful means for understanding constructions of Jackie at President Kennedy’s Inaugural as “performing” both gender and celebrity in particular ways. Jackie’s (re)constructed Inaugural persona both submitted to and subverted traditional gender norms, thereby (de)naturalizing her presumed performance.

Many rhetorical scholars use Butlerian performativity to inform their projects. In Robert Hariman and John Lucaites’ popular article “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” they argue essentially that iconic images illuminate and manage fundamental tensions in public life such as autonomy/collectivity, hope/despair, and liberalism/democracy.<sup>62</sup> These images remain performative because they call viewers to action, positioning them to choose a definitive

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, “Performing Civic Identity: The Iconic Photograph of Flag Raising on Iwo Jima,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, November 2002.

stance on an issue. Victoria Gallagher and Kenneth Zagacki contend that Norman Rockwell's images depicting Civil Rights "perform" the role of epideictic orator, both drawing attention to violence and the Civil Rights Movement while likewise positioning audiences to question themselves (as "good" people) and democracy (as a "just" form of government).<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Carole Blair and Neil Michel maintain that the Civil Rights Museum in Selma, Alabama, reproduces civil rights tactics of the 1960s. Blair and Michel examine how material objects of the monument physically interact with viewers to "perform" a disruption on public space and situate individuals as agents of change.<sup>64</sup> Charles Morris and John Sloop call for same-sex kissing as cultural representation and political imperative in "'What These Lips Have Kissed': Refiguring the Politics of Queer Public Kissing." Morris and Sloop contend that same-sex public kissing can denaturalize heteronormative sexual structures, "performing" a more diverse world-view.<sup>65</sup> Butlerian performativity therefore may prove relevant throughout my thesis: specifically in the second chapter, however, I examine both how *Jackie* sought to "perform" the (gendered) position of first lady and how media genderdized her "performance" in particular ways.

For the third chapter, dedicated to Jackie's televised tour of the White House, I use Hariman and Lucaites' work on circulation of cultural celebrity; in addition to film, documentary, and television analyses. Hariman and Lucaites define cultural celebrities as "within but not fully of the social group . . . related to the viewer abstractly rather than

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<sup>63</sup> Victoria Gallagher and Kenneth Zagacki, "Visibility and Rhetoric: The Power of Visual Images in Norman Rockwell's Depictions of Civil Rights," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, May 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 2000.

<sup>65</sup> Charles E. Morris III and John M. Sloop, "'What These Lips Have Kissed': Refiguring the Politics of Queer Public Kissing," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 2006.

through more organic ties, and . . . at once both far and near.”<sup>66</sup> This theory of celebrity therefore, provides an apt mode of understanding what Jackie “did” for viewers in the CBS special of her tour through the White House.

Gendered public sphere theory, wherein notions of public and private remain foundational, also informs my assessment of Jackie’s tour of the White House; for “the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ are routinely embedded in ordinary speech, including the distinction between near and far, hear and there, proximate and distant, and above all, closed and open.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, in a special issue of the *Journal of Women’s History*, Joan Landes writes: “This timely forum has offered the opportunity for a reconsideration of the category of public and private, and the shared conclusion is that it remains an indispensable framework for gender analysis.”<sup>68</sup> Jackie’s (gendered) televisual performance, which both denoted and connoted issues of public and private, perhaps provided American viewers novel opportunity to (re)engage a familiar public symbol—the White House—as well as presidential history. In Nancy Fraser’s seminal article “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” she suggests: “A tenable conception of the public sphere must countenance not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interest and issues that bourgeois, masculinist ideology labels ‘private’ and treats as inadmissible.”<sup>69</sup> I thus use both theory of celebrity and theory of publics to (1) illuminate how Jackie constitutes and

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<sup>66</sup> Hariman and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm'," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 1 (2003), 61.

<sup>67</sup> Joan B. Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 2 (2003), 35.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>69</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 137.

is constituted by viewers and (2) discuss implications of her performance for (a) public(s) understanding of the White House.

The fourth chapter of my thesis examines Jackie's orchestration of President Kennedy's funeral and its reiteration in print media. Oleg Cassini, her longtime clothing designer, contends: "The Camelot myth...was created by Jackie, who began a revolution in good taste."<sup>70</sup> Roland Barthes writes that mythology uses both semiology (the science of forms) and ideology (the science of history), studying "ideas-in-form."<sup>71</sup> He notes that myth is a "peculiar [second-order semiological] system [in which] a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second."<sup>72</sup> In the context of President Kennedy's funeral, Jackie may serve as paradoxical "sign" of national mourning/hope while likewise "signifying" differently in a more universal romance narrative. Northrop Frye theorizes specific genres of myth (romance, tragedy, comedy, irony) to examine the ways in which myth imagines cyclical human desire. Frye writes: "Myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire"<sup>73</sup> and "[the quest/romance as a form of myth] is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality."<sup>74</sup> Thus, I examine both how Jackie "staged" the final scene in the myth of Camelot and how that myth was (re)circulated in print media coverage. In this way, I seek to illuminate why this construction achieved affect for the American public in the 1960s. More specifically, I understand Camelot to be an instantiation of an

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<sup>70</sup> Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic*, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1972), 112.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>73</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1957), 136

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

American cultural narrative that grapples between the nation's simultaneous pride in a myth of self-made independence and its desire for the mythic prestige of European cultural tradition.

Overall, the aforementioned chapters and theoretical constructs seek to illuminate the complex ways in which Jackie Kennedy performed her role as first lady visually, verbally, and in written text, and what her performance “did” for viewers in the 1960s. Indeed, in *Shooting Kennedy*, David Lubin writes that the Kennedy Administration at that time “amounted to a looking glass” for Americans “that showed them their own dazzling and glamorous future.”<sup>75</sup> I hope to compliment existing first lady scholarship by reopening discussion of her performance from nuanced lenses—performative, celebritized, public, private, and mythologic. In my concluding chapter, therefore, I (re)assess her influence on her own legacy, the role of first lady, and American culture writ large. By locating tensions within her self- and media-constructed persona in the 1960s, we can better understand her rhetorical force and its subsequent effect on the American presidency.

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<sup>75</sup> David Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 135.



## CHAPTER 2

## “FASHIONING” CELEBRITY: JACKIE’S INAUGURAL PERFORMANCE

On a cold day in January 1961, President Kennedy gave an Inaugural Address that arguably remains one of the best in American history. His speech, however, was not the only performance of note that day; for First Lady Jackie Kennedy also enacted a new public role—one that would ensure “that every woman who followed her in the White House would have to carve out her own public image.”<sup>1</sup> In *A Thousand Days of Magic*, her longtime designer, Oleg Cassini, describes his conceptualization of Jackie’s visual Inaugural and presidential niche: “[Jackie and I] spoke of how fashion is a mirror of history: we discussed the message her clothes would send—simple, youthful, elegant—and how she would reinforce the image of her husband’s administration through her presence...”<sup>2</sup> Rather than adhere to fashion trends and norms of the time, Jackie set trends and redefined the style of her generation—prompting some scholars to tout the influence of her image as equal to or greater than her husband’s.<sup>3</sup> According to Cassini, therefore, Jackie saw herself as an influential reassertion of the administration’s presidential persona. She was not a passive bystander but an active participant in American perception of her husband’s presidency. Furthermore, Cassini contends, *Jackie* (not John) effected the fairytale image of the Kennedy presidency: “The Camelot myth had begun

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Craughwell-Varda, *Looking for Jackie: American Fashion Icons* (New York: Hearst Books, 1999), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Oleg Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1995), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Thurston Clarke, *Ask Not* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 46-47.

[at the Inauguration] and it was created by Jackie, who began a revolution in good taste.”<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I contend that audiences saw (and see) Jackie as a celebrity “stranger whose image [was] in wide circulation” but related to her through “the impersonal process of circulation in signs of private, personal expressiveness.”<sup>5</sup> Her mediated image conveyed both intimacy and distance to the American public in 1961 and cemented her burgeoning shift from political partner to celebrity icon, complicating her enactment of first lady as either a “performance of archetypal femininity” or “a location of feminist advancement that challenges gender stereotypes.”<sup>6</sup> Jackie strategically placed herself and was strategically placed by media as “both far and near” from the American public. Her enactment of celebrity, therefore, provides new means of understanding her Inaugural performance. Focusing on three print media—*New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and *Life* magazine—I use Butlerian performativity to better understand constructions of Jackie at President Kennedy’s Inaugural as “performing” both gender and celebrity in particular ways. Ultimately, I argue that Jackie’s (re)constructed Inaugural persona both submitted to and subverted traditional gender norms, thereby (de)naturalizing her performance.

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<sup>4</sup> Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, “Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of ‘Accidental Napalm,’” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2003, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2002, 567.

### Imagetext Analysis

The Nixon-Kennedy debates in 1960 legitimized television as *the* influential medium for presidential rhetoric because of the part it played in Richard Nixon's failed presidential bid. While Americans always have been interested in politics, particularly at the national level, historian and political biographer Thurston Clarke contends that politics in 1960 were particularly exciting.<sup>7</sup> The advent of television placed newfound importance on visuality and spurred public fascination of presidential image, constructed in large part by aesthetic appearance. This new medium, thus, certainly affected the influence of images within print media, for print media in 1961 was still the dominant source through which the public received its news information. The public likely used photographic images (as well as written text) of the new administration to participate in "meaning-making"<sup>8</sup> of Kennedy's presidential persona. Both visual and written texts, then, become important data for my examination.

John F. Kennedy's January 1961 Inauguration was Jackie's first opportunity to be seen (and photographed) as first lady, and the way she handled that event visually perhaps established precedent for her subsequent impact on the role. In addition to printing several articles about John Kennedy, the Inaugural Address, and problems facing the Kennedy administration, the *New York Times* published an article devoted to Jackie, entitled "It Was a Long, but Proud Day For Wife of the New President."<sup>9</sup> Two images of the couple are placed side by side: the first depicts Jackie, back turned to viewers,

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<sup>7</sup> Clarke, *Ask Not*, 171.

<sup>8</sup> Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting' the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory.," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Special to the *New York Times*, "It Was a Long, but Proud Day for Wife of the New President," *New York Times* (1961, January 21).

touching her hand to a smiling John Kennedy's face. Although he faces the audience, he looks at her, and his dark suit coat stands in stark contrast to her beige one. The (signature) pillbox hat frames Jackie's dark head of hair like a halo, and although viewers only can see her profile, she stands in closest proximity to us. The caption beneath the photograph reads: "THE PRIDE OF THE FAMILY: Mrs. John F. Kennedy pats the President on the chin in the Rotunda of the Capitol after the conclusion of the inaugural ceremonies held outside."<sup>10</sup>

The second image portrays the couple walking arm-in-arm through a snow-blanketed ground; the White House sits majestically in the background. John Kennedy wears a long, dark coat, pinstriped pants, and a dark top hat. His face turns slightly, and his gaze averts sideways, but he smiles broadly. Jackie, on the other hand, contrasts him in a knee-length light-colored coat and calf-length black boots. The bottom of her jacket blows open slightly from wind, and her hands are encased in a dark, soft-looking mink muff. Although she walks behind him, her gaze meets viewers' directly, and viewers' eyes immediately are drawn to her glowing face, juxtaposed against a shock of perfectly coiffed dark hair. The caption beneath the photograph reads: "THE ADDRESS IS 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE: President and Mrs. Kennedy leaving their new home yesterday to take seats in the near-by stand for the parade."<sup>11</sup>

Several features of these photographs are noteworthy. First, Jackie figures as an archetype of normative femininity in both photographs. In the first, she touches Kennedy's face in a loving, almost motherly way. The caption says that she "pats the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

President on the chin.”<sup>12</sup> As Parry-Giles and Blair write, “[Contemporary first ladies’] discourse reflected historical republican motherhood principles.”<sup>13</sup> Because femininity often has been associated with motherhood and domesticity, this construction of Jackie as mother and woman reinforces what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell—drawing from Judith Butler—calls “gender norms for the performance of femininity.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Butler asserts that “the performativity of gender revolves around...the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself.”<sup>15</sup> Mediated written and visual portrayal of Jackie’s gestures, therefore, demonstrate “the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself;”<sup>16</sup> for similarly, in the second photograph, Jackie trails slightly behind Kennedy. His hands are tucked into his coat pockets: one of hers rests inside her mink muff while the other touches his back lightly. Both photographs depict Jackie initiating physical contact (rather than Kennedy), and viewers likely see her displaying normatively feminine characteristics of warmth, emotion, and nurturance.

The written text of the article supports construction of Jackie as nurturer. The article describes her as “glowing”<sup>17</sup> and mentions her smile at four separate points in the text. Most notably, she gives Kennedy a ““you-did-all-right””<sup>18</sup> smile, which denotes

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Parry-Giles and Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002," 581.

<sup>14</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>15</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "It Was a Long, but Proud Day for Wife of the New President," *New York Times*, January 21, 1961.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 11.

motherly approval. She smiles “gaily,”<sup>19</sup> and “during the long prayer, a wisp of a smile passed across her face.”<sup>20</sup> Additionally, her “warm”<sup>21</sup> smile is juxtaposed against the “cold”<sup>22</sup> and “blustery”<sup>23</sup> day. The contrast of her light coat and hat against Kennedy’s dark coat and hat, like contrasting cold and warm, also portrays her as angelic—a portrayal reinforced by the halo-like pillbox hat she wears. Thus, because the article uses adjectives denoting feminine qualities and also emphasizes her smile (an aesthetic quality), the initial photographs showing her as nurturer are reinforced by and reinforce written construction of her performance as traditionally (and essentially) feminine.

Second, these photographs depict Jackie nearer to viewers both proximally and affiliatively. Although her back faces viewers in the first photograph, she stands closer to us than Kennedy. Viewers almost feel as if they can touch her, and because she touches Kennedy in such a loving way, audiences perhaps connect with her more strongly. The second photograph, however, shows Jackie walking slightly behind Kennedy; yet, although she remains more distant from viewers, she makes direct eye contact with the camera, whereas Kennedy’s gaze averts sideways. Again, audiences may identify with *her* more readily than they do Kennedy. She attains an accessibility in both of these photographs that viewers lack from him—*Jackie* is our link to “Camelot.”

