

Beyond Paris

Jacqueline Kennedy and the Presidency

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

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A presidential spouse in an era of rigid gender norms, Jacqueline Kennedy frequently straddled the divide between celebrity, social acceptability, and personal desire. Yet, history remembers America's thirty-seventh First Lady more for her fashion and soft-spoken nature. Forgotten is that she was a 'transitional' figure, who oversaw America's largest restoration of the White House and served as a 'goodwill ambassador' for her husband. When three gunshots brought their tenure to an abrupt end, Jackie's focus shifted and she fixated on the creation of a legacy that immortalized JFK. 'Camelot,' is a construct almost exclusively conceived and executed by the former First Lady. In this vein, the coming exploration delves into the private actions of Jackie during her time in as First Lady, contrasting them sharply with her public image. What emerges is a portrait the world seldom saw: one driven by raw intellect and a desire to be of service to her husband and country.

Keywords: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, First Lady, President, United States, White House, Charles de Gaulle, Nikita Khrushchev, Jawaharal Nehru, Restoration, Assassination, Image, Memory, Legacy, Camelot.

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- Allen Priest

Table of Contents

Abstract	<u>ii</u>
Acknowledgements	<u>iii</u>
Introduction: “Campaign Wife”	<u>1</u>
Chapter One: “Queen of America”	<u>18</u>
Chapter Two: “Art Director of the Twentieth Century”.....	<u>52</u>
Chapter Three: “Let Them See What They’ve Done”	<u>83</u>
Conclusion: “An All-Seeing Eye and Ruthless Judgement”	<u>114</u>
Post Script: “God Will Have A Bit Of Explaining To Do”	<u>124</u>
Endnotes	<u>127</u>
Bibliography	<u>155</u>

Introduction

“Campaign Wife”

On June 2, 1961, standing before a crowd of four hundred reporters at a luncheon held within the Palais de Chaillot, the thirty-fifth president of the United States introduced himself to the world. “I am the man,” he began with a characteristic smile, “who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris. And I have enjoyed it.”¹ This spontaneous moment of humility on the part of the leader of the free world sent the crowd into a fit of laughter and applause, all the while paying homage to the “extraordinary impression”² his cultured and intelligent wife made on the people of France. Jackie, who had once been described by her husband as “a little too much status and not enough quo,”³ had begun to grow into a global phenomenon. The cult of celebrity that surrounded the young First Lady in Paris may feature prominently within the historiography that encircles the administration, but an exploration of the extraordinary opportunity it presented Jacqueline Kennedy has become lost amongst the very cultural frenzy that thrust her into the spotlight. Instead, Jackie’s legacy is puzzlingly confined to that of “the country’s housewife, the homemaker extraordinaire,” while her fashionable nature and “silent elegance [served as what can only be described as] pure supplement to Jack’s fabled charismatic power.”⁴

This dichotomy between her refined public image and the subtle yet driven private nature of Jacqueline Kennedy is perhaps best embodied within Aaron Shikler’s series of paintings of the former First Lady. The official selection now hangs in a position of prominence within the White House; it is the portrait that is known to the public. Jackie stands, gazed fixed from the observer, her regal dress blending into the backdrop.

She appears determined, albeit a touch broken. The painting is ethereal, and as such offers the viewer a strange contrast to their historical memory of the former First Lady. It is foreign, because there is little of the traditional, stylish, and worldly matron of the White House that the American people came to know during Jackie's tenure in the mansion. Determined to show her "reserve and strength" in light of the assassination, Shikler selected this portrayal over an earlier attempt. Long since dismissed as a "study" by both the artist and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, the original painting offers an antithesis to the one that now hangs in the White House. Frozen in time, this original work shows the young First Lady standing, arms poised in front of her, clothed in a ruffled white blouse and flowing black skirt. Her porcelain face that holds only the slightest hint of a mischievous grin frames her dark, wide eyes. Rejected by Shikler as far too "girlish and coy," this is the public face of Jacqueline Kennedy.⁵ It is far more comforting than its successor, because in it, we see the familiar.

Historically, Mrs. Kennedy remains a traditional example of what a presidential spouse should be: image conscious, supportive, and engaging. When compared to the modern activism of many First Ladies, however, including Rosalyn Carter, Hillary Clinton, and now Michelle Obama, the influence and memory of Jacqueline Kennedy's tenure does seem dated. Part of the problem lies in what presidential historian Gil Troy terms the "extra-constitutional improvisation" that has enhanced the position of First Lady over the past half-century. As the office has grown, its continued reinvention and evolution has moved the bar regarding what the president's spouse should be.⁶ How, then, do we assess the influence of America's thirty-seventh First Lady in the twenty-first century? American presidential history tends to categorize First Ladies, the same way it

attempts to define the vice presidency. There are those who are more activist and others who are passive in their role. The complicated nature of placing Jacqueline Kennedy within this spectrum derives from the fact that she is not easily situated into either category. On the one hand, you have a woman who is fashionable, traditionally feminine, and has the refined nature that only finishing school can offer. These elements comprised her public image. Meanwhile, she imbued her role with an intellectual curiosity that would force the world to re-examine what exactly it meant to be an “American.” To this end, she was more cautious in choosing moments to show her hand.

Susan Douglas observes that in her complexity, “Jackie personified a generation of women, who in a variety of quiet but significant ways, [were departing] from the 1950s stuffiness, conformity, and confinement.” She helped to usher in a new “relaxed style, an uncoiling of the constraints that had hemmed in other, older first ladies.”⁷ In this regard, Anthony Eksterowicz and Kristen Paynter perhaps best define Jacqueline Kennedy’s legacy by framing her as a “transitional figure” in the office of First Lady. Despite her reserve and acquiescence to traditional gender norms, Jackie would often privately harness the cult of celebrity that surrounded her public image, and use it to subtly infuse America’s global perception with touches of sophistication and grandeur. As a result, under her tenure the role of First Lady “grew enormously and was transformed into ‘a grand public stage.’”⁸ She transcended what Wayne Koestenbaum terms the “proper sphere” of First Lady, and managed to harness the media’s attention to utilize her office in a way few of her predecessors had.⁹ The result is an historical duality that creates difficulty in addressing the true legacy of Jacqueline Kennedy, for there is,

as Aaron Shikler's portraits capture, the presence of multiple Mrs. Kennedys: the determined private individual, versus her traditionally coy public image.¹

In order to begin to reconcile the duality inherent in these interpretations, it becomes necessary to explore, in brief summation, the origins of this legacy. Using both her childhood and the presidential campaign as a launching point for this dialogue, this introduction serves as a gateway to understanding her time in office. The subtle influence of her private actions behind her very public image played a crucial role in helping to enhance the perception of her husband's administration. As a young woman and then political wife, her ambition and agency have become lost in a flurry of news copy. Fixating on Jackie's aristocratic femininity, her tenure as First Lady appears more passive than an historical analysis of her actions renders true. She was a mix of "old femininity and new womanhood, seemingly sustained in a perfect suspension,"¹⁰ yet as biographer Barbara Perry observes: "By clinging to a pre-women's movement vision of protecting home and hearth as a shelter for her husband and children, Mrs. Kennedy could maintain some semblance of a line between her private and public life."¹¹ Certainly, her reserved public image is a far cry from the teenager whose high school ambition was "not to be a housewife." Nor does it resemble the young adult who predicted that her half-sister would become the first female president of the United States. Finally, and probably most sensational for a woman who came of age in the conservative early fifties, it does not match the aspiring editor who proposed a *Vogue* issue centered on cross-dressing.¹²

¹ There is relevance in mentioning that as an individual, Jackie had a highly volatile nature. During their marriage John F. Kennedy frequently referenced himself as the straight line, through which Jackie curved repeatedly. (Thayer, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy*, 113). This polarizing ideal, though not directly related to the scope of this exploration, is helpful to bear in mind. Jackie's tendency towards the reclusive certainly impacted her decision-making process while in office. Furthermore, this trend towards the private, would impact public perception of America's thirty-seventh First Lady.

Born Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, to twenty-one year old Janet Lee and thirty-seven year old John Vernou Bouvier, III, the young girl, whose heritage was truthfully only one-eighth French on her father's side, grew up in relative comfort. As a child, she divided her time between Park Avenue and East Hampton.¹³ By the age of five, young Jackie was a skilled equestrian, worthy of entrance into youth-based competitions. Meanwhile, cousin John H. Davis highlights her ability to produce "charming verse" and beautiful drawings by eight years old.¹⁴ The headmistress of Miss Chapin's private school, Miss Ethel Stringfellow, described Jacqueline as the "most inquiring mind we've had in this school in thirty-five years." This did not however, stop the young girl from creating trouble; a restless Jackie was sent to the principal's office on an almost daily basis. When questioned by her mother about this, the young girl responded: "Well, I go to her office.... I sit down. Then [she] says a lot of things – but I don't listen."¹⁵ This carefree innocence was not to last. When she was nearly eleven, her parents divorced and her mother married the wealthy Hugh D. Auchincloss, Jr., two years later. As such, Jackie was forced, rather early, to become a "master of personal relations," juggling duelling parents and step-siblings, all the while learning to "[embody] a mysterious authority that would compel people to do her bidding."¹⁶

A teenage Jacqueline Bouvier entered Miss Porter's School at fifteen, a preparatory academy that would assist her in gaining acceptance to several colleges.¹⁷ "I discern in you more than passing evidence of leadership," grandfather John Vernou Bouvier wrote to Jackie around this time.¹⁸ He was right. Her college entrance exams placed her among the nation's twelve brightest that year, and she scored within the ninetieth percentile on the test.¹⁹ Ultimately choosing to study at Vassar, she remained the

same restless girl she had always been. This quest for enrichment led Jackie to apply for foreign-study, and in her junior year she attended the Sorbonne in Paris.²⁰ It was in France, the future First Lady recalled, “I learned not to be ashamed of a real hunger for knowledge, something I had always tried to hide.”²¹ In the early fifties, such blatant ambition really lacked a foundation for women of Jackie’s generation. Biographer Alice Kaplan asserts that there was a real shortage “of role models for women who aspired to beauty and wit at the same time, who wanted a life that was both sensual and intellectual.”²² It was this very desire for the cerebral that led a young Jackie to fall for then-congressman, John F. Kennedy. “We both have curious, inquiring minds,” she would later observe, “that’s a reason we chose each other.”²³

Still, the match proved far more complicated than that. For the Kennedy family, Jackie’s aristocratic background was far more appealing than her intelligence. His eyes ever on the White House, JFK’s “chariness of marriage was [quickly] superseded by the political need for a wife... [and] Jackie fitted the bill,” according to family friend Betty Spalding.²⁴ For Jacqueline Bouvier, the congressman-turned-senator fit another set of needs. His family’s wealth would allow her to continue to live a lifestyle to which she had become accustomed. With the declining status of the Bouvier fortune and a lack of inheritance from her stepfather, Jackie was aware of the need for a proper marriage.²⁵ Thus, beyond mutual admiration, the pair entered a mutual partnership. The problem, as cousin John Davis remembers, was that

the Bouvier family ethos was so unlike the Kennedy world Jacqueline would one day marry into. Ours was primarily concerned with beauty, style, individualism, and enjoyment instead of the fierce, and ultimately disastrous will to power that fuelled the Kennedy family ethos.²⁶

Over time, this would prove to be a point of contention, but early on there are instances within their relationship that speak to the notion of an intellectual partnership.

Even before they married, Jacqueline had begun to assist Jack by translating French-language material for him on Indochina and Algeria, which he used to enhance his Senate speeches on the embattled region. Furthermore, she accompanied her husband to Rome in 1955, serving as translator between JFK, French premier, Georges Bidault, and the Italians.²⁷ As the senator's confidence in his wife's abilities grew, she was asked to assist in drafting JFK's reluctant Democratic National Convention endorsement of Adlai Stevenson. Accompanying her husband to Chicago in 1956, Jacqueline Kennedy understood Stevenson's broad appeal to voters. Her flourished hand can be seen in the speech, which praised Stevenson's "intelligence, farsightedness and reasonableness," which "have neither diminished nor been matched by any other potential nominee."²⁸ With these words, the young senator from Massachusetts was launched from obscurity into the national spotlight. Although the twenty-seven year old Mrs. Kennedy can hardly claim full credit, her involvement in drafting the convention speech, among earlier contributions, provides evidence of John Kennedy's confidence in her capabilities.

Following a narrow failure to draft JFK as Stevenson's running-mate, his Hyannis Port political machine kicked into high gear with sights on the presidential nomination in 1960.²⁹ As the focus of the American media turned towards the youthful Massachusetts-based politician, Jacqueline Kennedy encountered her first taste of scrutiny. For a notoriously private individual, who was prone to periods of seclusion and depression, having her every move scrutinized by the press proved troublesome for the future First Lady.³⁰ Robin Douglas-Home, a friend of the family, recalls one specifically

heartbreaking conversation with Jackie shortly after the inauguration. She was, he said, “the original ‘bird in the gilded cage,’” and described her confessional as “the most emotionally disturbing I have ever had.” Jackie over the past four years, had been “literally projected into a position where she could rarely, if ever, be completely herself, or do anything, go anywhere, say anything, laugh, cry, drink, or even *talk* as she wished, without fear of becoming the subject of public comment.”³¹

Her apprehension was only made more severe when, according to Kennedy aide Richard Goodwin, a “conscious decision” was made to “keep [Jackie] in the background” during the campaign. Not out of concern for her well-being, but rather

they wanted to keep her away from the campaign because they were political experts and they thought that the American people’s idea of a First Lady was Bess Truman – nice, matronly, dowdy, [a] Midwestern American mother – and someone like Jackie would just turn people off!³²

Early on, as Jackie would tell Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in 1964, the press characterized her as somewhat of a dilettante, and she even came to see herself as a liability. She was foreign, when held against the historical image of a First Lady. “Everyone thought I was a snob from Newport,” she said, “who had bouffant hair and had French clothes and hated politics.” Though feminine, she was seen as too foreign to be a true American woman. While campaigning for her husband’s re-election to the Senate in 1956, voters would approach Jackie and were “surprised that I could speak English!”³³

This foreignness, coupled with her ever-increasing reserve of the press, resulted in a particularly limited role during the primaries. In September 1959, Wisconsin’s *Evening Telegram*, touted Jacqueline Kennedy’s fluency in Spanish and Italian as a particular asset to the campaign, allowing her to establish a special connection with crucial ethnic populations. At the same time, we see the early pangs of the “nice, matronly, dowdy,”

image that Goodwin refers to, as Jackie claims: “home is my primary interest.”³⁴ Such coverage is consistent with other articles from the early primaries. West Virginia’s *Wheeling Intelligencer* commented on her “obsession” with keeping “home life as normal as can be expected” in April 1960, while Missouri’s *Post-Dispatch*, observed: “Mrs. Kennedy doesn’t take to the hustings easily. She usually quits after a three-day stint on the dawn-to-midnight schedule.” As such, motherhood became the device that allowed her to maintain some semblance of privacy, while satisfying the most basic needs of the campaign.³⁵ Jackie would later remark that motherhood was the only way to dim the incessant media-spotlight: “I’ll get pregnant and stay pregnant. It’s the only way out.”³⁶