Third, the photographs present an interesting height contrast between Jackie and Kennedy. In the first photograph, she and Kennedy stand at about the same height; in the second, she walks slightly behind him, their height disparity noticeable. Viewers may

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

interpret this several ways: because the first photograph depicts an intimate, private moment between Jackie and Kennedy, perhaps we understand them as relational equals. The second photograph, therefore, illustrates a more formal, public moment in which they enact typical roles as dominant husband (leading the way) and submissive wife (following timidly behind him). In contrast, perhaps because she “pats him on the chin”<sup>24</sup> in a motherly way in the first image—and Kennedy therefore figures as child-like—they can be (height) equals in the first photograph. Conversely, in the second photograph, perhaps they display traditional roles of husband and wife, President and First Lady. These two interpretations of the photographs serve to highlight the complex first lady binary into which Jackie does not fit neatly: is she relational equal or submissive wife, wise mother or timid prop? Her “performance,”<sup>25</sup> so neatly anticipating “a gendered essence”<sup>26</sup> in one photograph, changes in the second photograph of her. The text of the article describes her as “the wife of the President,” “Mrs. John F. Kennedy,” “Mrs. Kennedy,” and “a politician’s wife.”<sup>27</sup> Her written identity, therefore, may reinforce and be reinforced by images of her enacting traditional gender roles; on the other hand, perhaps her written identity (or lack thereof) contradicts her photographic identity, for at least in the first photograph, she appears as equal or more accessible than Kennedy himself.

The article’s written text promotes other images—I use the word figuratively—of Jackie as well. First, much of the language describes what she is *doing* and therefore

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “It Was a Long, but Proud Day for Wife of the New President.” *New York Times*, 11-12.

constructs her as *active*. For example, the article mentions she “nudged her husband’s arm and waved vigorously,” she “made the sign of the cross” during the prayer, she “chatted animatedly,” she “leaned across to talk to Mrs. Richard M. Nixon,” and she “gave a small diffident wave.”<sup>28</sup> These lively descriptions of her, coupled with mention of her age (31) and her “glowing health” (in spite of “the Caesarean delivery of her son only eight weeks ago”),<sup>29</sup> not only reflect subtly the dynamic, youthful persona with which we associate the Kennedy administration, but perhaps also connote a masculine virility used non-normatively for a woman.

Furthermore, the article focuses several times on Jackie’s aesthetic appeal (*e.g.* incessant mention of her smile) and even takes an entire paragraph to describe what she wears: “Mrs. Kennedy has a reputation for wearing smart clothes smartly, and it was easy to see why today. She was dressed in a simple, fitted beige coat with a circlet fur collar. A matching pillbox was poised on her dark hair. She carried a small mink muff.”<sup>30</sup> The article’s use of “smart” and “smartly” to describe her clothes is interesting, for the sentence might easily have read “Mrs. Kennedy is known for being fashionable,” or “Mrs. Kennedy’s clothes have been the subject of much discussion.” Instead, the article chooses to comment both on the visual appeal of the clothes themselves and on the way *she wears them*. Moreover, the only other mention of clothes is a simple, one-sentence explanation of Lady Bird Johnson’s “olive green suit . . . matching pillbox hat and . . . mink coat.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, by dedicating an entire paragraph of this two-page article to describing Jackie in terms of her fashion prowess, and by consistently referencing her

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



aesthetic features, the author emphasizes the importance of her *image* (i.e. both her physicality and her emerging first lady persona). The (perhaps contradictory) descriptions of her both as active and aesthetic again complicate her “gendered essence”<sup>32</sup> in ways heretofore unseen. Her youth provides a new lens in which viewers may see her embodying an established role differently, for example, than women such as Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower.

This *New York Times* article, therefore, constructs Jackie in several ways: active, aesthetically appealing, and youthful. Thus, not only did she consciously construct her fashion to coincide with Kennedy’s political image, as Oleg Cassini contends, but her careful crafting of this persona further reinforced and was reinforced by the *New York Times*’ description of her in the aforementioned article. Moreover, the photographic images of the Kennedys above the article’s written text illuminate multiple (and sometimes competing) perceptions of her: as traditional first lady adhering to gender norms, as atypical first lady promoting style and youth, as submissive wife, as relational equal, as mother, as woman, as ideal, and as accessible.

Use of images to accompany written texts occurs even more frequently in print media sources such as *Time* magazine. In magazines with a photojournalism slant, the sheer number of photographs with which viewers engage increases. Indeed, in mid-January 1961, the week *before* Kennedy’s Inauguration, the weekly newsmagazine published an article and cover devoted simply to “Jackie.”<sup>33</sup> The ten-page article began by describing Jackie at an “Anti-Inaugural Ball” given by Democrats four years earlier (when Eisenhower was reelected, and Kennedy was still a junior Senator). During

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<sup>32</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>33</sup> Cover story, “Jackie,” *Time* LXXVI (1961, January 20 ).

Kennedy's senatorial campaign, C. David Heymann writes: "Although [Jackie] tried to share in the excitement...[s]he lacked the Kennedy family's political savvy and understanding, and although she would later attain it, it had not yet become part of her persona."<sup>34</sup> Yet, *Time* remembers her as "radiant"<sup>35</sup> and "young,"<sup>36</sup> and the final sentence about the aforementioned evening in 1956 describes her clothing: "a simple, Empire-waisted white satin gown."<sup>37</sup> *Time* then paints her in several lights: as "wistful"<sup>38</sup> first lady, reminiscing about her carefree days as a mere Senator's wife; as prominent high-society "regal debutante;"<sup>39</sup> as emerging woman;<sup>40</sup> and as "vigorous, determined"<sup>41</sup> wife of a handsome politician. Perhaps most intriguing, however, is the article's discussion of *her* family's disdain for Kennedy—its construction of her as socially superior to Kennedy—and the Kennedy clan's awe for her "stamina to stand up for her own tastes."<sup>42</sup> Similarly, readers are introduced to her visual elegance: she "has a certain instinct for fashion and lively writing flair;"<sup>43</sup> "her political role is mostly visual;"<sup>44</sup> and she is "'determined that [her] husband's Administration . . . won't be plagued by fashion stories."<sup>45</sup> This article, therefore, promotes particular expectations of the upcoming first

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<sup>34</sup> C. David Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, (New York: Carol Communications, 1989), 185.

<sup>35</sup> Cover story, "Jackie." *Time*, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

lady, and *Time* reinforces Jackie's (mediated) identity performance the following week in its Inauguration issue.

*Time* magazine pictured (literally and figuratively) Jackie differently than did *New York Times*. In the Inauguration issue, more than ten photographs appear prominently within the written text, and the cover of the magazine also displays a photograph of Kennedy, presumably taking the Oath of Office. Of the eleven photographs showcased within the text, only three include Jackie, and two of the three show her in her Inaugural ball gown rather than depicting her at the Inaugural Address. Already, by showing only one picture of her at the Address, the magazine places her more prominently in the role of "regal debutante" rather than intelligent political partner and continues to anticipate a particular performance of gender.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the singular image of Jackie at the Inaugural Address is a small reprint of the aforementioned *New York Times* photograph of the couple. The photograph sits timidly at the bottom of a page in the middle of the article. Its location and size are considerably less prominent and smaller in this article than in the *New York Times* article. Moreover, the other photographs of Jackie at the Ball loom larger and feature more centrally.<sup>47</sup> Placement of these photographs, therefore, suggests that *Time* valued images of her at the Inaugural Ball more than images of her at the Inaugural Address.

The adjacent written caption underneath the (reprinted) image in *Time* reads simply: "KENNEDYS AT HOME: Moved by the time of their life."<sup>48</sup> The *New York Times* caption under the photograph read: "THE ADDRESS IS 1600 PENNSYLVANIA

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<sup>46</sup> Cover story, "The 35th," *Time* LXXVII (1961, January 27).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 12.

<sup>48</sup> Cover story, "The 35th." *Time*, 10.

AVENUE: President and Mrs. Kennedy leaving their new home yesterday to take seats in the near-by stand for the parade.”<sup>49</sup> The two written explanations of the small photograph differ: *Time*’s caption uses “moved”<sup>50</sup> to denote both activity—the couple literally walks—and the couple’s emotional state—they are emotionally *moved* by this time in their lives. Also, the caption in *Time* presents Jackie and Kennedy as a unified whole: the “Kennedys” are “moved by the time of *their life*,”<sup>51</sup> (italics mine) which implies unity rather than autonomy. Conversely, *New York Times*’ caption distinguishes between Jackie and Kennedy, which, albeit in a small way, allows her (and him) individual identity, even though she features as “Mrs. Kennedy.”<sup>52</sup>

*Time*’s written unification of the “Kennedys” may be interpreted positively or negatively. Both lose their individual identities and appear only in terms of a collective whole; however, this loss of individual identity applies both to Jackie *and* Kennedy. Maybe *Time* marginalizes her merely as a “Kennedy” (and not as Jackie), or perhaps she becomes important enough within his presidential persona to lump into a unified category (Kennedy as both him and Jackie). Again, viewers face potentially competing interpretations of meaning that complicate her role either as reinforcement of gender norms or occupant of important political space. Jackie performs both.

The written text of *Time*’s Inauguration article focuses mainly on John Kennedy. *Time* mentions Jackie in passing several times, but her only substantive written recognition casts her and Kennedy in stereotypical roles of feminine and masculine: “Jackie Kennedy, arriving on the Caroline, had taken over virtually the whole house on N

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<sup>49</sup> “It Was a Long, but Proud Day for Wife of the New President.” *New York Times*, 11.

<sup>50</sup> Cover story, “The 35th.” *Time*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “It Was a Long, but Proud Day for Wife of the New President.” *New York Times*, 11.

Street for her hairdressers and other attendants: Kennedy, fleeing from this female world, decided to make his temporary headquarters at the nearby home of a friend.”<sup>53</sup> Herein, Jackie plays the role of “regal debutante,”<sup>54</sup> highly concerned with her appearance. Kennedy, in contrast, must escape “from this female world”<sup>55</sup>—in typical male fashion—because he has more practical responsibilities for the Inaugural Ball.

Although *Time*'s article featuring Jackie the week before the Inauguration offered several descriptions of her as “bright,” with “swift intelligence,” and “determined,”<sup>56</sup> the majority of this Inauguration article constructs her as elegant and aristocratic. *Time*'s Inauguration article, therefore, reinforces the image of Jackie as mere aesthetic both through its inclination to print photographs of her *at* the Ball and through its written reference to her preparation *for* the Ball. Furthermore, the article provides: “That evening came a moment for which all Washington womanhood had been waiting: Jacqueline Kennedy, stunning in a white gown of silk ottoman, emerged coatless from the house with her husband, lifted her skirt daintily above the snow and headed off for the festivities of inauguration eve.”<sup>57</sup> Again, *Time*'s written text reinforces Jackie (and viewers) as traditionally feminine through detailed description of Jackie's dress, hyperbolic assertion that seeing what Jackie was wearing to the Ball was “a moment for which all Washington womanhood has been waiting,”<sup>58</sup> and mention of Jackie lifting her skirt “daintily.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cover story, “The 35th.” *Time*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 3, 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Although *Time* places much importance on Jackie's aesthetic, the article's construction of her still highlights the (desired) political image of the Kennedy administration. In both *Time*'s article feature on her and its article on the Inauguration, certain cogent themes emerge: Jackie both as a "site for the performance of archetypal femininity"<sup>60</sup> (an emerging fashion role model) but also as a visual embodiment of Kennedy's presidential persona. Describing her as elegant, particularly through her clothing, further reinforces this image but serves dually to create and maintain a sense of "Camelot." Thus, audiences also may understand Jackie to be more than political partner or wife of the President: her performance as celebrity icon begins.

*Life* magazine, more so than *Time*, was a weekly print source that placed great emphasis on photojournalism. Therefore, this publication constructed Kennedy's Inauguration mainly through pictures. Although written text accompanies the photographs, visual images are the main lenses through which the Inauguration "means." Because of its emphasis on visual images, *Life* provides photographs of Jackie from the Inaugural Address that vary from those displayed in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine.

Those photographs published in *Life* that differ most from those already in circulation show the Inauguration at two different points: first, during Robert Frost's preface; and second, as Kennedy delivers his Inaugural Address. Beneath an image of Cardinal Cushing offering invocation (as smoke billows near him), a photograph taken during Frost's preface shows a close-up of Lady Bird Johnson, Jackie, former president Eisenhower, and President Kennedy, respectively. Lady Bird, Eisenhower, and Jackie sit

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<sup>60</sup> Campbell, "The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary," 4.

fairly near each other, while Kennedy sits at a slight distance from Eisenhower. Lady Bird wears a short, netted veil, and a fur-collared coat. Her pointed nose and thin eyebrows contrast with Jackie's softer features and fuller brows. Likewise, Lady Bird's thin lips part distinctly in concern whereas Jackie's mouth opens only slightly. The most noticeable visual difference between the two women, however, is the contrast of Jackie's smooth, youthful complexion against Lady Bird's lined, wrinkled skin.<sup>61</sup>

The obvious age difference between the former and incoming First Couple provided fodder in 1961 for journalistic commentary. For example, "when [Walter Cronkite] was at a loss of words [awaiting Kennedy's speech], he reminded everyone that Kennedy was the youngest man to be elected President, and Jackie the fourth-youngest first lady."<sup>62</sup> Further illuminating Jackie's visible youth in *this* photograph, she sits next to an elderly Eisenhower. He has a white scarf wrapped tightly around his neck, and small pieces of disheveled hair catch the sunlight; disjunctive against the polish of Jackie's perfectly coiffed bob. Her skin, again, looks smooth and taut compared to the looser skin hanging from the former president's face. Kennedy, on the right side of Eisenhower, looks every bit the youthful and energetic persona he evinces in his famous Inaugural speech; his hair, like Jackie's, is brushed neatly into a side part. Viewers only see his straight, square profile, but he leans back with an air of self-confidence. Again, although he appears closer to viewers proximally in the photograph, we see only his profile. Conversely, Jackie's face turns toward the camera.<sup>63</sup> Thus, we connect more

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<sup>61</sup> Cover story, *Life* (1961, January 27).

<sup>62</sup> Clarke, *Ask Not*, 181.

<sup>63</sup> Cover story, *Life* (1961, January 27).

readily with her. This connection, coupled with the motherly look of concern on her face, reinforces Jackie's performance both as nurturer and as accessible.

All four figures pictured look concerned, and the left caption beneath the photograph reads: "HELP FOR POET, venerable Robert Frost, is offered by Vice President Johnson who provides his top hat to shield Frost's manuscript from the sun, which interfered with his reading. The device did not work and Frost said, 'I'll just have to get through this as best I can.' But he had to abandon the attempt to read."<sup>64</sup> The caption to the right reads: "CONCERN FOR POET is shown by (*from left*) Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Kennedy, Ike, and Kennedy himself as Frost stumbles over his preface because of the continuing glare on the paper. What Frost could not read was a tribute which he had written to Kennedy for inviting a man of letters to participate in an affair of state."<sup>65</sup>

The written text describing this photograph leaves audiences to construct Jackie mostly in terms of visual image: again, one that reinforces her youth, beauty, and elegance. Likewise, her clothing differs significantly from Lady Bird's, which further intensifies the visual difference in aesthetic appeal. As Clarke suggests, Jackie "was the gorgeous petal in a dowdy bouquet of fur."<sup>66</sup> The written text does little to inform audience perception of those photographed, with the slight exception of formalizing the women (called Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy) and informalizing the men (called Ike and Kennedy).

The second photograph of note in *Life* depicts Kennedy giving his Inaugural Address with a bevy of spectators, including Jackie, seated behind him. He stands

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, *Ask Not*, 181.



upright, leaning forward slightly, his hands placed on the podium. Jackie's light coat and hat (again resembling a halo) serve as foils to his dark coat and hair, but her graceful posture, even while sitting, mirrors his. Her head floats elegantly above Eisenhower's, and her gaze is distant, but a small smile plays on the corners of her mouth. The stately Capitol sits prominently in the background, and even in the distance, audiences can distinguish tiny dark figures, each hoping to catch a glimpse of their new President (and First Lady).

Perhaps in this photograph, more than any other, viewers feel literal and metaphorical distance between themselves and Jackie. She sits in grace and elegance, poised and regal behind Kennedy, but for once, she does not foreground the photograph. To see her, audiences must look through a crowd of observers seated behind Kennedy. Yes, she mirrors Kennedy's body language and poise, but this distant polish makes her less accessible and more an image *ideal* than previous images. Viewers may perceive Jackie's facial expression to be dreamy, enigmatic, bored, aloof; but the unfamiliar image of her profile (not facing the camera directly) coupled with a lack of eye contact create a visual and emotional space from her heretofore unseen. Thus, in these *Life* photographs, viewers confront a conflicting dynamic between her as accessible (namely through her fashion prowess and embodiment of traditional femininity) and inaccessible (her aesthetic is an ideal to which women can only aspire). This accessible-inaccessible dynamic may perhaps best describe her complex image as both first lady/political partner and celebrity icon *per se*. *Life*'s construction of Jackie provides audiences not only with a potent visualization of her youth but also a fantasy persona to which we may aspire rather than a concrete reality to which we can relate.

## Conclusion and Implications

In *Shooting Kennedy*, David Lubin writes: “[Kennedy] came to realize what an asset [Jackie’s] beauty was to his political and diplomatic career.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Lubin describes the importance of Jackie’s image: “One cynical journalist turned to a Kennedy advisor and asked, ‘When are you going to have her come out of a cake?’”<sup>68</sup> More than an asset, however, Jackie embodied visually the Kennedy administration’s persona of youth and elegance. Her carefully crafted fashion choices coupled with media reinforcement of her style as “elegant” and “fresh” helped set the tone of the Kennedy administration as “Camelot” and its leading lady as both novel and traditional, familiar and remote.

Judith Butler writes: “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of the body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.”<sup>69</sup> Immense circulation in print media of Jackie’s image, both in visual and written texts, made her more available discursively than previous first ladies. Thus, she had enhanced opportunity to perform the role differently, “naturalizing”<sup>70</sup> her performance through mediated “repetition and ritual”<sup>71</sup> that augmented her individual popularity and facilitated her rising status as celebrity icon. As Oleg Cassini asserts: “[The Kennedy presidency was] like a film and [I had] the opportunity to dress the female star.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> David Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Cassini, *A Thousand Days of Magic*, 15.

Using Hariman and Lucaites' definition of celebrities as "within but not fully of the social group . . . related to the viewer abstractly rather than through more organic ties, and . . . at once both far and near,"<sup>73</sup> we can better understand Jackie Kennedy's Inaugural performance. She was "both far and near"<sup>74</sup> from the American public—far because most Americans did not actually *know* her but also near, for example, in photographs where her eye contact, proximity, and enactment of nurturer provide audiences an illusion of intimacy. Jackie exemplified the fairytale narrative with which Americans are so familiar, and thus she related to viewers "abstractly rather than through more organic ties."<sup>75</sup> Similarly, she was placed in an intermediary position between viewers and larger sources of power—namely Kennedy as president. She was within but *above* the social group because of her own high-society background, her marriage to the President, and her status as a fashion role model. Therefore, Jackie was celebritized both by her self-constructed image and through visual and written circulation of her in print media.

Images of her enacting "gender norms for the performance of femininity"<sup>76</sup> depict Jackie as performing "archetypal femininity."<sup>77</sup> In contrast, however, Jackie complicates the binary between two "types"<sup>78</sup> of first ladies: those who reinforce traditional gender roles or those who challenge gender stereotypes and thereby expand "women's political

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<sup>73</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" 61.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Campbell, "The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary," 4.

<sup>77</sup> Parry-Giles and Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," 567.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

space.”<sup>79</sup> She performs multiple roles that oscillate between the political import of first lady and the cultural/iconic import of celebrity, and therefore changes subsequent image politics in which a first lady must engage *for herself*. In 1961, she “(de)naturalizes”<sup>80</sup> traditional ways in which first ladies “perform.”<sup>81</sup>

The importance of image in politics manifests notably in subsequent literature on first ladies. In “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary,” Karlyn Kohrs Campbell notes: “The many biographies of the Clintons all describe Hillary Rodham’s makeover following her husband’s 1980 defeat for reelection after his first term as Arkansas governor. They report that she acquired contact lenses, lightened her hair, began to wear more fashionable clothes, and took her husband’s name.”<sup>82</sup> Hillary’s image transformation was a salient factor in her husband’s political career, and perhaps this pressure for first lady participation in aesthetic politics can be traced to ways in which Jackie was admired for her visual embodiment of Kennedy’s presidential persona. If we agree that Jackie redefined the role of the first lady as one in which aesthetic reflects or reinforces presidential personae, then we must also agree that she “expanded women’s political space.”<sup>83</sup> Because, however, she did so in a way acceptable to patriarchal society (*i.e.* through fashion), first lady scholars may write her off as merely using the first lady pulpit to perform “archetypal femininity.”<sup>84</sup> This assumption not only diminishes her rhetorical legacy but also underestimates her cultural importance—and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary,” 11.

<sup>83</sup> Parry-Giles and Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002,” 567.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary,” 11.

thereby her influence on the political landscape of the 1960s. Yet, particularly pertinent in the proceeding chapter, in her historical review of public sphere theory, Joan Landes suggests:

Breaking with an earlier view of the term 'private' as pertaining to the personal (often kin-bound) sphere of family and household and 'public' as the impersonal, institutional world of workplace or commerce, dress scholars are interested in how garments encode private, intimate sensations and fantasies with public and social meanings...[wherein, according to Carole Turbin, dress is] 'paradoxical and double-edged, both public and private.'<sup>85</sup>

Siegfried Kracauer made the astute observation that "society does not stop the urge to live amid glamour and distraction, but encourages it whenever and however it can."<sup>86</sup> Jacqueline Kennedy was an integral figure in perpetuating the image of the Kennedy administration as youthful and elegant, but she also contributed much to changing the political climate for women by emphasizing the position of First Lady as an important participant in presidential personae. We have yet to experience another first lady like Jackie Kennedy. She influenced, visually and rhetorically, the merger of the political and the cultural. Most important, Jackie Kennedy "amounted to a looking glass [for Americans in 1961] that showed them their own dazzling and glamorous future."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Joan B. Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 2 (2003), 31.

<sup>86</sup> Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19, no. 2 (2002), 135.

<sup>87</sup> Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy*, 135.

## CHAPTER 3

## PRESERVING THE WHITE HOUSE: JACKIE'S TELEVISED TOUR

On February 14, 1962, Jackie Kennedy featured in a solo televised tour of the White House to promote her relevant restoration and preservation project. Although projected ratings for the televised tour vary anywhere from 2 million to 80 million viewers, both American and international;<sup>1</sup> particularly for the early 1960s, these ratings remain an astonishing number in a time when only an estimated 12 to 22 percent of the American public had multiple television sets in their homes<sup>2</sup> (as opposed to more than 76 percent currently).<sup>3</sup> In *The American President in Popular Culture*, Melissa Crawley contends that television “reflect[s] the nation’s history and challeng[es] [the nation] to understand [sic] [its] future by allowing the public to experience the president in ways that inspire, educate, entertain, and amuse.”<sup>4</sup> More than just showcasing the *president*, however, for the first time, this highly rated CBS special reflected “the nation’s history”<sup>5</sup> and challenged the nation to “understand [its] future”<sup>6</sup> through its popular *first lady*.

Televised tours of the White House were done before and after Jackie Kennedy: from President Truman’s original televised tour in May 1952 to Laura Bush’s recent one, the advent of television provided the public a predominantly visual means by which to

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<sup>1</sup>See Elizabeth J. Natalle, "Jacqueline Kennedy: The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot," in *Inventing a Voice: American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Natalle, “The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot,” 43.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Melissa Crawley, "Television," in *The American President in Popular Culture*, ed. John Matviko (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2005), 183.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

access the institution of the presidency. Crawley suggests: “Opening the White House to television cameras creates a more accessible presidency by dissolving the boundary between public and private spaces...[and] often satisfies the public’s desire for both the ordinary and the extraordinary in their national leader.”<sup>7</sup> When discussing Truman, for example, Crawley argues: “Not just the subject of news, the president now became entertainment...[t]he performance was significant because it redefined [Truman’s] public image.”<sup>8</sup> Crawley then describes Jackie’s tour specifically: “A young and glamorous first lady, Jacqueline Kennedy’s solo tour of the White House promoted the vitality of the Kennedy administration...[and the President’s] minor role in the broadcast was effective because it created a scene of domestic harmony while casting a spotlight on the popular first lady.”<sup>9</sup>

The context in which Jackie enacted celebrity—a visual and verbal tour of a familiar monument—and its subsequent implications both for the American public in the 1960s, and the presidency and White House as continually evolving historical artifacts, remain equally important, particularly for public sphere scholarship. Argumentation scholar G. Thomas Goodnight writes: “‘Sphere’ denotes branches of activity—the ground upon which arguments are built and the authorities to which arguers appeal.”<sup>10</sup> More specifically, he delineates main spheres of argumentation: “[The personal sphere] is

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>10</sup> G. Thomas Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 18 (1982), 216.

invoked when a person tries to show ‘consubstantiality’ with another. [The public sphere] is invoked through partisan appeals—partisanship being a characteristic of the public.”<sup>11</sup>

Although Goodnight limits his discussion of spheres to textual and linguistic discourse, recent scholarship counters and (re)defines his theories in several ways. Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang show “the importance of making questions of visibility explicit in public sphere theory.”<sup>12</sup> Arguing that we must take seriously a Burkean notion of the social, Barbara Biesecker notes:

In claiming that the dissolution of illusion produces true (albeit social) knowledge or, to put it differently, that a true (which is to say consensual) knowledge of illusions can lead to a shared knowledge of reality on which more or less correct collective action can be grounded, these theorists [such as Goodnight] reiterate a will to power through (social) knowledge on which technocracy depends.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, viewers engaged Jackie’s tour of the White House through an “impersonal process of circulation in signs of private, personal expressiveness.”<sup>14</sup> Like Biesecker, I argue, however, that Jackie’s “illusion” of intimacy complicates theories of the public sphere, offering opportunity for, as Joan Landes writes, “a reconsideration of the category of public and private, and the shared conclusion [sic] that it remains an indispensable framework for gender analysis.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 217

<sup>12</sup> Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, " 'Sighting' the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (2004), 397.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Biesecker, "Recalculating the Relation of the Public and Technical Spheres" (paper presented at the Alta Conference on Argumentation, 1989), 69.

<sup>14</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" 60.

<sup>15</sup> Joan B. Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 2 (2003), 34.



Jackie's mediated performance in this television special, therefore, both reinforced construction of her as budding celebrity *per se* and also (re)constructed history of the White House by overlapping overtly personal and public spheres. Using scholarship on the enactment of celebrity, I examine how Jackie's visual image on film works with and against her oral speech to portray a celebrity persona. Additionally, I use theories of the public sphere to analyze the "stage" on which she plays her part; for the White House both serves as public property (a national monument—*America's* residence) and private home (the *Kennedys'* house). Ultimately, I contend that Jackie's invocation of personal and public spheres during her performance of celebrity may provide productive possibility for the ways in which the public (then) engaged American history, the presidency, and the visibility of gender therein.

#### Film Analysis

Jackie's televised White House tour runs about 57 minutes. The broadcast begins with a brief summary of the feature's content (the tour), a description of Jackie's purposes (preservation and restoration of the White House), and an introduction of Charles Collingwood (the reporter with whom Jackie will speak during the hour-long special). An image of the White House then emerges in extended focus; a singular man, looking comparatively slight, strides across the expansive lawn to the majestic stairs. A male narrator (presumably Collingwood) quotes former President Theodore Roosevelt as saying:

The White House is the property of the nation, and so far as it is compatible with living therein should be kept as it originally was, for the same reasons that we keep Mount Vernon as it originally was...It is a good thing to preserve such

buildings as historic monuments, which keep alive our sense of continuity with the nation's past.<sup>16</sup>

After referencing Roosevelt's quotation, the male narrator introduces Jackie, who gives an overview of the history of the White House. Her soft, clipped voice intones everything from its structural evolution to its interior changes and the women whom were responsible for those changes. After this initial voiceover, during which a myriad of historical images (design stills, unidentified everyday figures, and construction workers, to name a few) shift across the screen, Jackie walks toward the camera. She wears a simple, dark-colored boatneck dress; her hair perfectly coiffed in its signature bouffant. Her shoulders pull back in poised, upright posture, and her arms swing slightly at her sides. She makes no direct eye contact with the camera, but a small smile plays across her mouth. Throughout the remainder of the broadcast, Collingwood and Jackie discuss her project, walking through the East Room, Red Room, Blue Room, Green Room, and Monroe Room, respectively. The broadcast generally oscillates between (1) shots of Collingwood and Jackie walking room to room and (2) close-ups of various pieces of furniture, artifacts, and art; her voice softly describing their history and/or significance.

The aforementioned description provides a mere summation of the televisual contents in Jackie's tour. Several particular features therein, however, enhance her burgeoning celebrity persona (as opposed to her official presidential persona). James Bennett focuses on contemporary television culture in Great Britain (*e.g.* reality shows), but his discussion of the "television personality" resonates with Jackie's performance herein:

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<sup>16</sup> *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Tour* (NBC News Time Capsule, 1962); also see [hulu.com](http://hulu.com) to view.