Beyond the frequent references to Mrs. Kennedy as a “tall, attractive brunette, pleasant and quiet in manner,”³⁷ who proved herself as the “epitome of casual, off-hand feminine beauty of face, coiffure, costume and character,”³⁸ there are fleeting moments that demonstrate a sense of political awareness beneath this reserved public image. In a rare remark on policy to the *Evening Telegram*, she hinted at her husband’s approach to détente, stating: “It is good for us in the United States, to see Khrushchev and acquaint ourselves with his personality and character.”³⁹ Though a likely talking point, it ties in closely with her belief that the study of foreign language is crucial in “getting to know people of other countries more intimately.”⁴⁰ In this instance, her view appears to have appealed to her husband, and after some time in the presidency, he solicited his daughter’s French teacher to develop a covert lesson plan. His hope was to be able to communicate (basically) with General de Gaulle and French-language leaders in Southeast Asia by his second term, without the need of a translator or his wife.⁴¹

It is worth mentioning that when Jacqueline Kennedy did campaign, she possessed a remarkable ability to connect with voters in an incredibly intimate way. White House aide Dave Powers remembers: “She did not bother to put on a phony show of enthusiasm about everything she saw and every local politician she met. The crowds sensed that and it impressed them.”⁴² Early coverage by Donald Wilson in an August 1959 issue of *Life* acknowledges this phenomenon and attributes it to Jackie’s “intellectual turn of mind,” allowing her to prove “that beauty and quick brains are no handicap in politics.”⁴³ Still, the article returns to the notion of Jackie’s “basic irreverence towards politics,” which “supplies a perfect tonic for Jack when the job weighs heavy.”⁴⁴ *Redbook* magazine challenges her view that “the marriage is [a wife’s] entire life,” as “somewhat startling in this day of the emancipated female,” but stops short of questioning its legitimacy.⁴⁵ Ironically, when Jackie’s public image was questioned, it trended towards the elite, foreign, or sensational. One of the most outlandish examples comes from a column written by Dorothy Kilgallen, who accused Jackie of faking her pregnancy with John to remain evasive from the press.⁴⁶

Despite the fact that her presence on the campaign trail would double the size of the crowds, she was placed in a perilous position.⁴⁷ As the *New York Times* claimed, “She must tread the hazy abyss of being neither too chic, nor too plain. If too smart, she loses the common touch. If too drab, she lets down the affluent American way of life.”⁴⁸ When a frustrated Jackie jokingly threatened to abdicate in the face of intense scrutiny, Adlai Stevenson urged: “Steady, kid, you ain’t seen nothing yet.”⁴⁹ It was not until August of 1960, following a fresh post-convention wave of criticism about her elite, cultured nature, that Jacqueline Kennedy took on her critics. Detroit’s *Free Press* ran an extensive profile

by Roberta Mackey on the potential First Lady. In her series of interviews, Jackie came out swinging. Responding to claims that she was “a sheltered socialite,” Mrs. Kennedy stated: “I proved I could support myself by holding a newspaper job for a year and a half.” Meanwhile accusations regarding her inexperience were met with: “I believe that if you can’t cope with emergencies by the time you’re 25, you’ll never be able to adapt yourself to situations. A First Lady might not be able to handle the position well at 50.”⁵⁰

Around the same time, Jackie told Mary Cremen of the *Boston Globe*: “Please remember that I’ve been married seven years to a man who leads one of the most active lives in the United States, a life in which I’ve participated.”⁵¹ This remark, in particular, stands out against a backdrop of quotations about Jacqueline Kennedy’s role as wife and mother, and incessant media coverage over her supposed foreignness. Although potentially innocuous, it harkens back to her earlier influences and hints towards potential further contributions. We must be cautious however, warns Melody Lehn, as even behind the scenes, her subtle efforts prove to be “a rare deviation from her self-proclaimed desire to avoid policy-related ‘political duties’... since she felt such [obligations] would inevitably take her away from her children.”⁵² Nonetheless, the same assistance we see in Kennedy’s years in the Senate shines through in two ways that likely enhanced the Democratic brand in a close election. Recent historiography has brought these examples to light, and in both instances we gain insight into Jackie’s clarity and foresight when it comes to issues of public perception.

In late October, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested at a sit-in in downtown Atlanta. While it is traditionally thought that Robert Kennedy intervened with Governor Ernest Vandiver to protect his brother, Jack also placed a secret call to the governor. This

communication occurred at the behest of Jacqueline, who happened to be reading King's *Stride Towards Freedom*.⁵³ Unlike his less controversial call to King's wife, JFK also secretly pushed for the civil rights leader's release because Jackie felt that it was just. Kennedy advisor, Harris Wofford, would later observe that she was "the source of moral warmth on these issues."⁵⁴ Though little more of their private conversations about the matter are known, the example supports the notion of Jackie as at least a marginally engaged spouse. Although it is a stretch, it is worth mentioning that James A. Michener of *Look* magazine credits this risky decision over King for the Democratic victory in November of 1960. If Jackie had even the smallest role to play, it may very well have been significant to the outcome. "He did not lose Georgia or South Carolina or Texas," over the issue Michener maintains, but "he won the Negro vote in New York and Chicago and Philadelphia – and thus the Presidency."⁵⁵

Though less important, policy-wise, Jacqueline Kennedy's role in helping to distance her husband from the infamous "Rat Pack," speaks again to a politically cognisant mind, albeit again in a limited role. The infamous group was composed of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Peter Lawford, among others, and JFK's direct link to the trio came from Lawford who was married to Jack's sister Patricia. The prevailing view of most campaign staffers was that the Hollywood stars could be utilized to add appeal and lustre to events. It was Jackie who saw the men as a greater liability than a benefit to her husband. Making her wishes known, she was at least partially responsible for their quiet retreat from the campaign trail. Particularly wary of Frank Sinatra, Jackie would do her best to keep him at a distance, even once the couple reached the White House. Sinatra had ties to the mafia, and rumours resurfaced during the campaign linking

the singer with Capone, Giancana, the Fischetti brothers, and Lucky Luciano.⁵⁶ Given the wealth of revisionist historiography that has emerged surrounding Kennedy associations with the mob, Jackie's decision shows an interesting degree of foresight for the time.

She was, as the primaries had shown, all too aware of the dangers of the melodramatic, and during the general election faced a controversy of her own. Playing upon the recurrent theme of foreignness, *Women's Wear Daily* ran an exposé on Jacqueline Kennedy with the claim that she spent \$30,000 a year on clothing from Paris.⁵⁷ Her attempt at deflecting the story with the casual remark that she "couldn't spend that much unless I wore sable underwear," only enhanced public perception of Mrs. Kennedy as a dilettante.⁵⁸ "I refuse...to be the Marie Antoinette or Josephine of the 1960s," Jackie lamented, again withdrawing from the spotlight. "All the talk over what I wear and how I fix my hair has amused me and puzzled me," she admitted. "What does my hairdo have to do with my husband's ability to be President?"⁵⁹ It is a fair question, but the reality of the time was that to many Americans, the notion of a stylish, youthful, and refined First Lady was unbecoming. Letters flooded into newspaper editorial sections around the country, with one group of women from Iowa asserting: "We have better looking floor mops than the bouffant coiffure you [have]." Another woman based in Manhattan commented: "She looks too damn snappy. I just don't like women who look that snappy," while a more vicious remark comes out of Ohio. "She's both French and Catholic," the author maintained, "the wine will flow in the White House."⁶⁰

Alice Kaplan, on the issue of foreignness in the campaign, is appropriately critical of the behaviour of the press and the American people towards Jacqueline Kennedy. She poignantly asserts:

It [says] something fundamental about what it meant to be an American in 1960, how rigid the definition was, how unknowing and defensive. A country assuming its status as a world power was still afraid of not being itself.⁶¹

This same fear of losing an “American” identity, can be broadened to include concepts of femininity that surrounded Jacqueline Kennedy’s image in the sixties. It is clear that the Democrats were in an intense battle to carve out a unique role for the future First Lady against the tidal wave of public opinion. “Women *are* alert and interested,” Jackie declared, and “they have merited their place in the forefront of the political world.”⁶² Yet, criticisms of her cultured and thus foreign personality, led to campaign-manufactured images of Mrs. Kennedy tucking their young daughter, Caroline, into bed, and sitting at her desk answering letters. *Life* magazine, in the commentary accompanying these photographs, remarked that Jackie had only a part-time secretary and no nanny. This could not have been farther from the truth.⁶³ Though biographer Sarah Bradford maintains that Jacqueline Kennedy’s public appeal came from her “remoteness and mystique,”⁶⁴ there was a genuine need during the election, to make her more accessible, and seem like a traditional First Lady. As such, the notion of a purely apolitical Jackie dates to this period.⁶⁵

Her “Campaign Wife” column of September and October 1960 became a vehicle through which the Democrats attempted to highlight the similarities between Jackie and the mothers of the nation. Originating after her doctor placed her on bed rest, the series of articles were the brainchild of the same Kennedy staffers who worried that her presence was a liability. Now they were scrambling to avoid questions about why Jackie was being kept from the public. The hope was that a sense of accessibility could be harnessed as a way to encourage women to get out the vote for JFK in November. In the early 1950s, a

young Jacqueline Bouvier had managed to charm readers of Washington's *Times-Herald* as "Inquiring Camera Girl," and there were hopes of a repeat performance.⁶⁶ Taken at face value, the articles themselves are charming but rather unremarkable. At times they read like the personal diary of a bored housewife. For example, in her first piece dated September 16, Jackie talks of Hyannis Port and the damage Hurricane Donna caused to the property. "We really weren't terribly frightened," she says, "but Caroline did worry about what was happening to her father and whether her kitten and puppy were safe."⁶⁷ Further pieces provided similar quips and family stories all the while encouraging women to host listening parties for the debates, and to participate in the "Calling for Kennedy" campaign. At Jackie's urging, America's mothers were to phone others and collect information for the Democrats on issues facing America's homemakers.⁶⁸

There are fleeting mentions of policy within the column, and though Jackie's views stick to campaign talking points, it is the closest she came to Eleanor Roosevelt's more forceful political views.⁶⁹ As such, her column, though constructed to appeal to women and highlight Jacqueline Kennedy as a wife and mother, developed, at least subtly, into an additional space to raise issues: this time not privately, but publically, and under her name. Jackie gave prominent attention to medical care, highlighting a report from the "Women's Committee for the New Frontier," that pushed for social security reform and comprehensive medical coverage as individuals aged.⁷⁰ She further placed emphasis on the need for schools, and the necessity in America recruiting one and a half million teachers in the next ten years. To not do so, she said, would be a national failure to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding population. Acknowledging the issue of states rights, Jackie stressed, "When the schools are so crowded it does seem imperative that the

Federal Government step in and do its share.”⁷¹ Although questionable, Jackie maintained complete authorship,⁷² and though her views merely enhanced those of her husband’s campaign, the column is one of only a few moments where Jackie’s private and public natures converge.

Though continuously wary of the press, especially because of some of their more vicious criticisms, by the time her husband had won the presidency, Jackie had carved out a personal agenda for her time as First Lady. Social secretary Letitia Baldrige remembers, “She had given it a lot of thought, and I have never known anyone to be as firm as she was about what she wanted to do.”⁷³ Her plans revolved around infusing the White House and the United States with a cultured identity, all the while doing her best to maintain a semblance of privacy for herself and the children. Reporter Helen Thomas remembers that this was also the beginning of a “three-year war of independence with the press.... We won a few, she won a few, but her army included the secret service.”⁷⁴ Caught between a childhood distaste of intrusion, an astute and educated mind, an old-fashioned sense of family values, and necessary political circumscription to gender norms of the early sixties, it is no surprise that the historical memory of Jackie began to evolve into a complete paradox. Jackie’s public image was a calculated response to what Susan Douglas refers to as the “fun-house mirror” quality of the media which can “distort and warp ‘reality,’”⁷⁵ and as Betty Friedan observes in *The Feminine Mystique*, “Public images [of women at the time], defy reason and have very little to do with women themselves.” It has, she continues, “the power to shape too much of their lives.”⁷⁶

Sitting in a drug store in Cape Cod in the summer of 1960, enjoying a peach ice cream cone, Jackie was amused by a throng of cottagers huddled around the magazine

stand. “All those people over there,” she said, “are so happy reading what I don’t do, they have never looked over here to see what I really do.”⁷⁷ This exploration, in that spirit, aims to look at what Jacqueline Kennedy achieved with her three years in the White House. Sifting through the onslaught of sensational biography, historical media coverage, while taking advantage of newly gained access to the First Lady’s personal papers and oral history, it hopes to distil for the reader the subtle agency of Jacqueline Kennedy, which contrasts so sharply with her reserved public image.

The coming chapters will address moments, similar to those during the campaign, where Jacqueline Kennedy’s innate intelligence and perception, coupled with a skilful manipulation of the media, helped to construct a unique legacy for the Kennedy administration. What emerges is a picture of a woman whose sense of culture and history allowed her to craft a unique and transitional role as First Lady of the United States. Broken into three separate explorations, the first focuses not only on Jacqueline Kennedy’s unique relationship with many world leaders, but also her ability to serve as an ambassador of goodwill for her husband. The second expands upon her skilful ability to connect with the cultures of the world, and places her effort to imbue the United States with a renewed appreciation for its own heritage into focus. Finally, mirroring the sharp turn of late November 1963, the third chapter pivots away from her time as First Lady. Instead, it focuses on Jacqueline Kennedy’s fixation with her husband’s legacy, and her application of scholarship and cultural appropriation in the days following the assassination. As a result, the aim of this thesis is to deconstruct Jacqueline Kennedy’s public image as a way to peer behind the veil and glimpse her true contributions. To get lost in the sensational is to miss the woman in front of us, eating a peach ice cream cone.