The television personality's success is predicated on ensuring the audience believes there is a 'perfect fit' between their 'real' persona and the television personality as image...however, this authenticity has to be negotiated by a performance which, whilst intimate, immediate, spontaneous, and palpably authentic, must also clearly construct a televisual image that positions the television personality with 'star' qualities.<sup>17</sup>

Jackie's attire, for example, signifies "the successful mediation between upper-class and democratic style."<sup>18</sup> Her clothes look chic without being snobby, simple without being boring, and "authentic" but inimitable. She walks with grace, and her regal posture serves as a tacit reminder to sit upright. Jackie, therefore, relates to viewers "abstractly" rather than "organically"—she reflects an idealized self (for female audiences), who remains "within but not fully of the social group."<sup>19</sup>

Although Jackie recounts the history of items, rooms, presidents, and first ladies (to name a few), she rarely makes direct eye contact with the camera, and viewers instead relate to her within "the impersonal process of circulation [through] signs of private, personal expressiveness."<sup>20</sup> Repeated close-ups of her face coupled with her smooth, quiet voice project this facet of her celebrity persona. Indeed, as she floats from room to room, Collingwood either trails behind her or remains unseen. Jackie remains the central visual narrator of the tour, and focus on her face ameliorates her lack of direct eye

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<sup>17</sup> James Bennett, "The Televisual Personality System: Televisual Stardom Revisited after Film Theory," *Screen* 49, no. 1 (2008), 38-39.

<sup>18</sup> Diane Rubenstein, *This Is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the American Political Imaginary* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 128.

<sup>19</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" 61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

contact—personalizing “the impersonal process of circulation [through] signs of private...expressiveness.”<sup>21</sup> Even more telling, several shots depict her in environments resonant with (star) performance. For instance, to transition from viewing the Blue Room to the Green Room, Jackie stands in front of a curtain-laced window, out of which viewers can see the Washington Monument. In this scene, she looks much like an actress performing on stage (complete with curtains to be drawn when her performance ends). The Washington Monument’s prominence in this shot adds interesting context to this figurative play—she stars in this filmic production of history.

Jackie also features as principal verbal narrator. According to C. David Heymann, Collingwood later commented specifically on her voice, remembering: “She had that strange voice and I couldn’t hear her at all, although I was only standing four feet away...[when I told her to speak up, she responded by saying] ‘I don’t speak any louder than this.’”<sup>22</sup> Her speech, barely audible above a loud whisper, intimates viewers literally—to hear her, they likely had to lean closer to the television screen, increase the volume, and/or silence external noise. In this way, viewers likely had to connect physically with her performance, producing at least a momentary illusion of intimacy.

Jackie’s performance of celebrity, therefore, engaged the visual-oral medium in novel ways. As performance studies theorist Nathan Stucky surmises: “Natural performance resembles documentary film in editing, framing, and re/presenting a ‘slice of real life’...this move demands both the ‘real’ and the ‘story.’”<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Natalle

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> C. David Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie* (New York: Carol Communications, 1989), 335.

<sup>23</sup> Nathan Stucky, "Toward an Aesthetics of Natural Performance," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13 (1993), 177.

provides a fairly detailed summation of the film's construction and suggests that few retakes were needed for the live taping. In this way, the tour "re/presented a 'slice of real life.'"<sup>24</sup> Yet, moments in the tour demand "the 'story.'"<sup>25</sup> Near the end of the broadcast, for example, President Kennedy enters briefly to chat with Jackie and Collingwood, as they finish their visit to the Monroe Room. The two men sit across a table from one another, and Jackie sits to the President's right. During the men's presumably casual conversation, the camera shifts to Jackie several times: first, showing her pretty, unlined face frozen in an adoring smile as President Kennedy explains the significance of her project and then, showing her nod assuredly and bat her eyelashes as her husband describes the White House as a "historical guide to the Presidency...[and Americans'] source of strength."<sup>26</sup> In the final shot taken in the White House, the camera pans out; President Kennedy looks at her proudly, while she smiles at Collingwood, her hands placed demurely in her lap. This setting, therefore, may represent "'a slice of real life;"<sup>27</sup> however, the "scene"<sup>28</sup> also depicts "'the story'"<sup>29</sup> the American public likely hoped to see—*i.e.* their young, beautiful First Couple interacting as husband and wife.

As Crawley suggests, "[The President's] minor role in the broadcast was effective because it created a scene of domestic harmony while casting a spotlight on the popular first lady."<sup>30</sup> The scene in which President Kennedy appears provides viewers a momentary glimpse into the private life of their First Couple, which typifies public

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Tour*.

<sup>27</sup> Stucky, "Toward an Aesthetics of Natural Performance," 177.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Crawley, "Television," 185.

fascination with celebrity. As Karin Becker notes, “Visualizations of the private lives of public celebrities is one such example [of the intersections between the public and private spheres in media], including the question of how celebrity is created, to then be ‘privatized.’”<sup>31</sup> Although national political figures, especially the President, always garner media attention, Jackie’s (and John’s) particular enactment of celebrity merged with the visual nature of television to enhance public enthrallment with their personal lives.

Jackie’s celebrity persona, largely enacted visually through withdrawal (privacy) and accessibility (publicity), reflects a paradigmatic characteristic of the White House as both the *nation’s* home (and thus public) and the *First Family’s* home (and thus private). In a special issue of the *Journal of Women’s History*, Joan Landes writes: “The terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ are routinely embedded in ordinary speech, including the distinction between near and far, hear and there, proximate and distant, and above all, closed and open.”<sup>32</sup> G. Thomas Goodnight shows how arguments shift to inhabit one sphere more than another, and ultimately, he contends that “[contemporary] arguments grounded in personal experience...[promote] political speakers [to] present not options but personalities, perpetuating government policy by substituting debate for an aura of false intimacy.”<sup>33</sup> Goodnight’s work largely decries the personal sphere, contending that “the public sphere is being steadily eroded by the elevation of the personal and technical

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<sup>31</sup> Karin Becker, "Where Is Visual Culture in Contemporary Theories of Media and Communication?," 155.

<sup>32</sup> Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," 35.

<sup>33</sup> Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," 224-225.

groundings of arguments.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, Cindy L. Griffin argues metatheoretically that public sphere theory, more than just a theoretical construct, has particular essentialist underpinnings reiterated by scholars who privilege normative masculine discursivities; such as division rather than connection, control rather than compromise, and hierarchy rather than equality.<sup>35</sup> Jackie’s particular enactment of celebrity in her televised tour, however, may challenge public sphere theory’s purported essentialism, for Jackie’s invocation of both personal and private spheres during her celebrity performance in the tour may provide novel means through which the public sphere engaged American presidential history and the visibility of gender therein.

Throughout the broadcast, several moments portray both visual and verbal personal appeals. Goodnight posits: “[The personal sphere] is invoked when a person tries to show [Burkean] ‘consubstantiality’ with another.”<sup>36</sup> Jackie’s role as first lady and emerging celebrity persona places her “in [an] intermediate position between the viewer and larger sources of power”<sup>37</sup>—namely, the (current and past male) presidents and (patriarchal) history—and enables her to invoke the personal sphere by showing “[Burkean] ‘consubstantiality’ with another.”<sup>38</sup> In so doing, Jackie consistently uses anecdotes to recount presidential and White House history, drawing on the “everyday-

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>35</sup> See Cindy L. Griffin, "The Essentialist Roots of the Public Sphere: A Feminist Critique," *Western Journal of Communication* 60, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>36</sup> Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," 217.

<sup>37</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, "Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of 'Accidental Napalm,'" 61.

<sup>38</sup> Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," 217.

ness” of these stories to relate more effectively to viewers—and female viewers, in particular.

Jackie tells stories involving both presidents and first ladies, subtly weaving women into White House presidential history’s homogenous quilt. On several occasions, for example, she mentions First Lady Mary Lincoln’s propensity for buying pieces of furniture (Lincoln’s bed, in which Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge slept; and furniture in the East Room) of which subsequent presidents later revered. To show “[Burkean] ‘consubstantiality’” with her female (and male, incidentally) audience, Jackie laughingly concludes that President Lincoln was none too pleased with his wife’s spending. In a rare moment of direct eye contact with the camera, she reads beneath a piece of artwork in the East Room an inscription written for First Lady Abigail Adams by President John Adams. In the Green Room, she emphasizes the table on which the Gettysburg Address—treasured because this copy remains one of only five copies handwritten by Lincoln—displays prominently. Jackie discloses that First Lady Edith Roosevelt (President Roosevelt’s wife) loved the table and instructed workers to stain all other furniture in the room the same color. Furthermore, she divulges a humorous anecdote about President Andrew Johnson to introduce a cabinet in the Monroe Room, noting that although President Lincoln originally placed the cabinet in his office (the Monroe Room), President Johnson had the cabinet removed based on superstition—that this cabinet was bad luck. In this story, Jackie relates to female viewers by painting the former President as silly; doing so in an isn’t-he-so-cute-and-childish way. Although critics may dismiss these anecdotes as mere reinforcement of traditional notions of



femininity and masculinity, I see their inclusion in the broadcast to be productive means by which to increase visibility of first ladies in (then contemporaneous) history.

C. David Heymann recollects CBS producer Blair Clark's first inclination to broadcast the White House special:

[Fred Friendly], and Jack [Kennedy] and I [Blair Clark] talked about a whole new concept [to televising the tour] then. No President had ever really used television before. Past Presidents had been afraid to take chances with it...[when meeting with Jackie], she was at first a little apprehensive. She didn't want to give the impression of being an interior decorator.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, Jackie's (self- and mediated) celebrity performance as first lady augmented her authority as principal visual and verbal narrator throughout the tour. From the inception of the televised event, Jackie's inimitable (and oft noted) command of her aesthetic appearance, her history with the arts, and her presumably apolitical enactment of first lady made persuasive her (public) appeals about White House restoration and preservation.

As Nathan Stucky surmises: "Natural performance recognizes its status as aesthetic communication and its debt to interpretation."<sup>40</sup> Jackie's physical appearance during the tour—her attire, her hair, her posture, her mannerisms—likely reinforced viewers' "interpretation" of her as cogent authority on a topic (renovating/redecorating the White House) to which knowledge of aesthetics was fundamental. Moreover, Jackie's appeals are convincing precisely because she frames them non-technically but eloquently; reinforcing the premise—a *subjective* appreciation and admiration of the visual—upon

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<sup>39</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 334.

<sup>40</sup> Stucky, "Toward an Aesthetics of Natural Performance," 174.

which her public argument bases. Near the beginning of the broadcast, Collingwood asks her, for example, for her opinion on the relationship between government and art—thereby implying her judgment matters. Jackie replies: “That’s complicated, I don’t know. I just feel that everything should be the best.”<sup>41</sup> Although this statement seems vague, the aura of quiet confidence with which she speaks, coupled with her foreign (French) heritage and its connotations of aristocracy, intensifies her authority for selecting “the best.”<sup>42</sup> This simple statement, said in an almost blasé manner, maintains her cultured, celebrity aura and strengthens her ethos.

Later in the broadcast, Jackie expresses: “I feel so strongly that the White House should have as fine a collection of paintings as possible.”<sup>43</sup> She touts the significance of the setting in which the President presents himself to the world, arguing that when foreigners visit the White House, Americans should be proud of its political *and* artistic history. Herein, Jackie uses public appeals enthymemically—she relies on her celebrity persona and presumed aristocracy to establish her authority on the aesthetic construction of the nation’s home.

Jackie’s personal and public appeals both educate viewers (in new ways) of White House history and advocate her restoration and preservation project (albeit subtly). Throughout the tour, I argue that her image—both literally and figuratively—oscillates between familiar and extraordinary, intimate and unattainable. As such, Jackie performs (public) celebrity, and in so doing, she employs personal appeals to persuade effectively. Her usage of these appeals, therefore, complicates Goodnight’s argument that “the public

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<sup>41</sup> *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Tour.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

sphere is being steadily eroded by the elevation of the personal and technical groundings of arguments;”<sup>44</sup> instead instantiating “a tenable conception of the public sphere [countenancing] not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interest and issues that bourgeois, masculinist ideology labels ‘private’ and treats as inadmissible.”<sup>45</sup>

### Conclusion and Implications

Near the broadcast’s end, CBS news reporter Sander Vanocur reframes President Roosevelt’s quotation about the public nature of the White House (heard in the broadcast’s beginning) to one from Jackie suggesting that the White House belongs to *all* the people. Indeed, we find evidence for these statements in Jackie’s repeated reference to first ladies (women) in history. History literally has been (re)constructed. Furthermore, Vanocur quotes Jackie as saying that “as a child, the White House seemed a cold place,”<sup>46</sup> but that she hopes to make the national symbol warmer. As David Lester surmises: “[Jackie] could turn the White House not only into the kind of home she wanted for herself and her family but a source of pride for all Americans.”<sup>47</sup> Vanocur’s descriptive language throughout the broadcast’s conclusion invokes nostalgic (feminine, domestic) images of warm fires in the fireplace and flowers, and he concludes that the White House should be a continuing embodiment of this nation and its people.

More than just a popular television special in American, however, Jackie’s tour was watched worldwide. In that instance, *she* was the embodiment of America. As

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<sup>44</sup> Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," 223.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 137.

<sup>46</sup> *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Tour*.

<sup>47</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 59.

Heymann writes, “Jackie taped introductions in French as well as Spanish, and the show was eventually distributed to 106 countries on every continent.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, rather than merely recounting presidential history, Jackie perhaps was influencing her era’s political future.

Michael Curtin suggests:

Jackie’s televised tour presents her both as a mother—indeed, the national symbol of motherhood—and as a modern woman: a patron of the arts, an historical preservationist, and a key figure in producing the nation’s collective memory. In these respects, she might be seen as symbolic of female aspirations to re-enter the public sphere and this may help to explain the documentary’s popularity with female viewers.<sup>49</sup>

Although I disagree that the televised tour *per se* “presents her...as a mother,”<sup>50</sup> I argue that specific components of her visual and verbal performance, such as her use of first lady anecdotes and her aesthetic appeal, indeed support Curtin’s perceptive observation that she was “a key figure in producing the nation’s collective memory... and this may help to explain the documentary’s popularity with female viewers.”<sup>51</sup>

In his more recent scholarship, G. Thomas Goodnight examines the ways in which *The Passion of the Christ* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* influenced public wartime deliberation in the 2004 presidential election. He contends: “These films worked precisely because they addressed wartime issues in ways that no ‘mainstream’ politician

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Curtin, "A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy: U.S. Documentary," <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/T/htmlT/tourofthew/tourofthew.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

could dare in the campaigns of 2004.”<sup>52</sup> Jackie’s blurred identity as celebrity and political figure, icon and first lady, likely garnered ratings for a tour of the White House more effectively than, for example, John Kennedy or Harry Truman. Moreover, her public disengagement with politics—she once said her role as first lady was to be a good wife and mother<sup>53</sup>—ultimately effected her desired political change more efficiently. Jackie provided anecdotes that, albeit “domestic” or reinforcing normative “femininity,” strengthened her personal position as sole arbiter of presidential history and White House future and introduced women into a very public televisual medium. Rather than eroding the public sphere, therefore, her solo performance and invocation of personal appeals therein, may have spurred greater public deliberation about both performances and visibility of gender in ways no “mainstream” (traditional) first lady could dare.