Chapter One

“Queen of America”

“It all began in the cold,” opens Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in the prologue of his exhaustive history, *A Thousand Days*. Inauguration Day 1961 fell on a Friday, as the tail end of a storm made its way through the capital, blanketing Washington D.C. in a thick layer of snow. The temperature hovered around twenty degrees Fahrenheit and the local army was dispatched with flamethrowers to melt massive snow banks. Meanwhile, city officials worked through the night to clear the roads for the inaugural parade.¹ Despite their best efforts everything ran late that day, and the new president was sworn in fifty minutes after he constitutionally assumed office. The incoming First Lady may, in part, be to blame for the delay. That morning, she ran around their Georgetown home, putting the final touches on her outfit, as the president-elect paced in the downstairs hallway. “Come on, Jackie,” he exclaimed, “for God’s sake, let’s go.” In that moment, she rushed towards the door, the only thing standing between them and a frenzied crowd. Seconds later, America’s First Couple to-be emerged to a cheering world, leaving their Georgetown home to take up leadership of the White House.²

Jackie was wearing a “fawn-coloured” jacket that morning, with large buttons and a trademark pillbox hat.ⁱ Its minimalism is representative of the innocence and shyness in the public character of the new First Lady, yet it offers an interesting contrast to the

ⁱ When asked during the campaign, whether she would make any concessions regarding her lifestyle, Jacqueline Kennedy flatly replied: “I’ll wear hats” (Kelley, 92). For a First Lady who made the pillbox hat famous, especially following the events of Dallas, she hated wearing anything on her head. In a recent set of personal letters that went to auction, Jackie penned to Bergdorf Goodman personal stylist, Marita O’Connor, the following handwritten remark: “Oh dear it was so pleasant when I didn’t have to wear hats! [T]hey will pauperize me & I still feel absurd in them.” (“Letters From Jackie Kennedy,” *Daily Mail*, November 8, 2013). The active decision to add hats to her outfits, beyond concerns in pleasing the garment industry (Perry, 58), likely stem from a calculated effort to put forth a stylish, but conservative image. Around the residence and in private, she often dressed casually (West, 203), but was extremely formal in attire when presenting her public persona.

intensive fashion coverage of the campaign. She stood out from the array of women wrapped in fur coats, including her predecessor, Mamie Eisenhower, along with Lyndon Johnson's wife, Lady Bird.³ "The simplicity of her costume," biographer Mary Thayer observes, "would make her a memorable standout... and every elaborately hatted and expensively befurred woman on the President's Platform [appeared] less elegant."⁴ It was, as designer Oleg Cassini described, a meeting between the "old and new," in which Jacqueline Kennedy's countenance embodied the promise and gleam of her husband's proposed New Frontier.⁵ On January 20, 1961, the United States transitioned from one of its oldest presidents, to its youngest ever elected to office. Jackie's decision to wear a "white silk crepe gown" to a series of inaugural balls that evening only furthered this notion of new political beginnings and every eye was on the virginal-looking First Lady.⁶

Today, John Fitzgerald Kennedy's inaugural address is remembered for the closing lines: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," and is regarded as a progressive clarion call for progress and the advancement of human rights. At the height of the Cold War, on that frigid day, the youthful, refined Kennedys struck a seemingly serious break from the Eisenhower years in every way. The architect of that speech, Theodore Sorenson, remembers the hope Kennedy offered in his address: "As I watched the faces of the crowd...they had forgotten the cold, forgotten party lines and forgotten all the old divisions of race, religion and nation. It was time to begin." While his observation captures the promise of these moments, it ignores Kennedy's rabid anti-communist warnings that offered no promise of change, but rather a continuation of hostile American rhetoric. In a famous, but somewhat boilerplate line, the new president put all nations of the world on notice that his administration would "pay

any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”⁷

For the moment, however, the pomp and circumstance of the succession overshadowed a less than radical break from the past. Even more interesting, is that while the new president took an ample amount of the attention, much of the nation’s fixation lay on its new First Lady. Perhaps the most startling example comes from the inaugural *Time* magazine, which features Jacqueline Kennedy situated in front of the White House, sans newly sworn-in husband. It stands as a poignant metaphor for what would continue to be a media fixation with Jackie’s public image. It is the first, of many instances, throughout the Kennedy administration, where her visage and actions would serve as distraction from controversy, or traditionalist foreign policy issues of the United States. As one Republican was quoted on the eve of the inaugural, Jacqueline Kennedy would bring a “supersonic” quality to the role of First Lady and infuse the position “with a great sense of office and dash.”⁸ Thus, as the new administration pushed hard against the spread of communism in its first few months, obsessively consumed by it to the detriment of pressing domestic issues,⁹ Jacqueline Kennedy’s image had “overtaken the world.”¹⁰ It would be, as *Time* would accurately predict: a “demanding and often thankless role.”¹¹

During the transition, her husband had inherited two major foreign policy crises from Eisenhower – Cuba and Southeast Asia.¹² Much has been written about the failure of US-trained Cuban counter-revolutionaries to retake the island from Castro’s forces. It became the defining, potentially fatal moment of his early presidency. JFK himself, no stranger to ordering military intervention, would muse to friend Red Fay in 1962:

[A coup d’état] could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right. If, for example, the country had a young president, and he had a Bay of

Pigs, there would be a certain uneasiness.... Then if there was another [similar incident], the reaction of the country would be, ‘Is he too young and inexperienced?’ The military would almost feel that it was their patriotic obligation to stand ready to preserve the integrity of the nation.¹³

American policy towards Southeast Asia, especially Laos, in the early months of 1961, gave cause for concern about such repeat inexperience. Although in both instances Kennedy talked of a negotiated settlement, a joint-task force was used in Laos to force a shaky government coalition. Meanwhile, an inadequate deployment of American military advisors in South Vietnam became increasingly drawn into combat throughout 1961-62.¹⁴

It did not take the world’s leaders long to begin questioning the mettle of America’s young president, and the promise of change that he and his wife seemed to physically embody was fading fast. The presidential honeymoon was over. British prime minister, Harold MacMillan, French president, Charles de Gaulle, and Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev were all looking for signs that Republican claims from the campaign might be true. Was Kennedy a “lightweight with a rich father and a good haircut who had ambled into the White House”?¹⁵ⁱⁱ Kennedy jokingly told supporters at his birthday dinner in May, “The only thing that really surprised us when we got into office, was that things were just as bad as we had been saying they were.”¹⁶ The couple had recently returned from their first state visit, where the president found it hard to charm Canadian prime minister, John Diefenbaker. The two men had a tenuous set of meetings and Jacqueline Kennedy would later describe the interaction as “painful.”¹⁷

ⁱⁱ A few weeks after meeting with Kennedy, British prime minister Harold MacMillan confided to his diary on June 25, 1961 that “[I] feel in my bones that President Kennedy is going to fail to produce any real leadership. The American press and public are beginning to feel the same. In a few weeks they may turn to us. We must be ready. Otherwise we may drift to disaster over Berlin – a terrible diplomatic defeat or (out of sheer incompetence) a nuclear war” (Leaming, 136). It is a chilling observation, but it perhaps is the most accurate embodiment of the real concerns that Europe had over America’s leadership. Furthermore, it provides a glimpse at the posturing that was beginning to take place between de Gaulle and the British.

Not surprisingly, the diplomatic success story from this first visit originates with the new First Lady, whose image and personage managed to charm Canadians. Four thousand awaited the arrival of Jacqueline Kennedy for her visit to Canada's National Gallery, while another fifteen hundred made their way to the RCMP barracks to cheer her name.¹⁸ Speaking not only for his nation, Canadian senator, Mark Drouin, exclaimed: "[Jackie's] charm, beauty, vivacity and grace of mind have captured our hearts."¹⁹ As Mrs. Kennedy later remembered it:

Suddenly, everything that'd been a liability before – your hair, that you spoke French, that you didn't just adore to campaign... all the things that I'd always done suddenly became wonderful because anything the First Lady does that's different, everyone seizes on.²⁰

In these moments, the White House Chief Usher, J.B. West felt that the reserved First Lady "was slowly beginning to enjoy the adulation," as "she realized that the applause was indeed for herself and not simply for the political stereotype of the devoted woman behind the great man."²¹

This was perhaps Jacqueline Kennedy's first taste of the "soft power" she would wield during her time as a presidential spouse, and even after.²² Seen only briefly in her time as a campaign wife, Jackie was growing to understand a very important facet of governance: the appearance of things versus reality. Firmly tapped into the pulse of the nation, she regularly read major periodicals, including *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek*, received the weekly CIA briefing with interest, focusing in on the wires coming out of India and Pakistan, and was highly poised in her opinions about historical, cultural and global figures.²³ Utilizing this knowledge, she was able to influence global perception of the United States through her appearance, actions, and charm. In his definition of the principle, scholar Joseph Nye almost seems to channel Jackie, as he describes "soft

power” as the “ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments... [and] arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.”²⁴ It was in Canada, the First Lady’s social secretary Letitia Baldrige remembers that “[JFK] saw clearly... that his wife was the biggest asset he now possessed. We all noticed [upon return] that he had a new appreciation of and respect for her.”²⁵ Up until that point, as seen, Jackie was often viewed as a liability in her husband’s perception of “presidential” and her image was carefully managed. Canada was the beginning of what has been termed the “metamorphosis” of Jacqueline Kennedy.²⁶

As a test run for the European summits to which the First Couple were scheduled to travel to in a matter of weeks, Canada was a failed start for JFK. He had struggled to convince the anti-American Diefenbaker of the need for Canada to join the Organization of American States, and failed to warm the prime minister to the idea of American-controlled nuclear weapons on Canadian soil.²⁷ Yet, and not strangely at this point, *Life’s* coverage of the state visit upon their return was dominated by images of the First Lady. Despite a small nod to the fact that Canadians were more focused on “how the president smiled and responded, than with discussions behind closed doors,” the real attention was on “what Jackie wore and did.”²⁸ Both Jacqueline Kennedy and her designer, Oleg Cassini, were “acutely conscious of the ‘third eye’ of the photographer,” and planned wardrobes so that the First Lady proved to be “the one bright spot in a sea of gray suits.”²⁹ The fact that the president failed again to make a cover with Jackie, is indicative of both their understanding of the public gaze and the pure fascination with all things Jackie Kennedy.³⁰ Not surprisingly, editors around the world quickly found that issues featuring the First Lady sold an additional half million copies.³¹

As such, according to Loren Glass, “Jack and Jackie can be understood as the last contradiction of the American Oedipal order, the final frontier of separate spheres, an almost hyperbolic last gasp of public politics as a world of men and private consumption as a world of women.”³² Harnessing the sense of fascination surrounding her personage, extensive planning went into successive foreign trips and the visitors she received to the United States in an official capacity. Her focus became fixated on imbuing America’s legacy with a sense of cultural appreciation and largess, helping to detract from the struggling Kennedy brand. To quote biographer Barbara Leaming, Jackie was a “resident illusionist, conjurer of an image so dazzling and distracting as to shift public attention from her husband’s disastrous record” thus far.³³ In the coming pages, this chapter will chart her development, transforming from humble presidential spouse into a global ambassador who was able to utilize the fascination surrounding her image and use it to present to the world the notion of an interested and engaged America. To those who would doubt her understanding, she would later state: “People say [Jack] never talked about politics at home with me, but that’s all that was talked about.”³⁴ In as much, she utilized this understanding to evolve into not a partner, but rather a semiautonomous extension of her husband’s New Frontier.

Thus, beyond planning another captivating wardrobe, emboldened by her Canadian reception the new First Lady put an interesting level of additional preparation into the upcoming presidential visit to France and Vienna. Harkening to the early years of their marriage, she began readying to assist her husband in charming the world’s elite in any way possible. Driven by a lifelong passion for European history, America’s First Lady found the same “grandeur” in de Gaulle that drew her to study the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries.³⁵ She began by penning a series of letters to the French president, which led to discussions on everything from her family's francophone heritage, to her passion for the art and culture of France.³⁶ⁱⁱⁱ Such friendly communication between a head of state and the wife of the American president is unexpected, yet it was in the private nature of Jacqueline Kennedy. Beyond a healthy correspondence, she pushed her husband to read de Gaulle's memoirs, going as far as to translate important sections and placing them in front of him.³⁷ Having already read the work, she turned to other books on French history, and was devouring the biography of Cardinal de Bernis just prior to the visit. "This kind of historical reading," in the opinion of biographer Donald Spoto, may reveal "not only the intellectual preparation Jackie made for the journey but also the gravity with which she took her husband's role."³⁸

JFK meanwhile, lacked the time for such detailed preparation, facing a domestic crisis that threatened to detract attention from the European summit, and undermine his leadership. Unwilling to wait on the president to tackle the issue of civil rights,^{iv} a group of activists who styled themselves as "Freedom Riders," took integrated buses into the

ⁱⁱⁱ Ultimately, the relationship between Jacqueline Kennedy and Charles de Gaulle began to fall apart in 1963, when the French president pushed his independent agenda further away from the wishes of the United States. According to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. it was de Gaulle's distrust of the British dating from World War II that led to his resistance to British entry into the European Economic Community. As de Gaulle would later state, "England is an island; France the edge of a continent, America another world." He was incredibly wary of Anglo-Saxon dominance of Europe, both economically and through NATO (Schlesinger, 845-46, 867-69). Jacqueline Kennedy would tell Schlesinger that in these moments, his unwillingness to negotiate "really sunk down" her opinion of him because "he was so full of spite" (Kennedy et al., 53). Ultimately Jackie took the side of the United States, stating: "If de Gaulle and everyone want to have their own little thing – but really, we should turn to this hemisphere. And I'm going to do that, anyway" (Kennedy et al., 200).

^{iv} Two months before the November 1960 election, Kennedy told the media that he would push the newly elected Congress to pass his "liberal Democratic plank" which included "equal access for all Americans to all areas of community life, including voting booths, school rooms, jobs, housing, and public facilities." The closeness of the election, combined with Democratic losses in the House and Senate, convinced him that he was not given the mandate he desired for social change. Furthermore, Southern Democrats, who controlled the Congress were not willing to champion integrationist legislation. With the 1964 election already in mind, Kennedy "[kept] his pen in his pocket," despite promises to do away with segregationist laws by "the stroke of a pen." (Sabato, 77-79).

Deep South, where they were torched and attacked. In a letter to President Kennedy, one of the organizers, James Farmer, pleads the administration's support, as "Jim Crow betrays democracy. It degrades democracy at home. It debases democracy abroad."³⁹ An enraged Kennedy blasted his civil rights advisor, Harris Wofford, and demanded that he "tell [the Freedom Riders] to call it off." When Wofford informed the president that this was not likely, JFK exploded, "Can't you get your goddamned friends off those buses?"⁴⁰ Somewhat paradoxically, the very issue of *Life* that carried the spread on the visit to Canada, also ran a set of shockingly graphic images from the attacks in Alabama. Photographs of a bleeding Freedom Rider, a burning bus, and a young black man being attacked in Montgomery, are juxtaposed against images of a smiling Jacqueline Kennedy.⁴¹ It is a striking metaphor for the first year of the Kennedy administration – global image placed ahead of domestic problems.

In this vein, before their departure for France, Jackie sat down with Pierre Crenesse at the White House and taped an interview for French television. Slated to air nationally on the eve of their arrival, it is an unusually candid piece of film in which Jackie declares herself to be a daughter of the French Republic and gushes about her passion for the refined culture of France. She goes on to discuss how her husband is a fan of French cuisine, and in a surprising moment talks of both Caroline and John. Jackie's revelations about how she wants her children to have normal lives, and how she cannot keep Caroline "as a small prisoner of the Tower," are both familiar traditionalist rhetoric and unusual for a press interview.⁴² Upon becoming First Lady in-waiting, she wrote to her new press secretary: "I feel so strongly that publicity in this era has gotten so completely out of hand... you must really protect the privacy of me and my children."⁴³

Active discussion of the kids, in a political forum, coupled with a conversation about history and art, creates another strange moment where Jackie's public and private personas merge.