Heymann contends that “[t]he renovation project with all its obstacles and dilemmas proved convenient for Jackie as a means of avoiding the more mundane duties associated with her position. She was contemptuous of the traditional role of First Lady and opposed to playing the part.”<sup>54</sup> Jackie’s televised tour of the White House, therefore, was another means of subverting “the traditional role of First Lady.”<sup>55</sup> Melissa Crawley contends that showing the White House on television “creates a more accessible presidency by dissolving the boundary between public and private spaces...[and] often satisfies the public’s desire for both the ordinary and the extraordinary in their national

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<sup>52</sup> G. Thomas Goodnight, “The Passion of the Christ Meets Fahrenheit 9/11: A Study in Celebrity Advocacy,” *The American Behaviorist*, 49, no. 3, (2005), 432.

<sup>53</sup> Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2002, 577.

<sup>54</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 333.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

leader.”<sup>56</sup> More than just providing access to the president and first lady, however, Jackie’s specific tour may have influenced the public sphere more generally. She “creates a more accessible presidency”<sup>57</sup> not just “by dissolving the boundary between public and private spaces”<sup>58</sup> literally; perhaps she also provides access to a more inclusive (history of the) presidency—one in which women are visible in and “dissolve the boundary between public and private spaces.”<sup>59</sup>

Crawley asserts that “[b]oth [drama and entertainment] formats offer a shared sense of our national leader that moves beyond understanding the presidential image as a strictly ‘factual’ broadcast, ultimately providing insights into our nation’s history and ourselves.”<sup>60</sup> In 1962, the presidential image in the televised tour of the White House was not of the President: instead, viewers accessed the presidency through their first lady, which may provide “insights into our nation’s history and ourselves.”<sup>61</sup> Jackie Kennedy remains the only first lady to receive an honorary Emmy award, and the only first lady to give a solo televised tour of America’s home. In her essay on contemporary status of feminism, rhetorical scholar Bonnie Dow asks: “Do we need Judith Butler [sic], again, to remind us that you cannot alter definitions or expectations for one gender without affecting the other?”<sup>62</sup> As I turn to the next chapter, I contend that Jackie Kennedy

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<sup>56</sup> Crawley, "Television," 185-186.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Bonnie J. Dow, "The Traffic in Men and the Fatal Attraction of Postfeminist Masculinity," *Women's Studies in Communication* 29, no. 1 (2006), 127.

challenged 1960s expectations of her (gendered) role, and we are remiss to discard the productive possibilities seen in and stemming from her novel performance as first lady.

## CHAPTER 4

## CRAFTING CAMELOT: JACKIE'S VALIANT LEGACY

On November 23, 1963, President John F. Kennedy's assassination "once and forever damaged [Americans'] faith in the future...[and for the funeral] millions of Americans huddled before their television sets to watch Jackie, dressed in black, walk alongside her late husband's coffin..."<sup>1</sup> The death of a President, to be sure, invited large amounts of media coverage, and afterwards, America's popular First Lady was memorialized by print media, popular magazines, and books in hundreds of images from the funeral. Indeed, Anne Norton argues that "as signifier, the President calls up not only the American nation, the government, the executive branch, and the triumphant party...but the mythic and historical associations that attach to the office and to its past and present occupants."<sup>2</sup> As First Lady, Jackie also signified—she too was part of the "mythic and historical associations that attach to the office and to its past and present occupants."<sup>3</sup> Previously heralded to celebrity status both in print and televisual media, Jackie served as a sort of incumbent signifier during the funeral, arguably embodying national order and showing the nation (visually and otherwise) how to cope with the loss of their President.

President Kennedy's traumatic death summoned unique conditions under which his administration's legacy would be constructed rhetorically. Many historical scholars acknowledge Jackie's role in his funeral and, ultimately, his legacy. In *A Woman Named*

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<sup>1</sup> James Patterson, *Grand Expectations* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 522.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 91.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



*Jackie*, C. David Heymann recounts: “Rising above her grief, Jackie resolved to impress her husband’s place in history on the American consciousness, to remind Americans what had been taken from them.”<sup>4</sup> Although she largely deplores Jackie’s significance as first lady, Maurine Beasley concurs: “[A]t [John Kennedy’s] funeral, [Jackie] was the director and stage manager...she had orchestrated her own Camelot.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, Jackie’s meticulous coordination of President Kennedy’s funeral and her explicitly mythic characterization of his administration as Camelot provides means by which we can (re)assess her influence on public perception of his presidential legacy.

Roland Barthes notes that myth is a “peculiar [second-order semiological] system”<sup>6</sup> in which “a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second.”<sup>7</sup> Using Barthes’ lexicon, Jackie became both a sign of the nation’s simultaneous mourning/hope and a signifier in America’s fledgling political and cultural narrative. Furthermore, Northrop Frye writes: “Myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire”<sup>8</sup> and “[the quest/romance as a form of myth] is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, I examine both how Jackie staged the final scene in this myth of Camelot

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<sup>4</sup> C. David Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie* (New York: Carol Communications, 1989), 414.

<sup>5</sup> Maurine H. Beasley, *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 76.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1972), 114.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>8</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1957), 136.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

and how that myth was (re)circulated in print media to illuminate why this construction achieved potency for the American public in the 1960s.

In this chapter, I provide a brief historical summation of Jackie's preparation and execution of President Kennedy's funeral. Then, I discuss the story of Camelot and its implications both for President Kennedy's and Jackie's rhetorical legacy. I examine the following print media sources documenting Jackie after President Kennedy's funeral: a photo from *New York Times* with accompanying text, *Life* magazine's December 1963 cover, and *Look* magazine's January 1964 cover. In so doing, I analyze the ways in which these constructions both reinforce and subvert the Arthurian story of Camelot (and thus our assessment of Kennedy's presidency). Ultimately, I argue (1) that images of Jackie during President Kennedy's funeral construct a narrative more culturally resonant with European tradition than American customs, and (2) this narrative illustrates a long-held democratic tension between competing ideals of self-made independence and privileged (or inherited) cultural status.

#### Historical Context

Jackie's execution of President Kennedy's funeral was the final stage on which his (and her) presidential legacy was enacted. Heymann summarizes:

The funeral provided a means of demonstrating JFK's importance as a global leader, his historic links with Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt. A procession of international dignitaries would march to St. Matthew's behind Jackie and other members of the immediate family....[where] Jackie and her children would be received by Cardinal Cushing. She would kiss the Cardinal's ring before entering the cathedral. She and the children would emerge

after the service to the strains of ‘Hail to the Chief.’ And at her gentle prodding, John-John would salute the American flag atop his father’s coffin.<sup>10</sup>

John-John’s salute, in particular, became an iconic image in American cultural memory.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in *The American President in Popular Culture*, Arthur Holst concurs: “Most of the ceremonial details were her idea, many of them taken from a close study of the funeral of Abraham Lincoln, which she studied carefully on Saturday and Sunday.”<sup>12</sup>

Jackie’s planning of this visual and visible historic event, therefore, indicates her awareness not just of its political importance but also of its cultural resonance. In *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, Lester David writes: “Jackie was fully in charge...[even ordering] the eternal flame to be lit [in Arlington], she herself bending over with a torch to light it.”<sup>13</sup> By lighting the eternal flame in Arlington, Jackie first enacted her indispensable role in mythic characterization of Kennedy’s presidential legacy. More than just enacting her role as widowed first lady, however, mediated constructions of Jackie (re)illustrated an historical tension within America’s political and cultural narrative, both elevating America’s political significance through overt symbology and echoing Europe’s cultural influence more subtly. Simply put, Jackie signifies (in Barthes’ second-order semiological system) in an important cultural narrative that grapples between the nation’s simultaneous pride in a myth of self-made independence and its

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<sup>10</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 414.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2007), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Holst, “Myths, Legends, Stories, and Jokes,” in *The American President in Popular Culture*, (Ed. John Matviko, Library of Congress, 2005), 72.

<sup>13</sup> Lester David, *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* (New York: Carol Communications, 1994), 72.

desire for the mythic prestige of European cultural tradition. Seen in this way, Jackie's characterization after the funeral of Kennedy's administration as Camelot adds considerable depth to the ways in which his presidency (and her role therein) was performed.

### Myth of Camelot

The Arthurian romances from which mythical Camelot was first derived pervade European and American literature for centuries. Sir Thomas Malory remains the most notable author of these legends, and his fifteenth century *Morte d'Arthur* "is certainly the most important, once-and-future monument in the history of Arthurian storytelling in English."<sup>14</sup> In his works, "Malory recognizes that this legend, as hopeful and aspiring as it may be at times, has an essentially tragic disposition."<sup>15</sup> Because Malory's works employ dual premises of hope and tragedy, they become ideal means by which to assess evolving political identity. In contemporary political scholarship, for instance, Stephanie Barczewski examines the ways in which the myths of King Arthur and Robin Hood shaped British national identity in the nineteenth century. She argues that "King Arthur and Robin Hood were utilized in literary efforts to identify and promote certain elements considered essential to British national identity."<sup>16</sup> She also contends that in the late eighteenth century, "the selective mobilization of the past—and the medieval past in particular—acted to overcome the tensions created in the present by the often

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<sup>14</sup> Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin, ed., *Arthurian Writers: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>16</sup> Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

tempestuous relationship among the nation's constituent communities."<sup>17</sup> Arthurian folklore, therefore, becomes important as an object of cultural and political study (rather than just literary).

For purposes of this chapter, Camelot emerges as a theme singularly important in the Arthurian stories. Emerging later in Malory's works, Camelot was King Arthur's preferred castle. Although much research attempts to historicize the famed castle factually, "Camelot's geographic imprecision, whether conscious or not, was a stroke of genius on the part of romance authors: for Camelot, located nowhere in particular, can be anywhere...for it is less a specific place than a state of mind, a source of inspiration, an idea."<sup>18</sup> Lack of geographical precision persists in historical and modern versions of the Arthurian legend.

Camelot (re)emerged in several areas of twentieth century American popular culture. From the late 1930s to the late 1950s, Indian writer T.H. White became "the main articulator of Arthurian fantasy literature...not only rekindl[ing] popular enthusiasm for the world of King Arthur, but also inspir[ing] other writers, dramatists and film producers to take up Arthurian materials."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, "White's concern with communism, fascism, and pacifism...emerges everyway [in his Arthurian novels]."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner's popular 1960 Broadway play, entitled *Camelot*, used White's *The Once and Future King* as its primary influence.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, contemporary film versions of the legend achieved particular prominence in America

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Norris J. Lacy (Ed.), *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 67.

<sup>19</sup> Lacy, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 277.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 511.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

from the 1950s through the 1970s. White's scholarly preoccupations and his subsequent influence on the popular musical, therefore, likely attained specific relevance in a 1960s era in which communism became a salient political issue. Furthermore, in an era that would see explosive racial and gender issues, *Camelot* (as a narrative) may have provided a unifying lens through which (white, patriarchal) Americans could connect.

Although popularity of Broadway plays began declining in the late 1950s and 1960s, they remained a prevalent source of entertainment, with more than 60 productions still active in the late 1960s.<sup>22</sup> Music from the Tony award-winning play *Camelot* emerged as the top-selling LP for 60 weeks during the early 1960s.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after Kennedy's funeral in 1963, Journalist Teddy White spoke with Jackie in an interview that explicitly cemented *Camelot* as the mythic lens through which Americans would view Kennedy's presidency. Heymann describes White's recollection of the interview, in which Jackie said:

'Only bitter old men write history...Jack's life had more to do with myth, magic, legend, saga, and story than with political theory or political science.' She believed, and John Kennedy shared the belief, that history belongs to heroes, and heroes must not be forgotten. She reported how at night he would often listen to *Camelot* on their phonograph, and how he personally identified with the words of

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<sup>22</sup> "The Increased Popularity of Broadway Shows New York Tickets," (Reedstickets.com, Inc.).

<sup>23</sup> Classical Source, "Camelot," The Classical Source, [http://www.classicalsource.com/db\\_control/db\\_concert\\_review.php?id=5838](http://www.classicalsource.com/db_control/db_concert_review.php?id=5838), Accessed 20 January 2009.

the last song: ‘Don’t let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.’<sup>24</sup>

Afterwards, Heymann writes, White offered his interpretation of Jackie’s statement.

White concluded:

‘I realized it was a misreading of history, but I was taken with Jackie’s ability to frame the tragedy in such human and romantic terms...so the epitaph of the Kennedy administration became Camelot—a magic moment in American history when gallant men danced with beautiful women, when great deeds were done and when the White House became the center of the universe.’<sup>25</sup>

Herein, White acknowledges Jackie’s persuasiveness, noting that although “it was a misreading of history...[he] was taken with Jackie’s ability to frame the tragedy in such human and romantic terms.”<sup>26</sup> Through *her* (words), therefore, the Kennedy administration became an American Camelot; yet, through mediated images of the funeral, I argue she (and Kennedy) more closely signified European cultural tradition than “a magic moment in American history.”

#### Imagetext Analysis

*New York Times*, *Life* magazine, and *Look* magazine all featured coverage of President Kennedy’s funeral. At times, these media focused solely on the (now) former President. Elliot King notes: “At the death of a president, newspapers become the vehicle in which mourning can be expressed, and the process of transforming the president from

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<sup>24</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 418-419.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

his role as an active politician to a historical figure begins.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, each print media source also dedicated extensive coverage to Jackie, wherein she appeared as dutiful, grieving wife; composed, supportive matriarch; and poised, stoic first lady. As Jay Mulvaney notes, “Jacqueline Kennedy is singularly responsible for the creation of the most popular metaphor in American political history. The Kennedy presidency will forever be viewed through the romantic filter of the Camelot myth.”<sup>28</sup> Even before her infamous characterization of the Kennedy presidency as Camelot, however, print media—in this analysis, *New York Times* and *Life* magazine—reflected her more European narrative in its coverage of his funeral. After her interview with Teddy White, such coverage intensified—seen (in this analysis) through *Look* magazine’s cover.

In the few days following President Kennedy’s funeral, *New York Times* published dozens of articles on the event, several of which employed visual and written imagery redolent of a modern Arthurian romance. Northrop Frye observes: “In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy.”<sup>29</sup> *New York Times*’ funeral coverage supports Frye’s astute discernment. One *New York Times* article, for example, was entitled “A Hero’s Burial” (President Kennedy literally was deemed a hero) and mixed poetic frontier imagery (*e.g.* Americans “across the land” saw the ceremonies, and Kennedy was lowered into the “American earth”) with connotative and denotative reference to Europe (*e.g.* the flag was “presented to” Jackie; President de Gaulle of France and Prince Phillip, husband of

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<sup>27</sup> Elliot King, “Newspapers,” in *The American President and Popular Culture*, 116.

<sup>28</sup> Jay Mulvaney, *Diana and Jackie* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 289.

<sup>29</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.



Queen Elizabeth II of Britain are listed first and last, respectively, among notable figures in attendance; and “Roman Catholics the world over” watched).<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting article, however, was entitled “Mrs. Kennedy Leads Public Mourning.”<sup>31</sup> A single image features prominently above the article’s text and depicts four figures in its foreground. Jackie and Caroline kneel next to a massive, flag-draped coffin presumably holding President Kennedy’s body. Neither of their faces show, and Jackie’s dark dress and hair juxtaposes starkly against Caroline’s short, light-colored peacoat and light hair. The sheer size of the flag makes Caroline’s small right hand—with which she touches the iconic American symbol—seem even smaller. The flag’s stripes appear smooth and straight, and its stars stretch horizontally across the top of Kennedy’s coffin. Two guards, dressed in dark uniforms, crisp white gloves, and sharp white hats, stand diagonally across from one another. The guard positioned closest to viewers (us) faces the coffin, and his face turns away from viewers. The other guard faces him, his expression set in characteristically military-style seriousness. The background of the photograph largely remains unfocused. Viewers can see numerous (blurry) bodies lining the walkway. Beneath the photograph, a caption reads: “FAREWELL: Kneeling with her mother at John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s coffin in the Capitol, Caroline touches the flag.”<sup>32</sup>

When discussing purposes of myth, Barthes notes astutely: “However paradoxical it may seem, *myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear.”<sup>33</sup> The American flag and two male guards emerge most conspicuously as focal points of the

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<sup>30</sup> Tom Wicker, “A Hero’s Burial,” *New York Times* (November 26, 1963).

<sup>31</sup> Marjorie Hunter, “Mrs. Kennedy Leads Public Mourning,” *New York Times* (January 26, 1963).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 121.

photograph, signifying an overtly *American* historical moment. The size and stature both of the flag and of the guards' tall, upright bodies contrast Jackie and Caroline's small, bent figures, placing American symbology (as denoted by the guards and flag) at the image's forefront. Jackie's and Caroline's kneeling, however, becomes an interesting subversion (or, to use Barthes' language, *distortion*) of America's cultural role in this visual narrative: for kneeling, as a form of nonverbal communication, lacks major significance in American tradition. When saying the Pledge of Allegiance, for example, citizens place their hands over their hearts in deference to the flag (which symbolizes the nation metonymically). Even in American popular culture, kneeling never has "meant" in significant ways; unless, perhaps, to propose marriage. Their kneeling, therefore, perhaps complicates the simple patriotism so evident in this image.

When Frye delineates elements of romance, he writes: "The nearer the romance is to myth, the more attributes of divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities."<sup>34</sup> The act of kneeling resonates both in religious tradition (praying) and European political and cultural tradition (subjects often kneel before the Queen or King, and soldiers kneel to be knighted). Although the Roman Catholic service certainly provides a means of enacting religious ritual—perhaps anointing President Kennedy with "attributes of divinity"<sup>35</sup>—Jackie's and Caroline's symbolic kneeling also more closely resembles European norms associated with knighthood and royalty. Rather than making the overt "American-ness" of the image "disappear,"<sup>36</sup> however, Jackie's and Caroline's kneeling before the coffin instead

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<sup>34</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 121.

“distorts”<sup>37</sup> the photograph’s visual narrative through subtle reflection both of literary romance characteristics and European royal tradition.

*Times* author Marjorie Hunter references in four places throughout the text that Jackie and Caroline kneel at President Kennedy’s coffin.<sup>38</sup> The act of kneeling (and its evocation of European cultural and political tradition) thus attains greater significance in written text than visual image. Although overt symbols of America remain the dominant trope of this article’s image, the photograph’s denotative visual patriotism may be a compensatory mechanism for the connotative visual inclusion, albeit subtle, of this more European nonverbal form of communication. Moreover, in three of the four instances in which Hunter describes the act, she also mentions that Jackie, upon kneeling, kisses both the coffin and Cardinal Cushing’s ring.<sup>39</sup> The combination of these enactments (kneeling and kissing) may signify European royal rituals rather than American funereal ones (where, for instance, shaking hands largely remains a dominant nonverbal means of expressing respect).

*Life* and *Look* magazines also perpetuated, visually and in written text, a cultural narrative more reminiscent of Europe than of America. To summarize briefly *Life* and *Look*’s foremost historical relevance in American print media, Cara Finnegan writes: “*Life* and *Look* were not the first, and certainly not the only, picture magazines to appear in the 1930s, but they were the most successful and by far the most widely read.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, she explains that *Life* “focus[ed] on the news [and was] aimed at the middle and upper classes, while *Look* “would cultivate a more middle-to-working-class

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Hunter, “Mrs. Kennedy Leads Public Mourning,” 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Cara Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty* (Smithsonian, 2003), 175.

readership.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, both magazine covers of President Kennedy’s funeral arguably provided a central photographic means through which a majority of the nation understood the event.

As the singular image chosen to most visibly depict Kennedy’s funeral, *Life*’s December 1963 cover provided a snapshot of the ways in which the remaining members of the First Family performed in this tragic national setting. The magazine’s cover depicts Jackie, Caroline, and John Jr. standing stoic in the foreground. Jackie’s porcelain skin juxtaposes starkly against her dark dress and shoes. Her perfectly coiffed dark hair frames her face elegantly. Young Caroline and John Jr. stand on either side of her, both wearing light blue coats that complement the color of the guards’ uniform straps. Caroline’s hair is swept neatly away from her face, whereas John Jr.’s hair looks ruffled and messy. Caroline’s hands rest at her sides, whereas John Jr.’s hands are tucked into the small of his back. Both children wear white socks and brown shoes.

A tall, erect guard, however, figures closest proximally to viewers (us). His back faces viewers, and he wears a crisp dark uniform. His gloved, white hand holds a bayonet at his side, and he partially obstructs view of Jackie. The magazine’s title—“LIFE”—scrawls across the left corner of the cover page and (in relation to the guard) looks almost like a name scrolled across the back of a sports uniform. Another guard blocks Jackie, Caroline, and John Jr. on the right side of the image. The right guard’s face fixes in an expressionless gaze, and he stands at attention in a dark uniform that matches the left

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 177

guard's. In the distance (the far right of the photograph), a throng of blurred bodies looks toward the aforementioned scene in the image's foreground.<sup>42</sup>

*Life's* cover lacks the blatant American symbols so evident in the *New York Times* image of President Kennedy's funeral: and without context, the scene looks distinctly European. Again, two broad-shouldered, officially dressed guards bound Jackie and the children on either side both from viewers of the image and from the blurred bodies in the photograph's background. Yet, Jackie stands regally between her small children, her height equivalent to the guards' height. This height equivalence, unlike the noticeable disparity seen in the aforementioned *New York Times* photograph between the two standing guards and a kneeling Jackie and Caroline, suggests she plays a more central role in this visual myth. The guards' presence signifies her importance but in a regal (European) rather than accessible (American) way, and even the visual prominence of the closest guard's sword-like bayonet recalls Arthurian (medieval) imagery.

John Jr.'s clothing and stance also appear more formal and European than accessible and American. His small shorts look like British knickers, and the outfit easily could include a newsboy cap. Moreover, John Jr. (unlike Caroline, whose posture and facial expression mimic Jackie's) tucks his hands in the small of his back, presumably standing at attention in a manner more formal than his three years of age generally would dictate. His child-like dishevelment, so obvious next to Caroline's more mature composure, further exacerbates his visual distinction from Jackie and Caroline (the women). John Jr.'s stance looks military-esque, and although the guards hold their arms at their sides, the males in the image mirror each other—all look official. The gendered

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<sup>42</sup> *Life* cover (December 1963).

performances enacted in this image may serve as tacit reminders of hierarchical roles—the guards protect the women and children, and John Jr. appears as sole heir-apparent of the mythic Kennedy throne.

The whole *Life* cover attains a sense of majesty. Spatially, the rectangular steps and thick column seen thereon, like mythical Camelot, seem to be “located nowhere in particular...anywhere...”<sup>43</sup> This spatial imprecision, coupled with the aforementioned ambiguous visual features, may depict Kennedy’s funeral “less [as] a specific place than a state of mind, a source of inspiration, an idea”<sup>44</sup>—namely, regality.

Magazine covers may generally (de)contextualize the events depicted thereon by providing a mere snapshot meant to represent a much larger event and giving limited written explanation of that snapshot. According to Cara Finnegan, *Look* magazine, even more so than *Life*, “seldom made explicit reference to specific events, whether social, cultural, or political.”<sup>45</sup> Finnegan writes: “[T]he kind of people who read *Life* would be people who read the *New York Times*, while people who read *Look* would be more likely to read the *Daily News*.”<sup>46</sup> *Look* magazine’s January 1964 cover of Jackie, however, also reiterated the dual American/European visual and written myth already circulating in print media.

*Look*’s cover depicts a large headshot of Jackie. Her hair, usually perfectly coiffed, looks sideswept and windblown. The background blurs against the sharp focus of Jackie’s profile, and her face looks tanned. Small wrinkles line her eyes, but her gaze fixes upward, and her chin lifts confidently. A small smile plays on her full, pink lips, and

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<sup>43</sup> Lacy, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, 180.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

she does not appear to be dressed in funeral attire. “LOOK” sits perfectly atop her image, and a small headline in the upper right corner reads: “What President Johnson Faces in Vietnam.” Beneath the headline, and near the top of Jackie’s head, the magazine states simply: “Valiant is the Word for Jacqueline.”<sup>47</sup>

Like *Life*—and unlike the *New York Times*—*Look*’s cover lacks specific American symbols, such as the flag. But, even more so, *Look* (de)contextualizes Jackie from the funeral setting—absent are guards, her children, the coffin, blurred bystanders, funeral wear; in short, anything that might historicize her image. In this way, she appears “located nowhere in particular...anywhere...”<sup>48</sup> Sole focus on Jackie’s face, however, more closely resembles portraiture than photography. Indeed, this image somewhat recalls a sketched portrait of her published in *Vogue* in 1961<sup>49</sup>—both portray windblown hair, a lifted chin, defined facial features, and clothes that fade into the background. Thus, this (de)contextualized image of Jackie not only reinforces a whimsical aura of fantasy but also recalls a European tradition in which royals and aristocrats appear not in photographs but in portraits.

Nevertheless, the six-word caption next to Jackie’s image becomes the cover element most reminiscent of European culture and Arthurian romance. “Valiant,” etymologically Middle English (from the era in which Malory’s stories originally became popular), has as its synonym the word “heroic” and often functions adjectivally to describe soldiers. Harold Foster’s *Prince Valiant* comics pervaded American newspapers

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<sup>47</sup> *Look* cover (January 1964).

<sup>48</sup> Lacy, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> “Special Feature on Mrs. Kennedy,” *Vogue* (February 1, 1961), 130-137.

beginning in late 1930s and a film version was released in 1954.<sup>50</sup> Foster's comic strips follow "the medieval concept that the outward appearance reflects the inner character."<sup>51</sup> More important, in Great Britain, for example, soldiers receive medals of valor. In America, soldiers receive medals of courage or bravery. Thus, "valor" reverberates more distinctly in and stems more closely from European military tradition than in its American counterpart.

Furthermore, "valiant" herein is "*the word*" (emphasis mine) for "Jacqueline:"<sup>52</sup> like Camelot is *the word* for the Kennedy administration. *Look* mimics the way in which Jackie essentializes Kennedy's presidency—through a single word—to essentialize her, even doing so with a word closely associative to Jackie's chosen narrative. Without Jackie's explicit usage of Camelot as the myth through which she wished Kennedy's legacy to be viewed, "valiant" arguably may not have been "*the word*"<sup>53</sup> (italics mine) for Jackie. Instead, any number of less archaic synonyms denoting bravery and not resonant with male soldiers likely might have been used. Furthermore, the magazine's choice simply to deem her Jacqueline, rather than Mrs. Kennedy (as often was the case in print media), reiterates an aura of regality. Her name's lack of a specific title (*e.g.* Ms., Former First Lady) but preservation of elegance (Jacqueline as opposed to Jackie) frees audiences to imagine a "Queen" or "Princess" Jacqueline. *Look*'s written description of Jackie, in tandem with the image chosen for its cover, again both portrays "less a specific place

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<sup>50</sup> "Comics," Hearst Corporation, <http://www.kingfeatures.com/features/comics/pvaliant/about.htm>.

<sup>51</sup> M. Thomas Inge, *Comics as Culture* (Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> *Look* cover (January 1964).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



than a state of mind, a source of inspiration, an idea”<sup>54</sup> and a European cultural and literary narrative redefined for the Kennedys’ American presidential legacy.

### Conclusion and Implications

When President Kennedy was assassinated, he “was deeply mourned by the American people. For some the loss of his presidency became a symbol of unfulfilled promise.”<sup>55</sup> First Lady Jackie Kennedy, as sign of the nation’s appropriate comportment, both reflected (visually) national public sentiment and signified (visually and in written text) in a cultural narrative through which this historic moment “meant.” Lester David states: “In the days that followed the assassination, Jackie gave the country and the world an unforgettable image of courage that will remain etched forever in the minds of the estimated one hundred million persons who watched her on television and read about her in newspapers and later in history books.”<sup>56</sup> C. David Heymann concurs: “On this particular day [the funeral] Jackie transcended rank, outdid herself. She remained serene, embracing some, reassuring others.”<sup>57</sup>

Roland Barthes contends that “what the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men [and/or women] have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality.”<sup>58</sup> Jackie both “produced”<sup>59</sup> and “used”<sup>60</sup> literary myth—Camelot—to historicize Kennedy’s administration, and print media (re)circulated her image in

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<sup>54</sup> Lacy, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 67.

<sup>55</sup> Melissa Crawley, “Television,” in *The American President and Popular Culture*, 189.

<sup>56</sup> David, *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 416.

<sup>58</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 142.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

particular ways that strengthened the “*natural* image of this reality.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Barthes argues: “Myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us.”<sup>62</sup> Although Camelot may have assisted the American public in coping with the loss of its President and the national identity crisis that might ensue therefrom, the myth dually perpetuated an idealized “misreading of history”<sup>63</sup> in a 1960s era of increasing social turmoil.