The interview itself is a calculated primer, similar to one she opted out of in Canada.⁴⁴ Wayne Koestenbaum, in reviewing the tape, emphasizes a rare public glimpse at the private confidence and intelligence within the First Lady. "Her voice, for once," he begins, "is not breathless like Ophelia's [in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*], but the 'low' and 'cultured' voice that Jackie's intimates describe."⁴⁵ The answer, at its simplest, may well boil down to a disparity in comfort level. Jackie's love of France and her fond memories of the time spent studying at Sorbonne, L'École du Louvre, and the Institut d'études politiques,^v provided her with a sense of belonging she never quite felt among her blended family,⁴⁶ or she obtained by marrying into the Boston-Irish Kennedy clan.⁴⁷ Although moments of the conservative public image emerge, as a rare discussion of the children perhaps struggles for balance, we get a look at why Koestenbaum describes Jackie as "trapped in an American incarnation; a changeling, lost in America, misunderstood, in exile."⁴⁸ Thus, what the Crenesse interview provides is a rare glimpse into the private confidence of Jacqueline Kennedy, which would ultimately manifest itself in a variety of further assistive actions behind the scenes.

Jackie's public persona, in the words of Norman Mailer, was somewhat of a "self-conscious parody," as she attempted to present an image of First Lady that both the

^v Among her studies in art history and literature, which can be found on her transcript, Jacqueline Bouvier did take one course while in France on international relations from 1870. The course, taught by Pierre Renouvin, had roots in long-term historical effects combined with short-term political significance (Kaplan, 41). It is perhaps Renouvin, whom Kaplan mentions was deeply entrenched in the *Annales* approach to history, that helped shape a young Jackie's understanding of the forces of history as all encompassing, though subject to social influence and intervention.

American public and global media would accept and respect. Often this is exhibited through visits to orphanages and hospitals abroad, all the while reflecting an image of regalness through her dress.⁴⁹ Consequently, the French visit is really the first time where we see how “her political significances resist easy circumscription.” Although Jackie “more frequently is portrayed as a reactionary figure – a cautionary symbol, primarily for women of her generation,”⁵⁰ her private letters with de Gaulle and personal preparations for the visit, draw her into a tributary position in regards to foreign policy. This is not to say that she ever held the same influence as Eleanor Roosevelt or Hillary Clinton, yet unlike these First Ladies, Jackie’s sense of capability is often overshadowed by her reserved public persona and femininity.⁵¹

When the Kennedys touched down in Paris on May 31,⁵² newsstands were already inundated with coverage for the visit. As the president’s advisors calculated, Jacqueline’s confident interview assisted in whipping the French into a frenzy. *Paris-Match* ran a photo spread dominated by the First Couple, but Jackie again graced the cover. Similar to *Life’s* Canadian coverage, her visage pulls the viewer’s gaze next to the headline: “Jacqueline Kennedy Returns to France,” drawing readers inside, to regale them with tales of her junior year abroad.⁵³ She had, according to one magazine’s attempt at cultural appropriation, “the outside appearance of a Parisian woman, [with] the soul of an American.”⁵⁴ It is a somewhat roundabout way of praising her image, while the American “soul” hints towards her drive. Still, public obsession remained with her wardrobe, and worldwide papers ran countless stories. A young Manolo Blahnik embodies the sense of furor typical of the French in these days: “I was absolutely totally possessed.... I followed her all the time. All the time! I looked for magazines she was in, I bought them

all!”⁵⁵ The fascination was so intense that at one point JFK quipped: “Isn’t anyone interested in what I’m wearing tonight? Does anybody care?”⁵⁶ It is a haunting parallel to the morning of November 22, when Kennedy told an anxious audience in Fort Worth that Jackie would be along shortly. It takes longer to “organize herself,” he would say, “but of course, she looks better than we do when she does it.”⁵⁷

It does not take long, descending into a crowd of two hundred thousand Parisians, screaming “Vive Jacqueline!” to glimpse a cultural phenomenon in the making.⁵⁸ Jackie was set to kick start a “rediscovery of America as a new society [overseas], young and cosmopolitan and sophisticated, capable of aspiring to leadership of the civilized peoples.”⁵⁹ JFK, who had once viewed travelling with his wife as un-statesmen-like⁶⁰ desperately needed this touch of wonder. The French had firmly established themselves as critics of his leadership and took to the streets to express massive outrage at the Bay of Pigs.⁶¹ Charles de Gaulle was a staunch advocate of European independence and was of the belief that his nation’s guidance coupled with an economic community and an unarmed, unified Germany, could produce a stable and prosperous bulwark against communism. He was wary of “the United States’s desire for hegemony,” advocating for a larger French presence within NATO and local control of nuclear weapons.⁶²

From the airport, the First Couple were taken to the Quai d’Orsay, which houses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and suites for visiting dignitaries. As social secretary Letitia Baldrige remembers, “The president and first lady were like little kids, running all through the presidential apartments and relishing details like the bathrooms that looked like a meeting place for the Roman Imperial Senate.”⁶³ The official schedule gave them just an hour and a half to revel in their accommodations, before departing for lunch with

the President and Mme. de Gaulle.⁶⁴ The notion of metamorphosis is again evoked, this time by Barbara Leaming, who transitions Jackie from the purely visual to the political while at this luncheon in Paris. “The Nymphet,” she says, “metamorphosed into a highly intelligent woman who engaged the general on recondite matters of French history.”⁶⁵ Jackie’s briefing on Mme. de Gaulle purposely emphasized the similarities between the two women: “Conservative and classical in her tastes... [she] is most interested in being a good wife and mother, being First Lady comes second.”⁶⁶ Yet, it was the French president whose attention Jackie captured. While they talked of Louis XVI, the Bourbon dynasty, and the Duc d’Angouleme, President Kennedy and Mme. de Gaulle were forced to make conversation about the tablecloths.⁶⁷

In the evening, the parlay between the First Lady and President de Gaulle continued with Jackie serving as translator during a state dinner held at Versailles. Dismissing the interpreter, she stepped in personally, when she felt that JFK’s attempts at negotiation were not being properly conveyed to de Gaulle. In the opinion of Secret Service agent Clint Hill, it was she who “made the notoriously difficult de Gaulle much more receptive” to JFK and enhanced the general’s willingness to listen.⁶⁸ That afternoon, Jackie had toured L’École de Puériculture, in an official capacity. A teaching hospital for premature and sick infants, she “tickled the toes of a six-month-old baby girl,” and in a dire foreshadowing of history to come, “pressed her nose against the glass to look at a baby boy three months premature.”⁶⁹ The First Lady had personally requested the stop, and when it was suggested that she visit a training school for housewives instead, she scrawled under the memo: “Would rather see something to do with children.”⁷⁰ As mentioned, there is a political calculation regarding her public image that

is unavoidable in such circumstances. Reluctant to use her children for photo ops, this was one of many that happened frequently abroad. It was Jackie in the “proper sphere,” and the discussion of her doting over sick French children in the *Washington Post*, provides a stark contrast to the knowledge that she was able to charm French leadership.

Jackie’s travels similarly included a tour of the Jeu de Paume gallery, hosted by French Minister of Culture, André Malraux. France had bore witness to her fashionable side, her motherly nature, and her intellect. Now, after viewing a number of impressionist works, which she acclaimed as “the most beautiful paintings in the world,” they would glimpse her artistic side, combined with a hint of her childhood mischievousness. The First Lady selected Monet’s *Olympia* as her favourite work in the gallery. Described by the *Washington Post*, the painting depicts “a nude girl on a couch. Behind her is a Negro woman who carries a bunch of flowers [and] a black cat at the foot of the couch accentuates the whiteness of the sheet on which the girl reclines.”⁷¹ Although the historiography surrounding the incident mainly focuses on the sensationalism of the selection, the juxtaposition of race in the painting deserves comment given the very serious civil rights crisis unfolding in the United States. It also calls into question Jacqueline Kennedy’s personal views on race. As discussed, during the campaign, she appears to have taken at least a passing interest in the cause, reading King’s *Stride Towards Freedom* and providing “moral warmth.”⁷² Her time as First Lady was similarly focused on equality, and *Ebony* magazine later had nothing but praise for Jacqueline Kennedy. “Her relationship,” it claimed, “has always been free from that artificial cordiality that characterizes many white political figures’ dealings with members of a racial minority group. Always gracious and poised, she would meet Negro guests the way

they want to be met – like anyone else – with that same friendliness that endeared her to the world.”⁷³

In that vein, while his wife was causing trouble through her selection of paintings, John F. Kennedy attended a luncheon with the press corps at the Palais de Chaillot.⁷⁴ It was here he uttered the famous quotation that takes its rightful place at the opening of this thesis. In many respects, given the fascination that surrounded the coverage of the First Lady in France, JFK’s words ring true because of how accurately they captured the moment. W. Granger Blair of the *New York Times* praised the president’s good nature, taking Jackie’s star power in stride, while also paying homage to the “extraordinary impression the President’s wife has made on Paris.”⁷⁵ De Gaulle himself had told JFK that Jackie knew more about France than the average French woman, and Kennedy would credit any diplomatic success on the trip to his “charming wife.”⁷⁶ To borrow again from Barbara Leaming, the Kennedys entered Paris to enthusiastic fanfare over Jackie’s French heritage and cultured persona, but they left as a victorious duo.⁷⁷ *Liberation*, a French newspaper, reinforces this viewpoint and the multi-layered impact of the First Lady, in a published cartoon of de Gaulle, in bed, dreaming of Jackie. The First Lady loved the illustration so much that the artist presented her with the original.⁷⁸

The couple now set course for Vienna, where they were to meet with their communist counterparts, Nikita and Nina Khrushchev. The diplomatic discussions, which centered around Berlin, nuclear disarmament, governance of the United Nations, and the right to neutrality in the third world, offered little room for compromise on either side.⁷⁹ Kennedy, reporting back to the nation, would tell the American people that “it was a very sober two days.” “There was,” he said, “no discourtesy, no loss of tempers, no threats or

ultimatums by either side; no advantage or concession was either gained or given, no major decision was either planned or taken; no spectacular progress was either achieved or pretended.”⁸⁰ It is not the most inspiring speech given by the thirty-fifth president, and in many ways it embodies the hopelessness felt at the height of the Cold War. Nor was Kennedy entirely truthful. Miles apart on Berlin, Khrushchev threatened: “I want peace, but, if you want war, that is your problem,” to which the president offered the curt response, “It will be a cold winter.”⁸¹

Although it is apparent Jacqueline Kennedy wasn’t able to charm Nikita Khrushchev the same way she did Charles de Gaulle, she continued to establish herself as an asset in neutral Vienna through an array of decisions and humble actions. It is important to note that before their arrival, portions of Jacqueline Kennedy’s public image had made their way into Eastern Europe and Russia. In Leningrad, fashion magazines were stuffed with clothing advertisements that were overt copies of pieces Jacqueline Kennedy had worn.⁸² There was a global fascination with her sense of style. This proved dangerous for the Soviets. In Wayne Koestenbaum’s eyes, Jackie was a “decadent antithesis” to Marxism. He asks,

For Jackie’s charm and beauty, wouldn’t we give up the revolution? She leads us from small towns into the velvet metropolis; she beguiles us away from socialism, back into monarchy. Jackie is capitalism’s finest flower.⁸³

On June 4, this influence was readily apparent as Nina Khrushchev and Jacqueline Kennedy arrived at Pallavicini Palace for lunch with the daughter of the Austrian president. *New York Times*’ Russell Baker describes a crowd of ten thousand awaiting the arrival of the First Lady. When Nina’s car drove into the complex, she “scarcely drew a

murmur,” however when Jackie arrived five minutes later, “cheers heralded her approach... [and] when she stepped out of the car, a great cheer filled the square.”⁸⁴

Unsatisfied with this brief encounter, the large and swelling group of spectators continued to chant “Jah-kee, Jah-kee,” until a third floor window flew open and the First Lady appeared, accompanied by Mrs. Khrushchev.⁸⁵ As Jackie recalls those moments, she asked the Soviet premier’s wife to come with her to the window, stating: “I’m very shy so you have to come with me.” Taking her hand, “[Nina Khrushchev] was sort of beaming.”⁸⁶ As the pair waved to the crowd, the chants transformed from “Jah-kee, Jah-kee,” to “Jah-kee, Ni-na.” It was, according to Letitia Baldrige, a stroke of “sheer genius on Jackie’s part from a diplomatic point of view, but also it was an act of kindness.”⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the contrast is striking and photographs from that lunch support the tone of Baker’s coverage. In his eyes, as the women stood there before the adoring crowd, “one [looked] like a fashion magazine illustration, the other like a housewife for whom fashion magazines are illustrated.”⁸⁸ Flora Lewis of the *Washington Post* agreed, referring to Jackie as “the chic young mother,” while Nina Khrushchev played the role of “warm-faced grandmother.”⁸⁹ This was a new, refined America beside an aging Soviet Union. Capitalism, at least in these moments, emerges as the clear victor.

Although photographs show a cordial meeting, the First Lady later remembered Nina as “a bit malign” and complained about how she made passive-aggressive “little digs all the time.”⁹⁰ Part of this negativity could have stemmed from Vienna’s fixation with Jackie, combined with the fact that the Soviet premier had reportedly fallen over himself the night before, seemingly bewitched by Jackie’s presence. Preparing for her interaction with Khrushchev, she had studied her Russian history, which included reading

Sabres of Paradise by Lesley Branch.⁹¹ That evening “it was impossible not to notice how the Russian premier kept sneaking furtive glances at the First Lady of the United States,” says Baldrige, who described Jackie’s “white sequined ball gown,” as akin to that of Cinderella.⁹² As the couples arrived at Schönbrunn Palace for dinner, the press asked Khrushchev to shake Kennedy’s hand, causing the premier to quip while turning towards Jackie: “I’d like to shake her hand first.”⁹³ Through dinner, the pair talked about everything from horses to Ukrainian folk dance, along with a discussion on the tsarist regime that preceded the Soviet Union and the Russian space effort.^{vi} At one point, when Khrushchev tried to tout economics statistics about the Ukraine, Jackie proceeded to cut him off, cooing: “Oh, Mr. Chairman, don’t bore me with statistics.”⁹⁴ In this, Jackie managed to do what her husband could not – shock him into silence.⁹⁵

Khrushchev, whom the *Washington Post* described as “a smitten schoolboy when the ice thaws along the Volga in springtime,” was understandably taken with the First Lady.⁹⁶ Although her presence did not seem to help diplomatic negotiations, images of a dazzling, smiling Jackie with both the premier and his wife, certainly formed, at least in the eyes of the western media, “a tableau of affability.” She symbolized “the chumminess that was the predominant social mood here between the East and West since last night.”⁹⁷

Khrushchev would later record his thoughts on his evening spent with her:

^{vi} In her oral history with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Jackie recounts one of her conversations with Khrushchev in Vienna, regarding the Soviet Space dogs. One of the females had recently had puppies, and the First Lady told the premier, “Why don’t you send me one?” Several months later, two Soviet diplomats walk into the White House with a shaking puppy that had “obviously never been out of a laboratory.” When asked by JFK how this puppy had come about, Jackie confessed: “I’m afraid I asked Khrushchev for it. . . . I was just running out of things to say.” Beyond an interesting piece of history, it is a glimpse at the power dynamics at play between the United States and the Soviet Union. This puppy was a gesture that poked fun at the Kennedy administration, over the Soviet Union’s space successes. As Kennedy would jokingly tell Jackie, “You played right into his hands, reminding him of the space effort.” (Kennedy et al., 210).