The social turmoil of the 1960s may have set particular conditions of possibility for the Kennedy-as-Camelot myth’s subsequent popularity. As Frye observes, “The perennially child-like quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space.”<sup>64</sup> In *Essays on Myth and Metaphor*, however, Frye suggests that literary genres, particularly romance, are cyclical. Yet, he clarifies: “Nothing repeats exactly in history, and in any case the end of a cycle does not compel us to repeat the same cycle, but gives us a chance to transfer to another level.”<sup>65</sup> More than just a narrative to describe a political administration, as Frye suggests, the myth of Camelot that was (re)circulated in America by print media also illuminated a unique tension in America’s cultural identity: innovation versus tradition, privilege versus independence, and equality versus hierarchy.

Stephanie Barczewski sees nineteenth century Great Britain’s identification both with King Arthur and Robin Hood (two contradictory literary heroes) as suggestive of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>63</sup> Heymann, *A Woman Named Jackie*, 419.

<sup>64</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 182.

<sup>65</sup> Frye, *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays, 1974-1988*, Ed. Robert D. Denham (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 194.

Europe's dichotomous cultural identity.<sup>66</sup> Jackie's construction of an American Camelot, however, allows her the role of "valiant" female—she becomes an exalted heroine *unlike* Guinevere in the Arthurian folklore, who ultimately betrays King Arthur with Sir Lancelot (and thus is vilified to some degree). Because she establishes the myth in such tragic circumstances, her role therein becomes elevated—she plays the good, loyal Guinevere missing in Malory's original myth.

Moreover, American cultural history becomes reappropriated—Jackie and John become mythologized as American royalty in a way other administrations are not. As Sarah Bradford notes: "[After President Kennedy's funeral], Lady Jean Campbell reported back to *The London Evening Standard*: 'Jacqueline Kennedy has given the American people...one thing they have always lacked: Majesty.'"<sup>67</sup> Media coverage of Kennedy's funeral in the 1960s illustrated Campbell's sentiments by overtly heralding American symbology while likewise subtly constructing a narrative nostalgic of European tradition. Jackie's myth of Camelot, therefore, provides novel means not only with which to reassess her impact on Kennedy's presidential legacy, but perhaps the myth also reveals a unique tension in America's national identity between competing ideals of self-made independence and desire for privileged (often inherited) cultural status. As Jay Mulvaney concludes, "[Jackie] had elevated the cultural aspirations of her country and made us proud of our past. She had smashed the archetype."<sup>68</sup>

The myth of Camelot followed Jackie throughout her life, influencing her iconic (as opposed to presidential) legacy. If, as Barthes theorizes, myth both "points out and it

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<sup>66</sup> Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Britain*.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* (New York: Viking, 2000), 183.

<sup>68</sup> Mulvaney, *Diana and Jackie*, 303.

notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us,”<sup>69</sup> then Jackie’s mythic characterization of Kennedy’s administration perhaps helped her “understand”<sup>70</sup> her late husband’s historical legacy. Yet, that same myth also “imposed”<sup>71</sup> on her a memorable cultural and political role that ultimately may have worked against her lasting iconic legacy, shaping the ways in which the American public perceived her as “Jackie O.”

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<sup>69</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 5

END OF AN ERA: THE INFLUENCE OF JACKIE'S FIRST LADY ROLE ON HER  
ICONIC LEGACY

During her tenure as First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy—to invoke a cliché—became America's sweetheart. Jay Mulvaney observes: "One of Jackie's legacies is that she was the first First Lady who, in the words of Washington observer Sally Quinn, 'established an identity for herself that was completely different from the President.'"<sup>1</sup> She was young, beautiful, and polished during President Kennedy's Inauguration and wise, maternal, and poised during his funeral. Indeed, after three years of media saturation, the President's funeral was a culinary moment in her image construction. Yet, as Mulvaney notes astutely, "Jackie understood the impact of a visual image...[and] [t]he images from that weekend were so powerful, conveying so much emotion, that Jackie inadvertently forfeited any chance she had of retiring from the public eye."<sup>2</sup>

The chronological events I have examined (I hope) have provided insight into the ways in which Jackie's presidential legacy was shaped and her subsequent impact on the role of first lady. Lester David writes: "The Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy legend was created in the 1,002 days of the Kennedy administration. It still endures and will surely become a permanent part of this nation's social history."<sup>3</sup> Jackie's performance at the Inauguration, for example, elevates aesthetic appeal as an important component of the role; for Hillary Clinton's image transformation was a salient factor in her husband's political career. Perhaps this pressure for first lady participation in aesthetic politics can

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Mulvaney, *Diana and Jackie* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 290.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>3</sup> Lester David, *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* (New York: Carol Communications, 1994), 67.

be traced to ways in which Jackie was admired for her visual embodiment of Kennedy's presidential persona. Examining Jackie's televised tour of the White House for her restoration project perhaps advances a (female) legacy for the iconic national symbol: after all, even current First Lady Michelle Obama advocates building a garden on White House property to make the home/monument accessible to the American public. Thus, Jackie's legacy as first lady endures in reiterations of her personal and public objectives.

Nonetheless, after President Kennedy's death, Jackie became subsumed within popular culture, largely because of the political myth (Camelot) she had established as first lady. Her effect on American culture draws from her affect as celebrity, as complicated performance of gender, and as heroine of an impossible romance. Jackie's ability to evoke a range of competing emotions—adoration, disgust, reverence, contempt—from the American public after 1963 should be no surprise in light of her complicated role in presidential history. Mulvaney asserts: "Nobody is writing about Mamie Eisenhower or Bess Truman. Fifty years of newspaper articles, books, plays, and even an opera haven't dampened our interest in her. She remains a unique figure on the American scene."<sup>4</sup> Most important, Mulvaney concludes: "Much to her annoyance, [Jackie] became a martyr...a brave, valiant figure, the symbol of tragic loss, one whom the country would fixate on for the rest of her life."<sup>5</sup> He adds: "The marriage [to Aristotle Onassis] signaled a huge shift in Jackie's public persona. Mrs. John F. Kennedy was now Jackie O."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 268-269.

“Jackie O.” became a legacy built from her time as first lady but much different than the image projected therein. That persona *per se* has implications all its own, which further strengthens my contention that Jackie must be (re)examined as a female figure who changed the political and cultural landscape both in the 1960s and now. To discuss her iconic legacy more concretely, I therefore analyze briefly Andy Warhol’s 1964 “Jackie Prints” as a means of illustrating one way to examine her transition from (classy, restrained) First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to (commodified, eroticized) “Jackie O.” Using Neo-Lacanian theory to inform my understanding of Warhol’s images, I maintain my overall desire in this work to interrogate her performance from a variety of nuanced lenses. In this short investigation, I understand Jackie Kennedy to be one signifier (one placeholder) for constrained, “appropriate” female sexuality within a bipolar construction of what sexuality could look like for women in the early 1960s.

#### Imagetext Analysis

In his seminal lectures on psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan explicates fantasy as the particular ways in which subjects “organize their enjoyment.”<sup>7</sup> He explains: “In the scopical relation, the object on which depends the [f]antasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation is the gaze.”<sup>8</sup> To summarize briefly: the scopical drive, like all Lacanian drives, circles incessantly around objects but cannot be satisfied. The gaze resides in objects (not subjects, who look), and for Lacan, subjects essentially depend on fantasy to “mean,” (to fill the void of lack). Likewise, fantasy also perpetuates

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and tr. Alan Sheridan (London: Vintage, 1998), 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

subjects' desires. Thus, fantasy both perpetuates subjects' desires and sustains subjects at the level of their vanishing desires.<sup>9</sup>

Neo-Lacanian use fantasy in different ways. Predicating his view of democracy on Lacan's discussion of fantasy, Slavoj Žižek defines fantasy space as a frame of coordinates that enables subjects to live as "meaningful."<sup>10</sup> Žižek argues:

Fantasy as a 'make-believe' masking a flaw, an inconsistency in the symbolic order, is always particular...[and therefore] we can acquire a sense of another's fantasy only by assuming a kind of distance toward our own, by experiencing the ultimate contingency of fantasy as...the way everyone...conceals the impasse of [sic] [their] desire[s].<sup>11</sup>

Simply put, Žižek interprets Lacanian fantasy as enabling individuals to manage the limits of their (unfulfilled) desires. Drawing from Jacqueline Rose's understanding of fantasy, Diane Rubenstein argues that First Lady Hillary Clinton exacerbated (without resolution) points of tension within the national body.<sup>12</sup> Common to all aforementioned definitions of fantasy, however, is their central focus on the ways in which subjects conceal an essential lack in order to "mean."

I contend that traditional, patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity provided particular conditions of possibility for female sexuality, operating as the national fantasy through which Americans "meant" in the 1950s and 1960s. Put another

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 185; see also Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. A Selection*, tr. Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Formal Democracy and Its Discontents," in *Looking Awary: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, (Boston: MIT, 1992), 154.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>12</sup> Diane Rubenstein, *This Is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the American Political Imaginary* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 120.



way, (and here I echo, in some ways, Diane Rubenstein’s explanation of hatred of Hillary Clinton), exaltation of Jackie Kennedy—and, specifically, her composure and restraint during the funeral—served as a cultural symptom for the eminent rupture in Americans’ fantasy of female sexuality. Ultimately, I argue that President Kennedy’s assassination produced anxiety not only because of the “mythic and historical associations that attach to the office,”<sup>13</sup> but more importantly, because his death unbound Jackie and potentially troubled the ways in which women perform(ed) sexuality. I substantiate this claim through examination of Andy Warhol’s “Jackie Prints.”

Released first in 1964, Andy Warhol used images of Jackie Kennedy differently than did normative print media. Taken mostly from the funeral, her image became a central subject for his prints. He released the funeral-themed prints as a series of three: the first, doubled images of Jackie at President Kennedy’s Inauguration; the second, doubled images of Jackie at President Kennedy’s funeral; the third, a conglomeration of four images, including one from President Kennedy’s Inauguration, two from his funeral, and one from President Johnson’s Inauguration. Because the third set of images differs both from the first two (as singular events in repetition), I analyze the images last released to illuminate the ways in which Warhol constructed both Jackie and viewers in ways uncharacteristic to his “style” but with similar effect. Additionally, I examine a singular Warholian headshot image of Jackie also released in 1964.

In the book *Jackie Under My Skin*, Wayne Kostenbaum writes:

If you are searching for Saint Jackie, recall that she was voted, in 1963, the Catholic Welfare Council’s ‘Woman of the Year,’ and that Cardinal Cushing

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 91.

suggested that the public should imitate Mrs. Kennedy instead of movie stars...[w]hen she married Onassis, however, she was declared a ‘public sinner’ and was barred from the sacraments (because Onassis was a divorced man).<sup>14</sup>

Warhol’s “Jackie” series serves as an anticipatory moment for Jackie’s subsequent eroticization—her transformation from “First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy” to “Jackie O.” Contemporary critics note of Warhol’s images: “By turning... ‘random’ clippings into paintings, Warhol transformed them into monuments for personal tragedies. As such, they represent a personal experience as well as a social comment and an illustration of a time when the media grew in pertinence and relevance.”<sup>15</sup> According to Sherri Geldon, director of Wexner Center for the Arts: “[Warhol] somehow [foretold] our complete obsession with putting ourselves in the limelight, reflecting ourselves back to the world in a kind of instantaneous way...”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Hal Foster surmises: “Warhol select[ed] moments when th[e] spectacle crack[ed]...but crack[ed] only to expand.”<sup>17</sup>

Warhol’s *trauma* images retain particular relevance when discussing implications of/for Jackie. In *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Hal Foster summarizes Lacan’s seminar on trauma, defining “traumatic” as “a missed encounter with the real.”<sup>18</sup> He then contends: “As missed, the real cannot be represented;

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<sup>14</sup> Wayne Kostenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin: Interpreting an Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 149-150.

<sup>15</sup> Critical Events: The Progressive Calendar of Historic and Contemporary Happenings, “Andy Warhol,” [http://www.calendarshoppe.com/index.php?event\\_action=view&eid=6839&instance=2008-8-6](http://www.calendarshoppe.com/index.php?event_action=view&eid=6839&instance=2008-8-6).

<sup>16</sup> Doug Whiteman, “Andy Warhol, filmmaker, given equal billing in touring Warhol art exhibition now in Ohio,” [http://www.fox59.com/pages/landing\\_hells\\_kitchen/Multi-media-exhibit-in-Ohio-merges-Warhol=1&blockID=70878&feedID=13](http://www.fox59.com/pages/landing_hells_kitchen/Multi-media-exhibit-in-Ohio-merges-Warhol=1&blockID=70878&feedID=13).

<sup>17</sup> Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, (Boston: MIT, 1996), 136.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

it can only be repeated, indeed it *must* be repeated.”<sup>19</sup> Foster adds: “[R]epetition serves to *screen* the real understood as traumatic. But this very need also *points* to the real, and at this point the real *ruptures* the screen of repetition...less in the world than in the subject—between the perception and consciousness of a subject touched by an image.”<sup>20</sup> Generally, Foster argues, Warhol’s repetitive depictions of trauma provide no clear restorative cohesion to a traumatic event, but instead: “[T]he Warhol repetitions not only reproduce traumatic effects; they also *produce* them. Somehow, in these repetitions, then, several contradictory things occur at the same time: a warding away of traumatic significance *and* an opening out to it, a defending against traumatic affect *and* a producing of it.”<sup>21</sup> Yet, rather than employing *doubled* repetition in the last set of his funeral-themed “Jackie Prints,” Warhol produces the same Lacanian effect by de-situating the historical narrative within which Jackie was operating. Furthermore, both sets of Warholian “Jackies” serve as “screens”<sup>22</sup> that function as “object[s]” that hide “something from view, that shelter or protect”<sup>23</sup> but also produce “traumatic effects” within “the perception and consciousness of [sic] subject[s],”<sup>24</sup> who view an unconstrained, destabilized, and ultimately eroticized (non-normative) First Lady Jackie Kennedy.

Simply put, by figuring in Andy Warhol prints, Jackie overtly blurs distinction between popular culture and political arena—she becomes a “tragic celebrity” linked

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>23</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 146, 132.

literally to other popular culture icons such as Marilyn Monroe. Although Foster argues that the punctum of Warhol's images resides in their repetitive "popping" (of color, of difference, of sameness), I argue Warhol's variance from his normative artistic style (*i.e.* doubled repetition) provides further reason to analyze these particular images. Although Jackie functions as de-situated and isolated in Warhol's prints *generally* (*e.g.* in the series of funeral "Jackie Prints"), the singular Warholian "Jackie" momentarily disrupts the normative role Jackie performs in the patriarchal fantasy that constitutes the 1950s and 1960s. Likewise, the image foreshadows Jackie's eventual evolution into "empty" celebrity.