She didn't impress me as having that special brilliant beauty which can haunt men, but she was youthful, energetic and pleasant.... I couldn't care less what sort of wife he had. If he liked her, that was his business.⁹⁸

This entry is in stark contrast to any sense of affability and offers important insight into Jackie's understanding of the media's third eye. Returning to Cassini's revelation that she purposely planned her outfits for the camera, the personal chumminess she managed to create with Khrushchev gives an illusion of progress that America did not manage to make. Indeed, the chairman in his diary actually strikes a very serious blow at this commodification of Jackie's image. By attacking her looks and what *Life* termed a "queenification" in Europe,⁹⁹ Khrushchev calls attention to the worldwide allure with her person, and the propaganda value it had.

Carl Sferrazza Anthony equates Jackie to "a symbol of the liberation from the notion that American had to be bourgeois."¹⁰⁰ The statement itself seems somewhat paradoxical, given the discussion of her regal presence in Europe. However, as you begin to pull at the thread of the idea, there is simplicity to the way Jacqueline Kennedy dressed, despite her innate cultured nature, which made her style (and thus her personage) accessible to a wide audience.¹⁰¹ In most instances, Jackie trended towards minimalism, favouring discreet jewellery, a lack of fingernail polish, and only the faintest traces of makeup.^{102vii} To touch on Khrushchev's view that Jackie lacked "brilliant beauty," there certainly was a lack of sexuality to her. The First Lady's physical appearance was slightly androgynous: wide shoulders, far apart eyes, large hands and feet. This created a sharp contrast from made-up, flashy, overtly feminine (and thus inaccessible) Hollywood

^{vii} In her memoir, *My Life With Jacqueline Kennedy*, Mary Gallagher recounts a story the night before the Inauguration, where the Kennedys got into a debate over jewellery just as they were to leave for a Gala. Jackie initially objected to wearing a pair of emerald earrings and a necklace with her gown. The First Lady-to-be was clearly "annoyed that her husband was questioning her judgment," but ultimately she gave into JFK's request and wore the jewellery (83-84)

starlets: Doris Day, Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, and Audrey Hepburn. In contrast to these typical “sex symbols,” Koestenbaum describes Jackie’s beauty as “legible.”¹⁰³ Yet, as the media fixated on her shoe size, desperately searching for attempts to peer into the soles and find out if she was a 10 or 11, this very legibility is what made her accessible, and thus ideologically appealing for America and American women.¹⁰⁴

Stopping over in London on the way home, the president left for Washington on June 5, to prepare for his address to the nation, while Jackie travelled with her sister on a short vacation to Greece.¹⁰⁵ While in England, despite not fulfilling a public schedule, people again obsessed over America’s First Lady. Interestingly, though JFK’s car was able to pass through the streets unobstructed, Jackie’s limousine was mobbed to a standstill.¹⁰⁶ She later described the president in these days as a man who had “seen just naked, brutal, ruthless power,” pushing him into a deep depression.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, her public profile was on the rise. Talk in English pubs was said to fixate on Jackie’s triumph in Europe, covering her husband’s futile efforts at diplomacy.¹⁰⁸ She gave, described one paper, “the American people from this day on one thing they had always lacked – majesty.”¹⁰⁹ Mary Thayer expands upon this, though in highly stereotypical American fashion, to illustrate global enthusiasm for Jacqueline Kennedy: “The French are volatile people and the Viennese notably warmhearted, so perhaps the enthusiasm was to be expected. But when she arrived in conservative England there was no longer any doubt that Mrs. Kennedy had become a world figure in her own right.”¹¹⁰

The historical largess that Jacqueline Kennedy encountered in Europe, particularly at Versailles, is partially what fuelled her passion to showcase her own nation’s history. Work had begun on a restoration of the White House, which will be

discussed in the next chapter, and that summer she set to work staging a dinner of similar historical calibre.¹¹¹ On July 11, 1961, the President of Pakistan, along with a hundred and forty other guests, were carried up the Potomac to Mount Vernon on a series of PT boats and luxurious yachts. A three-course dinner had been prepared for the guests,^{viii} while mint juleps made from George Washington's own recipe were served in frosted, antique goblets. Entertainment included a military drill, carried out by officers in full revolutionary attire, and an after-dinner concert by the National Symphony Orchestra.¹¹² The event itself was elegant and a pinnacle of history and largess. Nonetheless, in spite of all the detailed planning, the First Lady managed to have a bit of fun. At the expense of the press corps, her mischievous side emerges again, when the Revolutionary War actors turned and fired a volley of blank rounds at the media. Agent Hill remembers "the smile on [Mrs. Kennedy's] face.... I had little doubt that the placement of the press, directly in the line of fire, was all part of her master plan."¹¹³

President Ayub Khan was touched by Jackie's efforts, and would later tell her: "You did not do that because of me, because we had never met before. It was because of the regard and deference to the people of Pakistan which the people of the United States have. I was touched by it."¹¹⁴ As the eyes of the developing world fixated on JFK's presidency, with concern it appeared "opposed to social change [and] revolution," Jackie's abilities were ironically useful in establishing amiable linkages with the leaders of Pakistan, and later India. In this regard, the latter was especially important. Kennedy

^{viii} The Mount Vernon dinner is an example of the grand designs of Jacqueline Kennedy, but it also offers a rare glimpse into the complications that her fantastical ideas could pose for White House staff. The historical site was not designed to host a large dinner, resulting in the need for warming ovens, refrigerators and generators. Furthermore, an outbreak of mosquitos required two rounds of insecticide and Chef Rene Verdon then became worried it had poisoned the food. To ensure that America and Pakistan's ruling elite would not succumb to DDT poisoning, Letitia Baldrige "dispatched two Secret Service agents to offer up their lives for their country, [and] so they tasted all the food with great glee and lived to tell the tale, unscathed" (Baldrige, 197).

sought to maintain neutral India's allegiance to supposed American progressivism, as opposed to Soviet ideals of economic equality.¹¹⁵ In this regard, a private dinner with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in November was perhaps more important than Mount Vernon. As a congressman and then senator, John F. Kennedy had been committed to establishing India as a regional economic power in Asia. "If China succeeds and India fails," he once said, "the economic-development balance of power will shift against us."¹¹⁶ Following this logic, JFK's administration pledged one billion dollars over two years to India's Five-Year-Plan.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, economic assistance was not enough to purchase the prime minister's support. Nehru, like many leaders, remained convinced that the United States placed the defeat of communism ahead of all other regional goals. It is a theme reminiscent of the concerns of Charles de Gaulle. The American president, for all his charms, was unable to convince the Indian prime minister that America's "pluralistic society did many things besides eat Marxists for breakfast."¹¹⁸ Nehru lectured Kennedy during his trip about Eisenhower's warnings of the military-industrial complex, and made a rather condescending speech at the White House dinner that evening.¹¹⁹ Kennedy would later describe the visit, similar to Canada, as "a disaster."¹²⁰ Again, any minor success came from Jackie's ability to charm Nehru. Having received him at Hammersmith Farm before flying back to Washington, the pair emerged from Marine One, "walking arm-in-arm... obviously enjoying a very animated chat together." In front of them marched Kennedy, who "looked terrible... he had wide circles around his eyes and he seemed dreadfully morose."¹²¹ Realizing the diplomatic advantage of his wife, a visit to India and Pakistan had been in the works since September, and tonight as Nehru looked at Jackie

“with the light of love in his eyes... obviously delighted,” it became clear that JFK had made the right decision.¹²² In a private conversation with Kennedy, Schlesinger mentioned Nehru’s interest in Jacqueline. “A lot of our visiting statesmen have that same trouble,” the president comically quipped.¹²³

Ultimately the trip to the Indian subcontinent, slated for November 1961, had to be postponed due to the escalating conflict over Berlin. Thus, the First Lady accompanied JFK to South America, before touching down in India and Pakistan in March 1962.¹²⁴ Their arrival in Venezuela and Columbia that December was designed to place a “spotlight [on] the cooperative effort being made by the United States and the Republics of South America to accelerate the economic and social development of the Western hemisphere.”¹²⁵ In reality, it was a goodwill mission, to raise the profile of the United States.¹²⁶ As Theodore Sorenson explains,

[Two] percent of the citizenry of Latin America who owned more than [fifty] percent of the wealth and controlled most of the political-economic apparatus... [h]ad friendly ties with U.S. press and business interests who reflected their views in Washington. They saw no reason to alter ancient feudal patterns of land tenure and tax structure.”¹²⁷

As such, there was a natural mistrust of the new Democratic president, despite his best efforts with the launch of the Alliance for Progress. Before their coming to Caracas, leftist organizations had spent days covering city walls with the slogan “Kennedy, no.”¹²⁸

As the arrival of the First Couple drew near, these slogans were countered with: “Jackie, si!” and as the presidential motorcade made its way through the streets of Caracas, there were the familiar, desperate shouts of “Jackie! Jackie!”¹²⁹ Her presence on this trip was purely visual. In Venezuela, she visited the Don Simón kindergarten,¹³⁰ and gave a speech to a group of peasants in La Morita, accompanied by her husband. Fluent

in Spanish, she spoke for JFK and told the assembled crowd that America would not be “satisfied until the people of all our countries have an opportunity to work for adequate compensation to live decently and to receive an education.”¹³¹ She continued to address this theme of social justice the following evening at the San Carlos Palace in Bogotá, Colombia. After visiting a children’s hospital that day, she told the assembled crowd: “The good things in life – education, housing and employment – should be within reach of all and not just a few blessed by fortune.”¹³² Her mere presence, in the eyes of the State Department “visibly enhanced the impact of the President’s visit.”¹³³ White House advance man, Jerry Bruno, expands upon this by suggesting that Jackie garnered a warmer outpouring of support than the president could have hoped to gain on his own.¹³⁴

Between Canada, Europe and South America, the Kennedy administration was witnessing the growth of what columnist Russell Baker deemed “Jah-keeism.”¹³⁵ Jacqueline Kennedy had, in the words of Hamish Bowles, utilized a combination of public fascination surrounding her fashionable, yet conservative image, and imbued it with a sense of genuine engagement, to add “weight and luster to her husband’s presidency [and] in so doing, she helped change the world’s view of America.”¹³⁶ The upcoming visit to India and Pakistan would prove to be the crown jewel in her foreign efforts. Found among the First Lady’s personal papers, the initial itinerary, dated January 17 to February 4, is incredibly intensive, yet it reflects the subcontinent’s enthusiasm over the visit. President Kennedy, in conversations with Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith, felt that the proposed schedule was far too ambitious and Jacqueline’s reservations are evident as well. The itinerary is peppered with her characteristic question marks. The offending items included an informal gathering with the press, a donation of animals to

the New Delhi Zoo on behalf of Caroline, and a “huge reception” at the Museum of Modern Art, requiring Jackie to “stroll around the garden to greet notables.”¹³⁷

The second draft was only marginally less complex, and the trip was delayed again until March 5 so that “revisions” could be made.¹³⁸ In reality, India’s invasion of Goa in December had posed a foreign policy nightmare, and Kennedy harshly condemned Nehru’s seizure of the territory. The consternation mixed with prior distrust of American aims, led to a new outburst of ire for the United States, and Jackie’s visit to the region was likely delayed to allow passions to cool. That being said, the First Lady still walked into a highly volatile situation as of March 1962, and credit must be given to her skilful diplomatic negotiation of the problems between India and Pakistan.¹³⁹ Her presence again navigated the divide between her public image and her private nature, and she remained remarkably humble to the media about the reason for her journey:

It feels unnatural to me to go on such a long semi-official trip without my husband. I have missed my family and I have no desire to be a public personality on my own. If people were kind to me it was because I was the wife of the President – so the people were showing their affection for him and he should have been there to receive it.¹⁴⁰

Yet, in India, one hundred thousand greeted her motorcade as it wound its way through downtown New Delhi, while in Karachi streets were thronged with Pakistanis holding welcome banners and throwing flower petals. Agent Clint Hill remembers, “[We] had seen this kind of reception in Paris and South America, but on those trips she had been with the president. Here, all of these people had come out *just for her*.”¹⁴¹

Again we see a familiar plea from the First Lady’s office, harkening back to the campaign, maintaining that Jackie wanted to avoid fashion stories overshadowing the

serious diplomatic nature of her visit to India and Pakistan.^{142ix} Yet, her personal files speak to a conscious effort to capture that “‘third eye’ of the photographer” that Keogh mentions. Her schedules contain personal scribbles detailing various ensembles to match particular events, along with a series of note cards that include an overview of morning, afternoon, and evening clothes.¹⁴³ Vibrant but cool pastels of “apricot, fuchsia, yellow, and ice blue,” were purposefully aligned with traditional continental colours and ensured that her presence held focus in all situations.¹⁴⁴ A French artist on the trip, noticing this contrast, remembers: “She must have studied terribly carefully. Every dress she wears becomes a marvellous spot of color, like the bright spot that holds your eye in Persian miniatures.”¹⁴⁵ Her constantly perfect appearance in these days led *Life* to comically critique: “The females in her party grew gradually rumped and wilted,” while Jackie “looked precisely as [she] had the day she left.”¹⁴⁶

Naturally, such rabid fixation on the First Lady’s image brought with it the usual degree of domestic backlash. Baltimore’s *Morning Sun* ran an editorial by Mrs. James F. Booth on April 2, criticizing Jackie for disavowing a fashion show of sorts in the Southeast, yet wandering amongst some of the most “impoverished people in the world” in a “showy wardrobe with an especially designed evening gown.”¹⁴⁷ Paul Grimes, covering the visit for the *New York Times*, similarly worried about the contrast between the elegant First Lady and the fact that she was kept away from “the seamy side of India,

^{ix} Conscious of the problematic imagery “as India and Pakistan are such poor countries,” Pamela Turnure penned a memo to Jacqueline Kennedy asking if she wanted to release her fashion sketches, as had been done for past trips. “Naturally [the press] are screaming for them,” she wrote. Jackie’s reply, written at the bottom of the memo is cautious: “I think better not to – don’t you – Say I haven’t decided what to wear when. Lets NOT – it just makes a lot of fashion stories I hate” (Memo to JBK from Pam Turnure, February 15, 1962, Box 15, “India-Pakistan [General],” Folder 1, DSCN1660). The note offers a glimpse into the First Lady’s thinking, but also contrasts with her meticulous planning regarding fashion. Her desire to downplay, ultimately leads to conclusions that there were other more important diplomatic elements Jackie wanted to ensure were highlighted by the press in Southeast Asia.