In the last set of Warhol's funeral "Jackie Prints," two images of Jackie at President Kennedy's funeral sit atop two images of Jackie at Inauguration Day (both Kennedy's and Johnson's). The top left image foregrounds Jackie's somber face, shadowed on both sides by a grayish sweep of veil. A dark cap sits atop Jackie's head, and the surreal fuzziness and luminosity of her face juxtaposes her against a dark backdrop, making her appear angelic. In an image to the right of this one, Jackie stands next to a State guard (of some sort), only her profile visible. Unlike the uppermost left image, in which Jackie's brows were knit in sorrow and her face seemed to express (sad) emotion, Jackie's face fixes in a blank, almost cold stare. The gray background in the image makes Jackie's and the State guard's body less dream-like and more sharply visible. The bottom left image, positioned beneath the first image of Jackie at President Kennedy's funeral, depicts Jackie at President Johnson's Inauguration. Again, viewers only see her profile; her skin pictures luminously against a shock of shiny, dark hair that covers her right eye. Jackie's gaze focuses downward, and her mouth opens slightly in

apparent consternation. In the last image, situated at the bottom right beneath the image of Jackie with the State guard, Jackie smiles at President Kennedy's Inauguration. Her hair looks windblown, and a light-colored cap sits atop her head, almost blending with the light backdrop.

Although Warhol does not eroticize Jackie explicitly in "Jackie Prints" from the funeral (as he does in the later 1964 image), several subtle features of the prints trouble her (non)sexual role in the patriarchal fantasy of the time. These Warholian images function as trauma discourse both "to inhabit a place of total affect and to be drained of affect altogether."<sup>25</sup> For example, the (uncanny) relationship between the bottom two images depicts a shocked Jackie staring literally at the carefree, happy Jackie in the bottom right image. The carefree photograph of Jackie, taken out of context and situated against its horizontal counterpart to the left, now figures maniacally; does happy Jackie laugh cruelly at shocked Jackie's misfortune? Perhaps shocked Jackie, lacking her signature pillbox hat or liminal pillbox veil, looms ominously (unrestrained) over happy Jackie, complete with her pillbox hat and "appropriate" sexuality. As Kostenbaum notes about President Kennedy's assassination:

We know *factually* that Jackie is innocent...[yet a] living woman next to a dead man (a Pieta) is a uniquely satisfying, if horrifying icon to contemplate, because the two have been brought to an even level: the man cannot rule now, cannot move mountains, cannot cure lepers. It is the woman's turn to be heroic, to incite worship, to rule.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,136.

<sup>26</sup> Kostenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin*, 60.

In this way, the Warholian images depict a complex paradox between Jackie as embodiment of “total affect” and “drained of affect altogether.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, within these traumatic images, viewers likely recognized: “There are countless different Jackies. Jackie may silently say more about difference than she says about sameness, even if her image seems to stay the same, in picture after picture; even if it may seem that everyone feels the same sentiments about Jackie.”<sup>28</sup>

First, Jackie remains the isolated subject in all but one of the photographs; the one in which she figures with a male guard depicts her standing in front of him. *She binds him* from viewers (as opposed to normative depictions of *men binding her* from viewers). Second, both the structured pillbox hat and the liminal pillbox veil feature in the upper left and lower right corners (respectively) of the images. Her headwear figures in juxtaposition; perhaps forcing viewers to grapple with both Jackies—sad and happy, beginning and end, contained and...free? Third, Jackie’s mouth—sorrowfully pursed, for example, in *New York Times* and *Life*—opens in two of the four prints. The bottom left image shows a shocked Jackie at President Johnson’s Inauguration, lips parted in disbelief, eerily staring at and looming over the bottom right image of a happy Jackie, smiling at President Kennedy’s Inauguration. Her mouth, therefore, understated in most print media photographs, attains newfound emphasis—its very openness seems to implicate at least a relaxing of her constraint. In these ways, Warhol’s funeral-themed “Jackie Prints” produce in viewers and in her: “Pure affect, no affect: *It hurts, I can’t feel anything.*”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 136.

<sup>28</sup> Kostenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin*, 274.

<sup>29</sup> Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 166.

These content features, coupled with the (non)narrative, atemporal positioning of the images produce a sense of destabilization or, at least, present her (and the funeral) atypically. Rather than being given a horizontal or vertical temporal means of associating the images (a visual timeline of sorts), viewers instead are bombarded with the images all at once. Perhaps viewers first look at the top left corner of the images and then proceed to the top right corner, but choosing the “right” next image to view becomes unclear—do we continue circularly, looking then to the bottom right, or do we reposition our sight linearly, looking then to the bottom left? Either way, the event that “happened” first—President Kennedy’s Inaugural—situates at the bottom of the set. Moreover, the more viewers examine these images, the more arbitrary the relationships between the images become. Our inability to “read” the (Camelot) narrative properly (and temporally), therefore “provokes” viewers’ gaze, producing, as Lacan would say, a “feeling of strangeness.”<sup>30</sup>

Warhol more overtly eroticizes Jackie (and thus anticipates her commodified, celebrity persona as “Jackie O”) in a singular image of her also released in 1964. The similarities between Warhol’s 1964 “Jackie” and his 1962 “Marilyn”—produced after President Kennedy’s assassination and after Marilyn Monroe’s suicide, respectively—remain undeniable. Both prints foreground isolated headshots of the two women; each woman’s eyes are shadowed blue; each woman’s lips prominently are red; and both women’s bob haircuts part to the right. Even their faces sit slightly to the right. In Warhol’s 1962 “Marilyn,” the sex icon’s thick, dark lashes veil cat-shaped, blue-shadowed eyes. Marilyn’s thin, arched brows lift playfully, and her plump, red lips (and

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<sup>30</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 21.

red teeth) complement her red shirt and earrings. A single tendril of her wavy, blond hair brushes against her smooth forehead. In Warhol's "Jackie," her dark bouffant hairdo features against a siren red backdrop. Jackie's thick, dark brows sit seductively over almond-shaped dark eyes, accentuated by bright blue eyeshadow. A small smile plays on the corners of Jackie's full, red lips, and small, bright blue earrings dangle in elegant complement to her eyeshadow. In this Warholian image, Jackie *is* Marilyn—hypersexual, unrestrained, sexual icon.

Even more interesting, Jackie's headwear disappears in this Warholian image, and her full, red lips (like Marilyn's) arguably serve as *the* focal point of the picture (what Barthes and perhaps Foster would deem the "punctum"). Her (lack of) this structured part-object seems to signify the unrestrained (and inappropriate) sexual freedom she now possesses. Her sensual red lips, silently (or perhaps loudly?) scream for attention, further intensifying her overt eroticism. Thus, without normative viewing constraints—whether spatial, temporal, or culturally learned ("knowing" who Jackie and Marilyn are)—these (undefined) relationships provoke in viewers "a feeling of strangeness"<sup>31</sup> that propels them into the realm of the Lacanian real. In this way, both sets of Warholian images rupture, in Parveen Adams' words, "the structure of representation"<sup>32</sup> in 1964 by "emptying out the place of the object."<sup>33</sup> These Warholian images, therefore, even momentarily, function as trauma (*tuché*), positioning viewers to experience their fundamental lack, and thus replicating a "missed encounter with the real."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Parveen Adams, "Operation Orlan," *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 156.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>34</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.



## Conclusion and Implications

Lester David writes: “In the 1961 Gallup poll, which asked respondents to name the women they most admire...Jackie placed second that year and was first from 1962 to 1966. But since then she has never ranked higher than fifth...and did not make the top ten at all in 1968, the year she married Aristotle Onassis.”<sup>35</sup> Jackie’s diminished popularity, therefore, may be explained by her complex role in the idealistic political narrative (Camelot) that she created. Joan Copjec writes that the law of sexual difference, “which mandates that each subject make a choice as to his or her own sexual identity, does not define or even permit a fixed identity so much as it defines the mode in which the subject will come to question and challenge his or her own identity and the cultural laws that attempt to fix it.”<sup>36</sup> As such, she argues, “the [neurotic] subject for whom this law is an unconscious necessity remains in a state of ‘uneasy indetermination’ regarding the question of his own pleasure and sexual identity.”<sup>37</sup> The crisis of President Kennedy’s assassination, then, was not politics in the small sense but politics on a much larger scale; for as ideal placeholder for women’s “appropriate,” contained embodiment of sexuality in 1963, Jackie arguably signified the impending rupture—which would happen in the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s—of a bipolar sexual female.

Normative print media constructions of Jackie at President Kennedy’s funeral sought to picture her as the embodiment of traditional femininity—which was inextricably linked, in Copjec’s words, with “uneasy indetermination” regarding subjects’

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<sup>35</sup> Lester David, *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> Joan Copjec, *Imagine There’s No Woman* (London: MIT, 2002), 222.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

own “pleasure and sexual identity.”<sup>38</sup> Throughout this work, I examined mediated moments that resist this interpretation as the *only* way for viewers to “see” Jackie. At President Kennedy’s Inauguration, Jackie complicates a purely feminine performance and plays the role of burgeoning celebrity. During her televised tour, Jackie again enacts celebrity, and her performance invokes personal and public spheres to—literally and figuratively—(re)imagine White House and presidential history. At the funeral, Jackie’s constitution of President Kennedy’s administration as Camelot influences the visual and written cultural narrative mediated through American print sources. In his pop art, however, Andy Warhol anticipated Jackie’s status as commodified “Jackie O.” For Foster, “[pop art] celebrates rather than questions...the sex appeal of the commodity sign, with the commodity feminized and the feminine commodified.”<sup>39</sup>

In subsequent eras, “Jackie O’s” headwrap scarves and large, round sunglasses became popular fashion items. Even now, boatneck dresses and A-line hemlines are said to imitate “Jackie O.” Thus, her particular “brand” of “sex appeal” and femininity persists in contemporary culture. If, however, as David Lubin observes, the Kennedy Administration in 1961 “amounted to a looking glass” for Americans “that showed them their own dazzling and glamorous future,”<sup>40</sup> then as Wayne Kostenbaum notes, “The O puts Jackie in places she doesn’t belong, in places that the real [fantasy] Jacqueline Onassis would hate to be. The O shames Jackie; the O turns her into currency, a gold piece.”<sup>41</sup> Jackie Kennedy, therefore, was much more than just a “reinforcement of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>40</sup> David Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 135.

<sup>41</sup> Kostenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin*, 158.

cult of domesticity,”<sup>42</sup> as many first lady scholars conclude. Some of her rhetorical force lies in her potency as a signifier, in Rubenstein’s words, “exacerbating (without resolution) tensions within the national body.”<sup>43</sup> Perhaps eroticizing Jackie—whether it be in Warhol’s images, President Kennedy’s death, her marriage to Aristotle Onassis, or her infamous trip to a pornographic movie—may have had larger implications for American society; for her eroticization perhaps signified a rupture of the simple categories into which women’s sexuality could be neatly imagined in the early 1960s.

Kostenbaum notes astutely:

[Jackie’s] political significances resist easy circumscription. Although she can function as a subversive figure (and instrument of longings we can’t name), she more frequently is portrayed as a reactionary figure—a cautionary symbol, primarily for women of her generation, of the proper way to behave (how to obey one’s husband, how to limit one’s accomplishments to the domestic sphere or the appropriately feminine realm of the arts). And yet Jackie didn’t perform as expected. Not only did she offer an alternative to the Marilyn Monroe/Jayne Mansfield body image then dominant in popular culture, but, by refusing to behave like an ordinary 1950s political wife, she subtly broadcast shifts in female protocol and possibility.<sup>44</sup>

Jackie Kennedy remains an object of nostalgia for American popular culture. Indeed, the late 1960s saw a (re)emergence of popular family television shows with either “Jackie”

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<sup>42</sup> Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women’s Voice, 1789-2002, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2002, 577.

<sup>43</sup> Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 120.

<sup>44</sup> Kostenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin*, 17.

or “Marilyn” female roles (*e.g.* compare *The Dick Van Dyke Show* within which Mary Tyler Moore featured as a classy brunette and *Bewitched*, within which Elizabeth Montgomery starred as a sneaky, blonde witch).<sup>45</sup> Patterson notes: “Millions of people still demanded non-threatening ‘family’ entertainment.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, also in the mid- and late 1960s:

[T]he sexual revolution assumed an unprecedentedly open and defiant tone, especially among women, increasing numbers of whom rebelled against the ‘feminine mystique’ of deference and domesticity...[t]he mid 1960s, one survey on sexual behavior concludes, represented ‘perhaps the greatest transformation in sexuality [the United States] had ever witnessed.’<sup>47</sup>

Thus, a neo-Lacanian understanding of Jackie Kennedy perhaps compels scholars to (re)imagine her as a (perhaps) necessary signifier for “appropriate” sexuality: a placeholder in the 1960s without which subsequent “transformation in sexuality...among women”<sup>48</sup> might not have been possible.

Jackie’s historical, political, and cultural legacy, therefore, remains a complex confluence of the ways in which Americans see their political leaders, their entertainment celebrities, their national symbols, their cultural myths, and most important, themselves. In the millennium, forthcoming First Lady Michelle Obama consistently draws comparison to First Lady Jackie Kennedy, seen both in popular celebrity-focused magazines such as *US Weekly* and *People* but also seen in traditional news media sources

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<sup>45</sup> “The Most Popular 1960s Television Shows,” *Pop Culture Madness!*, (<http://www.popculturemadness.com/Entertainment/Decades/50s-TV.html>).

<sup>46</sup> Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 454.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

(e.g. CNN, FOX, NBC). Thus, we continue to view Jackie as an ideal to which female figures should aspire in some way. Moreover, the either/or paradigm of female sexuality remains a dominant lens through which the public understands what women can be: either “Jackie” or “Marilyn,” politically active or politically passive, feminine or masculine. Rhetorical scholars instead should examine nuances of female performances as a way to “expose...points [not only] of *breakdown* but of *breakthrough*...[addressing] the new possibilities that...cris[es] might open up.”<sup>49</sup> By no means do I suggest that any “read” of Jackie’s performance(s) is “correct;” yet, I advocate interrogating political and iconic female performances for their potential to illuminate aspects of our political and cultural past and present. Thus, perhaps questions of inquiry for feminist scholars should be: what “points of tension” are exacerbated by certain figures at certain times, and how do we, as Rubenstein asks, “mobilize desire”<sup>50</sup> for more and better subjectivities for women?

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<sup>49</sup> Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 157.

<sup>50</sup> Rubenstein, *This Is Not A President*, 234.

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