an under-developed country of 438,000,000 people....”¹⁴⁸ Numerous letters and editorials flooded the press from Americans who did not approve of the trip. Many felt, said anchor Edward Morgan of ABC News, “[that] Mrs. Kennedy should have stayed home with the children instead of going off alone with her princess sister to strange places, wearing glittering gowns in the palaces of maharajahs and being candidly photographed on elephants and camels and things.”¹⁴⁹ Indeed, there is a certain quality to the visit that plays out “like a version of Gidget in India.” Koestenbaum paints Jackie as “the ingénue who visits a far-flung locale and makes friends there, proving that her normalcy can subdue even a subcontinent of strangers.”¹⁵⁰

It is true that Indians and Pakistanis alike thought they were in the presence of royalty. America’s First Lady, in addition to the Secret Service, was accompanied by “elegantly attired attendants, who...served her food, protected her with parasols from [the] searing sun, and performed sundry duties that attend a queen.”¹⁵¹ The people of Pakistan called her “American Malika,” while their counterparts in India knew Jackie as “Amriki Rani.” Both phrases roughly translate to “Queen of America.”¹⁵² This presentation of radiance, contrary to American concerns, again drew people to Jackie rather than alienate them. At the Taj Mahal, her convoy was swarmed, as a large crowd cheered her name and ran after her car. This happened again when she arrived in the former capital, Udaipur. Sailing down the Ganges River, “hundreds of spectators, many of them bathers in loin cloths, ran along the steep bank after the launch. Some dived into the river and swam toward [the barge] but did not get far.”¹⁵³ Cries of “Jackie ki jai!” (Hail Jackie!) and “Jackie zindabad” (Long Live Jackie!) were heard throughout the subcontinent.¹⁵⁴ In Pakistan, twenty thousand cheered her arrival at the Lahore Horse

Show and she further won hearts by wearing a traditional Karakul cap to the Khyber Pass. The most meaningful moment however came when Jackie praised the beauty of Pakistani women. “She had yet to see an ugly girl in [Pakistan],” ran a headline based on her comments.¹⁵⁵

“It is the psychological pull that counts ultimately,” observed Jawaharlal Nehru, countering concerns that Jackie offered no change to the stereotype of imperial America. “Mrs. Kennedy’s visit has been a very considerable success,” he continued, and though “other things change, political policies and the rest, [there] is that psychological pull of friendship between India and the USA and to that [her] visit has added greatly.”¹⁵⁶ A note to JFK from Ambassador Walter P. McConaughy expands upon this, emphasizing the personal connection Jackie established. “She has won,” he said, “the confidence and even the affection of a large cross section of the Pakistani populace who feel that they know her and know that they like her.”¹⁵⁷ Jackie’s preparation beforehand along with detailed notes about the various individuals she met and regions she travelled provided the leaders of the subcontinent with the image of an interested and engaged America.¹⁵⁸ As First Lady, Mrs. Kennedy managed to achieve the aims of the administration without getting weighed down by the political. As the president later recalled, “Jackie took all the bitterness out of our relations.... If I had gone there, we would have talked about Kashmir and Goa... [she] did a helluva job.”¹⁵⁹ She had proven herself, not a mere queen, but a “great diplomat and a great Ambassador – who has given an image of America which has made the world smile again.”¹⁶⁰

Even the media, characteristically critical of her wardrobe, had to admit that Jackie’s goodwill visit had been a success. Edward Morgan of ABC conceded: “We are

lucky to have such a charming and versatile symbol working for us,” while Ambassador Galbraith is quoted in *Link* as equating the trip with “something close to magic.”¹⁶¹ A clipping from the *Rajasthan Chronicle* notes that Jackie’s presence “create[d] more feelings of good wishes and deep love between the Americans and Indians,”¹⁶² while Pakistan’s *Dawn* hailed the largest foreign news presence ever, far surpassing that of Queen Elizabeth II.¹⁶³ Domestically, *Time* declared the visit a “triumph”¹⁶⁴ while clearly taking glee in the fact that “deadly rivals, were engaged in benign competition: each was trying to outdo the other in the warmth of its greetings [towards the First Lady].”¹⁶⁵ The *New York Times* talked of new ties of “mutual understanding,” while also importantly observing that “no one seemed to believe in the wake of the visit by the United States’s President’s wife to Pakistan and India that her presence would have any significant political impact.”¹⁶⁶ Perhaps not, but what the *Times* fails to notice, is the extension of the psychological pull that Jawaharlal Nehru refers to.

In what appears to be standard practice for the Kennedy administration, a United States Information Service (USIS) film crew followed the First Lady to the subcontinent.¹⁶⁷ In the Eisenhower years, American propaganda films were often dry in their Cold War fervour, lacking star quality. The Kennedys, especially the First Lady, offered a chance to depict America in a new light: “tolerant, nurturing, and culturally sensitive.” As filmmaker Leslie Stevens expressed to Edward R. Murrow: “This special film can be of great value in that it will show to all of the nations of the world the seriousness with which our country takes the Indo-Asian peoples.”¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, these reels would be narrated and sent to seventy-eight countries, converted into twenty-nine languages, under the titles “Invitation to India,” and “Invitation to Pakistan.” To give an

idea of the scope, twenty thousand viewed the film in Beirut in one week, while three hundred thousand ultimately watched the films when they aired in the French West Indies. Another seventy thousand saw the reels in Indonesia, while tickets sold out in Singapore.¹⁶⁹ This level of interest, especially in such volatile and crucial regions, shows the value of the First Lady in America's propaganda efforts. The point is perhaps best highlighted by an editorial in the *Journal American*: "If you were a family man in Ghana," remarks the author, "and had a choice of seeing a free film showing Jackie's travels or a documentary on Khrushchev's visit to a tractor factory, which would you choose?"¹⁷⁰

To return to the thought process of Wayne Koestenbaum,¹⁷¹ the visit to India and Pakistan, in which Jackie was able to elicit such fervour on her own, cemented her status as the most effective Cold War tool in the Kennedy administration's arsenal. A piece in the *Pakistan Times*, takes this usefulness beyond the visual, hinting at the private way she managed to relate herself to people across the world through cultural appreciation:

As one watches her dazzle de Gaulle, Khrushchev, and other such testy characters, one cannot help but dream of what would happen on the international scene if Jacqueline Kennedy suddenly decided to settle accounts with Fidel Castro, invite Mao for dinner at Mount Vernon and normalise relations with China, or take up the chairmanship of the disarmament talks in Geneva.¹⁷²

Though this oversimplifies the very real world problems facing the United States, it is an accurate criticism of the first year and a half of the Kennedy administration's failures: from Cuba, to civil rights, and the construction of the Berlin Wall.¹⁷³ Jackie's ability to charm the world, and connect with cultures on an intimate level would earn her the title of "goodwill ambassador," and in the opinion of the *News and World Report* her time as First Lady gave the world "a lesson in diplomacy."¹⁷⁴

A cartoon in the *Journal American* captures the spirit of Jackie's return. As her caricature emerges from the airplane, the outstretched arm of Uncle Sam hands her a bouquet of flowers,¹⁷⁵ a present from a (mostly) grateful nation. JFK afforded her arrival full diplomatic honours, and upon her return to the White House, Jackie was privately asked to deliver a written report to the administration. Her observations, in the words of Ted Sorenson, "held back nothing by way of either praise or criticism."¹⁷⁶ Again we return to the notion of an observant and capable First Lady, whose skills and assessments were valued behind the scenes. Her oral interview affords some perspective into the kind of commentary she would have presented. Quite bluntly, Nehru's daughter Indira Ghandi is described as a "real prune," and a "bitter, kind of pushy, horrible woman."¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Ambassador Walter McConaughy, in Jackie's eyes was "hopeless," and none of what "[she] thought the ambassador [to Pakistan] should be, which was a gentleman's soldier, and a friend of the President's." In his place, she even suggested alternative men to be appointed.¹⁷⁸ She also, somewhat surprisingly, had an impression of women's rights in the two nations:

Jackie much preferred India to Pakistan. Pakistan, she said, was a man's country: the women were still mostly in purdah; the men were interested, not in women, but in hunting and soldiering and in talking to each other. India, on the other hand, had many intelligent and able women, and its men (or at least Nehru) were agreeable and responsive.¹⁷⁹

Jackie was, in the words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Quite willing to play a political role when necessary." Over the years she had developed "keen reactions to issues of public policy,"¹⁸⁰ that were frequently hidden behind a guise of femininity. As such, Jackie's remarks on female empowerment are extraordinary, from an age where her public persona was submissive to that of her husband, for both protection and privacy.

Through these foreign visits, especially the later, there is an evolution in Jacqueline Kennedy's conception of self. The "stunning egghead"¹⁸¹ who had been viewed both as a campaign liability and a selective asset, discovered that despite continuously maintaining her role as a wife and a mother, there was a role to be played in assisting her husband through both her passion and intellect, along with a skilful manipulation of her image.^x The problem, historically, lies in what Pamela Clarke Keogh describes as the "almost obsessive" interest in the First Lady.¹⁸² Despite a desire to play down clothing stories, Jackie was well aware that her image was directly linked, beyond motherhood, to her sense of style. It is, as Koestenbaum explains, an inherent trait in human nature that "prefer[s] surfaces to depths."¹⁸³ This has built up an historiography, that often mirrors the words of Sorenson, in his praise of Jackie's tenure as First Lady: "By maintaining her own unique identity and provocative personality... she became a world-wide symbol of American culture and good taste."¹⁸⁴ Yet, this chapter has strived to show that diplomatically, there is a depth to Jacqueline Kennedy that is evident in small ways throughout her historiography, when one knows where to look.

This philosophy is perhaps best surmised in an interview with Hugh Sidey of *Life*. Standing on the Truman Balcony, staring out at the expansive capital before her, she stated:

This is what it's all about – these men *battle* in politics. And here it is, the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the White House, the meaning of that whole struggle.

^x In early 1963, White House Chief Usher J.B. West remembers that Jacqueline Kennedy was coming into her own and accepting the power that the office of the First Lady held. "She had begun to enjoy the title," he said, "and the life, more than anyone ever suspected that she would. Proud of her accomplishments, confident of her position, sure of her staff, [Jackie] was ready to sit back and relax for the next few years" (West, 268). The rest that is referred to centers around Jackie's pregnancy and expectation that she would play a limited role in 1964, following the birth of Patrick. Ultimately, this future is relegated to the wastebasket of "what ifs," as is the possible outcome of her involvement in the campaign in 1964.

It took, remembers Sidey, “a great mind... to sum it up like that, in an artist’s way.”¹⁸⁵ She was able to look out at Washington, and see not just politics and conflict, but history, culture, and symbolism. Unfortunately, as First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy would only get to make one last diplomatic trip abroad, to Mexico at the end of June 1962.¹⁸⁶ Again, she addressed the population for her husband in Spanish, praising “the underlying values of [Mexican] culture, [and their] profound faith in man’s dignity.” She went on to speak of how “material progress can flourish without destroying the real values of the heart and human intellect.”¹⁸⁷ Similar to Venezuela, her speech was televised nationally, and its effect, according to one State Department official was nothing short of “astounding.”¹⁸⁸ Another observer, perhaps somewhat ambitiously, praised the Kennedys for their role “at long last in laying the collective ghost of the Mexican-American War” to rest.¹⁸⁹

Due to pregnancy, Jackie would declare 1963 as the year she would be “taking the veil,” and would not resume official travels until their visit to Texas that November. It was her first time, as First Lady, touring domestically and the public’s enthusiastic response prompted her to agree to a second trip to California two weeks later.¹⁹⁰ There was also talk of a “See America” tour, by Jackie in 1964 – hoping to capitalize on some of the domestic energy heading into the re-election campaign.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, there were plans according to the First Lady, for state visits to the Soviet Union and the Far East in the second term.¹⁹² Had Kennedy lived, and been re-elected – it would have been the first visit by an American president to the Soviet Union, during the height of the Cold War. One can only wonder, given Jackie’s receptions in Ottawa, Paris, and Vienna, along with Caracas, Bogotá, New Delhi, Karachi, and Mexico City, what would have happened had she set foot in Moscow? The assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, not only took

away a presidential administration that in many regards, had yet to define a legacy; it also tore from the pages of history, Jacqueline Kennedy's continuing evolution into a global ambassador of goodwill and détente. Instead, forever seared in public consciousness, lingers a blur of brilliant pink, splattered in the crimson glare of history unfinished.

Chapter Two

“Art Director of the Twentieth Century”

On their first morning in the White House, Jacqueline Kennedy asked her staff to inspect the decor of the mansion’s staterooms and report back. In the process, they found the following note from John F. Kennedy to the First Lady:

“Jackie, let’s declare war on toilet paper. Where the hell is it?”¹

Easily overlooked as a humorous anecdote, the message between the couple highlights the bewildering nature of the White House and its quadruple functionality as a private home, state house, office building, and museum. In July 1790, the first American Congress chose Washington, D.C. as the permanent home of the nation’s government, and by late 1792, the cornerstone of the White House had been laid.² The architect, James Hoban, based his design on an eighteenth-century colonial manor, favouring trendy oval-shaped rooms. George Washington’s desire for a modest presidential residence led the chief executive to trim Hoban’s plans, eliminating the entire third floor of the design. While this cut significant cost from the initial \$400,000 estimate, “from then on, almost every First Lady [has] lost her battle to make the White House a home.”³

On December 9, 1960, as First Lady in-waiting, Jacqueline Kennedy toured what would become her residence and workplace over the next three years. She had been released from hospital that morning, following the birth of her son. Taken directly to the White House to meet with Mamie Eisenhower, she walked through the doors of the mansion with trepidation in her heart, knowing what awaited her.⁴ In 1941, Jackie’s mother had taken her and her younger sister on a tour of the White House over Easter break. “It seemed rather bleak,” she remembered. “There was nothing in the way of a

booklet to take away, nothing to teach one more about that great house and the presidents who lived there.”⁵ As Mrs. Eisenhower led Jackie through the residence, the incoming First Lady observed that little had changed over two decades. Indeed, if anything, the White House had gotten worse. It was, as Jackie described it: “[a] dentist office bomb shelter,”⁶ that “looked like a hotel that had been decorated by a wholesale furniture store during a January clearance.”⁷ Overwhelmed by the task ahead of her, combined with the exertion of walking so soon after a caesarean section, Jackie excused herself to the bathroom and burst into tears.⁸ⁱ

Recovering in Palm Beach over Christmas, she ordered and devoured volume after volume of material on the White House from the Library of Congress, determined to prepare plans for a full-scale restoration. The rooms were, in her opinion: “tattered, worn, and seemed to have no rhyme or reason.” She would go on to lament, “What did the kings and queens and great statesmen of the world think when they came to our President’s home?”⁹ Few women in the sixties were as capable as thirty-one year old Jackie of infusing the White House with a sense of American history. An avid student of the late French monarchy,¹⁰ Jacqueline Kennedy knew and had experienced the importance of historical symbols, such as Versailles, to the French. In her eyes, the United States lacked a similar appreciation for its history, and Washington especially,

ⁱ The tour itself took place on December 9, 1960, and was only allowed by Jackie’s doctor, John Walsh, on the condition that she not over-exert herself and use a wheelchair while in the White House with the First Lady. Mamie Eisenhower, who wanted to “give Jackie a private tour...seems not to have contemplated abandoning her dignity to push her guest around.” As a result, it was decided by Mrs. Eisenhower that a wheelchair would be present but hidden and only be used “if she asks for it.” Two months later, when Jackie asked Chief Usher J.B. Walsh why the wheelchair had never appeared, she was informed of Mrs. Eisenhower’s orders, only to giggle and remark: “I was too scared of Mrs. Eisenhower to ask” (Bradford, 191-92). As Jackie remembered that: “Like a fool, I said I’d go. I wish I hadn’t.... There was never any wheelchair and you just were dragged around every floor, and not even asked to sit down, and brought in and out of the – past all the press. And when I got back, I really had a weeping fit and I couldn’t stop crying for about two days. It was something that takes away your last strength when you don’t have any left. So that wasn’t very nice of Mrs. Eisenhower” (Kennedy et al., 132).

was in desperate need of both culture and sophistication. To the incoming First Lady this was a detriment during the Cold War; to lack a sense of self was to lack forcefulness in asserting one's way of life.

This mindset partially stems from a young Jacqueline Bouvier's effort to discover her own confidence and place in the world. In a sense, the White House is a metaphor for her own transformation. As a young adult, Jackie would write that she was "a poor man's Paris copy...[with] a square face and eyes so unfortunately far apart that it takes three weeks to have a pair of glasses made." Her release channelled itself through a passion for and deep sense of history and art. In an essay for *Vogue*, she describes her ideal job as: "Overall Art Director of the Twentieth Century," where she could "[watch] everything from a chair hanging in space."¹¹ Alluding to her cultural influences, she draws primarily on two nineteenth century artists for the style she would impose on mankind: poet Charles Baudelaire and playwright Oscar Wilde. Her choices speak to her favour toward the sensual and the graphic. Alice Kaplan emphasizes this point, by stressing Jackie's emphasis on Wilde's sensory descriptions: "candybox spillings of pinks and mauves," and Baudelaire's visual parallels: "perfumes as green as the prairies," which demonstrate her deep-set appreciation for the visual.¹²

This "attraction of the look of things" would have a tremendous influence on her actions when she took up residence in a visually shabby White House, a mere decade later.¹³ Naturally, her husband was less fond of her trend towards the lavish. There was concern that the cost and aims of his wife would make his administration seem aristocratic and "frivolous."¹⁴ Kennedy was worried that an eager Jackie would usher in the sense of monarchy that George Washington hoped to avoid. In a mere two weeks, she

had blown through her annual congressional appropriation of \$50,000 for redecoration of the executive mansion. This had barely covered changes to the family's personal quarters in the residence.¹⁵ⁱⁱ JFK was cautious to avoid a repeat of the clothing scandals from the campaign, and for his part, he donated his entire salary to charity.¹⁶ There was also the matter of the White House itself; anytime a president (or First Lady) attempted alterations there was public outcry. It was a third-rail for most occupants.

In his 1902 State of the Union address, President Theodore Roosevelt highlighted the symbolism of the White House and the public's desire to maintain the building's sanctity:

The White House is the property of the nation and, so far as is compatible with living therein, it should be kept as it originally was.... The stately simplicity of its architecture is an expression of the character of the period in which it was built and is in accord with the purposes it was designed to serve.¹⁷

Ironically, very little of the actual mansion remained by the time the Kennedys took up residence. Following the burning of the house in 1814, the 1902 Roosevelt expansions, and the 1949-52 Truman renovations, there was little original architecture left.¹⁸ For all Teddy Roosevelt's talk of structural integrity, it was his expansion in search of office space that saw ceilings haphazardly nailed up. When Truman ordered a structural inspection after he noticed that the floor of his study was vibrating, it was found that the interiors of the White House were on the verge of collapse.¹⁹ The subsequent gutting and renovations drew particularly poignant criticism from the public, in part because of the cost of \$5.4 million, but especially regarding the addition of a balcony to the South

ⁱⁱ To put this spending in perspective, a confidant of the Kennedy family remembers visiting the emptied residence shortly after Inauguration Day. Invited to dinner on the Sunday, Joe Alsop describes a vivid memory of Mamie Eisenhower's use of "vomit green and rose pink" for her bedroom and bathroom (Bradford, 228).

Portico. Truman was accused of “meddling with a structure that not only didn’t belong to him, but that he was not likely to be occupying much longer.”²⁰

Though Jacqueline Kennedy’s intention lay in preservation, the American public remained sensitive about any and all changes to the building. Jackie remembers, “I was warned and begged and practically threatened... not to dream of touching the White House. They said it was such a symbol of the American people that anyone who had the audacity to tamper with it could only bring down the wrath of a nation.”²¹ As such, this chapter addresses the very complex effort that Jacqueline Kennedy undertook as First Lady, not only to develop a home that she was comfortable living in, but a presence that represented the history and dignity of the United States. Her end result draws comparisons to the great mansions of Europe that house priceless treasures and centuries of history. This exploration moves through the early processes of the restoration, style influences and ultimately the worldwide reception of Jackie’s eventual tour of the White House, all the while focusing on her extremely hands-on approach. This chapter builds on that which precedes it, bringing the First Lady’s private capabilities further into focus, all the while returning to an exploration of her public image.

In an interview with *Life*, Jackie differentiated her efforts from the “renovations” of Roosevelt and Truman by establishing her work purely as “a question of scholarship.” “Everything in the White House must have a reason for being there,” she said. “It would be sacrilege to merely redecorate it...it must be restored.”²² To offer political cover, one of her first actions was to establish what became known as the White House Fine Arts Committee. Comprised mainly of affluent and knowledgeable elite, the committee allowed for the collection of private monies (bypassing the controversy Truman faced

over the use of public funds), along with gifts of furniture and antiques. Furthermore, prominent Republican, Henry Francis du Pont, was made chairman of the commission. His expertise in American furniture from 1640 to 1860, combined with his connections to America's most affluent citizenry, is the official reason for his enlistment. Du Pont's political status however, served to offer an air of bipartisanship to Jackie's efforts. Indeed, a majority of the members on the Fine Arts Committee were drawn from members of the Republican Party. This was not by accident.²³

Jackie's original aim, from her early research, was to return the building to the early nineteenth century style that had graced the mansion in the time of its first occupants, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The most obvious argument against the plan comes from the fact that large portions of the White House, such as the East Room, remained unfinished in the early nineteenth century. Abigail Adams used the intended grand ballroom to hang wet laundry.²⁴ An April 1961 report, commissioned from historians Lyman Butterfield and Julian Boyd, was received with interest by Jacqueline Kennedy and quickly dispatched to the committee. The full study, found in Jackie's personal files, advises against the use of a single style and argues that the nature and tone of the mansion changed with each early occupant of the presidency. As such, it urged the committee to draw on various early periods in an effort to display the true history of the White House. The report also stresses that historical scholarship into the varying periods will be a challenge, but accuracy is of the utmost importance as "at no other site in the United States do the lines of human and historical interest converge so sharply."²⁵ Thus, the committee encountered its first problem: nineteenth century American furnishings drew heavily on foreign (French and Victorian) influences.

Following the American Revolution, the young republic quickly moved away from British inspiration and turned towards the hard lines, ornamentation, and animal visages of French décor. In the age of Napoleon, this decorative style took on imperialistic tones, combining Greek and Roman revival with influences from the Egyptian empire. Napoleon personally did away with the gilded furniture of the Bourbon kings and introduced rich mahogany woods and bronze ornamentation. In the United States, these ornaments featured American symbols (i.e. eagles, buffalos, moose), and more locally accessible woods were used over mahogany.²⁶ When the French monarchy was restored, gilded furniture made its way into the White House, and though some ornamentation remained, the more classic and simple tastes of the monarchy returned.²⁷ At the same time, as America became a power in its own right and began to forge a closer relationship with the English, the classic French style gained competition from Victorian influences. Furniture from the Victorian period was heavy, plush and highly stylistic.²⁸

In his annotated companion publication to Jacqueline Kennedy's White House tour, producer Perry Wolff notes that "democracy, to state it frankly, has made a shambles of furniture design"²⁹ in the nineteenth century. These complexities, even if only in very brief summation, gives one an idea of the scope and difficulty of the project that the First Lady and the Fine Arts Committee would carry out over the coming three years. The process was made more complicated by the fact that until a law was passed in 1929, White House furnishings were the property of the First Family, who could do whatever they wanted with the pieces. Over the years most furniture moved on with the outgoing administrations, was discarded, or sold. One story has Mary Todd Lincoln upon her husband's death, selling much of the mansion's furniture at auction, in an effort to

raise money. In reality, Mrs. Lincoln received a third of the late president's \$110,000 estate, a year's presidential salary, and a \$5,000 annual pension.³⁰ Although, it is unclear as to whether Jacqueline Kennedy was aware of the story's status as pure legend, her personal notes suggest that the belief in Mrs. Lincoln's furniture sale provided the motivation to establish a permanent and protected collection inside the White House.

Public Law 87-286, secured at Jacqueline Kennedy's request in September 1961, builds upon the 1929 legislation, granting museum status to the executive mansion, and ensuring that all pieces removed by future administrations would enter into the Smithsonian's care.³¹ Section Two of the act is seemingly motivated directly by the tale of Mrs. Lincoln's fire sale. It reasserts, for posterity, that all "articles of furniture, fixtures, and decorative objects of the White House... shall thereafter be considered to be inalienable and property of the White House."³² The non-existent auction was thought to have inflicted a lot of hardship on the attempt to locate furniture that resided in the mansion during early administrations. In a set of notes about the Lincoln Room, Jackie writes of the former First Lady: "She sold a lot of good things – to get money for herself."³³ Her tone is harsh, almost bitter, and highlights the frustration and monstrosity of the task before her. Although untrue, it is representative of the confusion Jackie was attempting to correct by infusing a sense of history into the residence.³⁴

Previous historiography on the restoration and the degree to which Jackie was personally involved in these efforts has varied. As mentioned, biographies and studies tend to focus on the long stretches of time that she was absent from the White House, combining them with her very public desire to place her children first. Family friend, Janet Felton Cooper remembers, "[Du Pont] lent legitimacy to the whole thing – [there

was a view that] it would have collapsed in seconds, because I think Jackie was considered a bit of a flighty young thing.”³⁵ Nonetheless, recent access to the First Lady’s personal papers yields obvious but unseen involvement. Similar to her thoughts on Mrs. Lincoln, her input comes through scores of marginal notes, lists, and memos. A personal favourite is a note from Jackie to Bill Elder, to ensure he is “hawk-eyed next winter in guarding and caring for our things.” After receiving word of wear on furnishings following tours, she bemoans: “If the life of a beautiful piece of furniture or old carpet is only six months, there is really not much point in restoring the White House.” Closing, she begs him to attend tours, “to see just what those little tourists are snitching now.”³⁶

In addition, several stories highlight Jackie’s deep enthusiasm and eagerness in the project. The first takes place only a couple days after inauguration, when she announced to a small dinner party: “Do you know, I’ve found a whole room of calligraphers busily at work in the cellar?”³⁷ With the energy of a child, she had already explored all the dark recesses of the mansion. White House Chief Usher, J.B. West, comically observes the problem with this:

I didn’t *want* her going all over the house. There are many areas in which our work goes smoothly without the First Lady’s knowledge.... I knew there would be enough to do in the weeks ahead without Mrs. Kennedy taking notes of conditions in the linen closets or the butler’s pantry.³⁸

The First Lady’s staff would ultimately come to characterize these trips as “spelunking.”³⁹ One afternoon a dust covered Jackie emerged from a White House elevator, startling Martin Luther King, Jr. Totally immersed, she exclaimed: “You would be so thrilled if you could just have been in the basement this morning. I found a chair right out of the Andrew Jackson period.”⁴⁰

Beyond searching the house and compiling lists of historical significances and period furniture, one of her first actions upon assuming the office of First Lady was to summon the director of Washington's National Gallery of Art to the White House. Under the impression that Jackie wanted to see him sometime in the coming week, he was quickly rebuffed and informed that he was to be at the White House by the next morning; at the latest.ⁱⁱⁱ Director John Walker, a family friend, was hardly surprised when he discovered the object of Jacqueline Kennedy's desire – eight paintings by artist Paul Cézanne. The collection technically belonged to the White House, but had been transferred to the gallery under the tenure of President Truman. They would now return to the White House, in pairs, and rotate through display in the Green Room, and later the Yellow Oval Room, at Jacqueline's request. According to Margaret Davis, "Had it been anyone but Jackie Kennedy who wanted them, [Walker] would have barred the door to their departure." Although Walker viewed the collection as an important acquisition of the National Gallery, to Jackie, the paintings proved a crucial foundation to the restoration. They were representative of the very real artistic influence the French had on nineteenth century America.⁴¹

Ultimately, Mrs. Johnson returned the paintings to the National Gallery shortly after the assassination, as Cézanne "wasn't an American painter."⁴² Her reaction is characteristic of the nationalized conflict that surrounded the restoration. The issue was made more complicated by concerns carried over from the 1960 campaign about Jackie's French heritage and her abundance of clothes from designers based in France.⁴³ In

ⁱⁱⁱ As Jackie describes that first week, in her oral history with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.: "And then once I was in there, I was in bed for about a week in the Queen's Room after inauguration, but I can remember seeing David Finley in bed and maybe John Walker, so it started right away. Because just to look at that place! Maybe just because I'd been to the White House obviously, for some congressional receptions, and my little tour around with Mrs. Eisenhower" (131).

addition, the relationship that the Kennedys forged with De Gaulle in 1961 began to grow contentious over nuclear proliferation and control of Europe. As public opinion towards the French began to sour, Jackie went to great lengths to hide the very necessary French influences on the White House restoration. In addition, it was kept from the public that Henry du Pont had relatively little influence over the final designs as chairman of the commission. The major drive behind most of the other mansion staterooms came from Stéphane Boudin, a French decorator to the European elite. Officially, Jackie brought him in on a “consultation” basis.⁴⁴

Reflecting the recommendations of Butterfield and Boyd, each of the three major staterooms of the White House were designed to embody a particular period with early American history. The first to be completed was the Red Room. Described by *Know Your Antiques* in January 1963 as awash with glistening “dark woods, golden decorations... [and] American paintings,” it was “unusual but magnificent and surprisingly simple.”⁴⁵ Jacqueline Kennedy’s personal notes on the Red Room describe her inspiration as drawn from an antique mantelpiece, dated to the Empire period.⁴⁶ The room was not decorated in a pure red, as expected, but rather takes on a raspberry hue, a shade that was popular in early to mid-nineteenth century parlours. The colour was derived from documents dated to around 1812, which spoke of the original colours being a mixture of cerise and gold. Fabrics were then ordered from an American textile company based out of New York to match the original hues of the room.⁴⁷ Completed in January 1962, Boudin’s early achievement, driven by Jackie’s input, helped to give a sense of purpose to the very public project. The warm response from Americans provided much needed political leverage for the completion of the restoration.⁴⁸

In contrast, the Blue Room, which was funded by Boudin's personal friends Charles and Jayne Wrightsman, allowed a freer hand for himself and Jacqueline Kennedy, away from the moderating influence of the committee. This liberty permitted a more grandiose French style, and the room itself looks the most like something out of a European palace – particularly Versailles.⁴⁹ Even the First Lady was worried they had gone too far at first, later recalling, “I was so disappointed in the Blue Room when I first saw it. I thought it was too much.”⁵⁰ Du Pont similarly complained, “It’s too *French*.”⁵¹ In time however, she came to appreciate its presence as “a formal reception room,” with “a sense of state, ceremony, arrival, and grandeur.” She would praise it as “Boudin’s masterpiece.”⁵² Unlike the Red Room, which has little gilded furniture, other than a chandelier donated by Secretary of State Douglas Dillon,⁵³ the Blue Room dazzles with gilded armchairs, tables, candelabras, and is even adorned with golden walls and carpet. The First Lady’s notes indicate that a single piece of furniture provided her inspiration for the room: a pier table found in the White House craft shop. Dated to Monroe, Jackie’s research tells of how the president ordered it following the fire of 1814. Unable to get furnishings in Empire style, his rooms were adorned in the gold of restoration France.⁵⁴

It was in a 1946 copy of *Gazette des Beaux Arts* that Jackie originally saw a reference to the pier table and asked J.B. West to locate it for her. The table was in bad condition from misuse, and had to be sent off for repair. Upon return it glistened with a golden finish and a marble tabletop.⁵⁵ The before and after images are striking and through this table Jacqueline Kennedy brought the Monroe-era, and that of restoration France, back to life. Although a serious effort was made to obtain American materials for the Blue Room, complications arose and the committee, given the period’s heritage,

justified the purchase of French-made fabric. Monroe had ordered his furniture from France, and now Jackie would order her furnishings from Paris as well. To hide this obviously inflammatory choice from the public, the order was shipped through the American embassy in France to the US State Department and covertly delivered to the White House.⁵⁶ Nor was it the only item brought secretly from France. A 1962 memo to Jackie approves the acquisition of a Louis XVI tablecloth. The First Lady has only one comment: “Fine – but no publicity.”⁵⁷

This was Jackie’s approach in handling the presence of Boudin as well, and as one member of the committee comically remembers: “[We] had to hide Mr. Boudin in the pantry when Mr. du Pont came round.”⁵⁸ Publically, du Pont and the Kennedys’ personal designer, Sister Parish, were given credit for the rooms, however the rooms match neither with Parish’s simplistic country style or du Pont’s early American expertise.⁵⁹ The only room in which du Pont had a measurable impact was a space chosen to represent a period not dominated by the rise and fall of the French imperial era. The Green Room was decorated with furniture that would have graced the homes of Washington, Adams and Jefferson prior to the turn of the nineteenth century. As none of the pieces likely made it into the White House, it presented the First Lady and du Pont with an opportunity to select a broad range of fine antiques.⁶⁰ Once again, the presence of dark wood permeates the room, but unlike the ornamentation and elegance of the Red Room, the pieces are described in White House memos as having a “classical style.”⁶¹ One only has to look at the official paintings, commissioned to artist Edward Lehman, to see that the Green Room is “more cool than dramatic, more rational than sensual.”⁶² It is the physical

embodiment of the difference between designers. When Stéphane Boudin was shown the completed Green Room, he was said to yell: “It is full of legs!”⁶³

Sarah Bradford relates the “gradual ascendancy of Boudin...with Jackie’s own evolution from a relatively unknown Georgetown wife to glamorous First Lady, wife of the most powerful man in the world and celebrity in her own right.”⁶⁴ The First Lady, seemingly drawn to all things French, was equally drawn to him. She later would remark: “When you saw him work, you saw what no American decorator could do.” In her eyes, it was he who had returned the White House to a sense of stateliness and “grandeur.”⁶⁵ Indeed, the impact of the restoration itself cannot be understated. The present White House continues to permeate many of the lavish alterations made by Jacqueline Kennedy and her committee.⁶⁶ One only needs to look at images from successive administrations to glimpse the lasting impact. The restoration was, as Jackie maintained, a sense of duty. In a March 1963 interview, she observed that she had always cared about old houses and preserving the past. When asked why she pushed so hard, her reply was that “it would have been criminal of me not to.”⁶⁷ For Jackie, similar to her approach to foreign policy, the restoration was never a question of personal fulfillment or political aims, but rather a matter of image, imbued with a private passion for history and culture.

The culmination of these efforts developed into a televised tour of the progress, given by the First Lady herself. On February 14, 1962, the program aired jointly on CBS and NBC at 10 p.m. and ABC followed up with a rebroadcast the following Sunday at 6:30 in the evening. Forty-six million Americans tuned in that first night, a shocking seventy-five percent of all television viewers in that time slot.⁶⁸ The original idea, not surprisingly for the media-shy Jackie, appears to have originated with her husband.

Historian David Halberstam asserts that it was Kennedy who convinced CBS executives to take on the cost and allow his wife to show Americans what the Fine Arts Committee had been up too. Though unclear to what degree Kennedy's thinking was influenced by the 1952 tour given by Harry Truman, for her part Jackie was won over by the chance to appeal for further donations.⁶⁹

Though production teams had little contact with the White House as they were drawing up the script, producer Perry Wolff remembers the First Lady's painstaking sets of revisions during the final consultation process:

I had prepared a script for her which she had marked up. [Our] research team was very careful about documenting the provenance of the various artefacts of the White House, [but] Jackie immediately spotted some mistakes. She absolutely knew her stuff. She was amazing.⁷⁰

Here again, we see a very private attention to detail on the part of the First Lady, and in this sense, Jackie's notes on a draft dated January 10, 1962 show a keen eye for history. The tour was to be filmed five days later, yet she again filled a previously edited script with pages upon pages of additional comments and changes.⁷¹ Some of her edits are extremely telling of her views on the project and the ultimate tone of the program.

She removed a reference to the difference between antiques and reproductions being only slight.⁷² Similarly, Jackie felt that the story of Teddy Roosevelt practicing Jiu Jitsu in the East Room was a "cheap crack," and scrawls: "not true – one exhibition."⁷³ Her scribbles further indicate a deep knowledge of many little known traditions in the White House, such as her reference to the "portraits of 2 presidents – always tradition 2 have last 2." The anecdote was her suggestion to fill time whilst moving past the North Portico, by pointing out the presidential portraits of her husband's immediate predecessors.⁷⁴ Attention to detail is seen as she scratches out the phrase "American

Century parlor” in reference to the Green Room, and scrawls: “It is what a fine American drawing room of 1800 would have looked like – at the [time of] Adams & Jefferson.”⁷⁵ This focus is similarly evident in her edits to press releases. In an announcement regarding the opening of the Blue Room, Jackie is careful to change the word “white” to “cream” in describing the wall treatment.⁷⁶ Even small details mattered to this First Lady. As such she filled the newly restored rooms with fresh flower arrangements, ashtrays, and on social evenings had fires burning in the hearths. Though seemingly innocent touches, it was all part of her larger attempt to ensure that the mansion did not feel like the sterile museum she had visited as a child.⁷⁷

Whether Jackie’s televised tour achieved this aim is up for some degree of debate, both among journalists of the time, as well as scholars today. Viewed years later, the program can come off as stilted. A piece by Norman Mailer in the July 1962 edition of *Esquire* best summarizes its tone as he compares Jackie’s performance to the “girl with the magnificent sweater who used to give the weather reports on television in a swamy singsong voice.”⁷⁸ A modern viewing of the tour further backs up Mailer’s criticisms of Jackie as a “starlet who is utterly without talent,” who “moved like a wooden horse.”⁷⁹ The program itself is awkward, as Jackie traipses from room to room, often fixing her gaze just shy of the camera lens. She describes the rich history of many of the antiques she has acquired, while peppering her commentary with an overwhelming number of acknowledgements to donors and remarks about keeping rooms the way they are. In this last effort, she perhaps falls short of emphasizing that she was returning the room to an original status, rather than leaving them the way she found them. The tour crucially and detrimentally forgets that a majority of Americans had never seen the White House, and

thus lacked a frame of reference to compare Mrs. Kennedy's accomplishments to. Nor did the black and white airing of the program help the matter much.

The tour's shortcomings led to a brutally honest, but brilliant parody by Vaughn Meader on his "First Family" album. Although the slight infuriated Jackie, its criticisms of her feigned innocence are quite poignant. The track, titled "The Tour," mocks her efforts at the girlish and coy façade which embodied her public persona as First Lady. The Jackie character, after wandering through a hallway, pointing out paintings: "Well, there's this one, and this one, and that great big one over there....," wanders into the Blue Room, only to exclaim: "We decided to leave it just the way President Blue had it originally!"⁸⁰ The real First Lady's reserved nature, in fairness, may have stemmed from nervousness, quite in contrast to her interview for French television.⁸¹ Yet, it is worth mentioning again, the warning by Norman Mailer, discussed in the last chapter. In an effort to make herself more palatable to the American people, he states, there was "something very difficult and dangerous [Jackie] was trying to do from deep within herself." By acting aloof, she perhaps opened herself up to even more criticism from the tour. It was only years later however, that she would acknowledge Mailer had been right, and publically expressed the problems that the duality between her public and private nature posed for the program.⁸²

There certainly was a great political risk for JFK, exposing his seemingly dilettante wife to the American people. She meekishly guided them through a tour of the White House, whilst pointing out priceless antiques. As one telegram to the administration following the program asked, "Is your wife a Republican or a Democrat [?]." The writer then answered his own question by insisting: "I think she really is a

Republican.”⁸³ The tour itself showcased furnishings that most Americans could only dream of. One couple from Maryland congratulated the First Lady with the humorous request: “Since you are furnishing your White House by donation due to a tight budget we thought we’d try it too[.] How about something to start us off [?]”⁸⁴ Many Americans lacked a true understanding of the First Lady’s aim and scope. A controversy arose over antique panoramic wallpaper used in the diplomatic room, depicting historical scenes from West Point, Boston Harbour, and Niagara Falls, among others.⁸⁵ An October 1961 interview with Milton Glaser, President of the American Institute of Interior Designers (AIID), exposed that \$12,500 was spent on the extraction of wallpaper from a period home. It could have been reprinted for \$1,600.⁸⁶ Jackie’s press secretary, Pamela Turnure, then inflamed matters by calling the criticism “undignified,” threatening to withdraw support for the AIID if Glaser did not issue a retraction.⁸⁷

Angry letters from those such as Mrs. Donald Shoemaker, Jr. swiftly poured into the First Lady’s office. They complained of the abhorrence of a “moth eaten old wall paper job...[for those] who take pride in this beautiful building and hate to see its walls abused in this manner.” Shoemaker went on to assert that \$12,500 was an “unheard [of] sum...to millions of we tax paying citizens.”⁸⁸ Another note from a resident of Texas complained that “the average (mean) income of a family in Travis County... is too little if taken in [to] pay for the wallpaper – almost five years of such family income before taxes is needed to equal cost of item.”⁸⁹ Others still bemoaned the White House’s attempt to censure Glaser’s opinions, observing that he was “constitutionally guaranteed the right to express them.”⁹⁰ Only a solitary letter, from Mr. Glen S. Goodnow of New York, stands out from the pack. It congratulates Ms. Turnure for:

[Taking a] stand against the American Institute of Interior [Designers'] protest over the antique wallpaper.... Americans consider the White House an historical monument imbued with the tradition associated with the great men who have lived there. It is only proper that the décor should be done in a manner compatible with its historicity.⁹¹

This conflict over a set of wallpaper is indeed representative of the greater risks Jacqueline Kennedy took with the restoration project and the tour itself. Though it could have been purchased for cheaper, the historical set was beautifully preserved, far from “moth eaten” and offers a romantic aura to the room.⁹²

Suspiciously timed to coincide with the tour's airdate, a comparable scandal broke the morning after the television premiere. It all began when the *New York Herald Tribune* ran a story accusing *Life* of making a quid pro quo donation to the Fine Arts Committee in exchange for access to the First Lady. Although the magazine had confirmed a donation, it refused to disclose the amount. As such, a spokesperson for *Life* was forced to respond and maintain that the decision to make a donation came “after the story was prepared,” and asserted, “We have always supported national shrines and museums with corporate contributions.” The *Herald Tribune* furthered alleged that NBC and ABC, in helping to bear the cost of production, were informed by CBS of a similar arrangement. Included in the total cost of the tour was a supposed donation to the work of the Fine Arts Committee. For its part, CBS then acknowledged that a monetary contribution was under consideration, but only by the station. It maintained that a donation was never promised as part of a bid, nor was it to be included in the cost of production. White House Press Secretary, Pierre Salinger, backed these claims: “If the networks want to make a contribution, the contribution is welcome. If they don't – it's just that simple.”⁹³

The overall response however, was overwhelmingly supportive of Jacqueline Kennedy's efforts. Indeed, the greatest measure of the public's enthusiasm comes from the number of telegrams in Jackie's personal files, and although a majority are purely congratulatory, there are interesting finds in between.^{iv} A newspaper clipping sent to the First Lady by Carolyn E. Fortin of Portland, Maine, observed: "long after she has returned to private life, the nation will be grateful to [the First Lady]." What is surprising about this clipping is that in her attached letter, Ms. Fortin mentions that the newspaper was staunchly Republican and usually opposed to all things Kennedy.⁹⁴ This was not a unique phenomenon. Many Americans such as Roy M. Frisby⁹⁵ and Mr. and Mrs. Jack V. Seaver,⁹⁶ chose to identify themselves as opposed to her husband's policies, yet admitted to thoroughly enjoying the program. Jackie's contribution to the preservation of America's past, they exclaimed, was worthy of deep respect by all countrymen. Nonetheless, there was still the odd cable from Middle America, that returns to the ever-present notion of grandiose and excess, not relatable to the average citizen. These were the sometimes pithy remarks that insisted Jackie be sure to "throw another straw mattress out in the slave quarters,"⁹⁷ as she proceeded to fleet through the mansion.

Despite the scandals, media coverage similarly reflected an overall tone of support for the First Lady. The *Washington Daily News* declared Jackie's performance as "full of enthusiasm," and observed that "she looked charming, spoke in a soft breathy voice, was poised, dignified and she was a definite TV hit."⁹⁸ The *Boston Globe* went on to praise "her performance [as] straightforward and unpretentious," and stated that Jackie

^{iv} When the volumes of condolence letters to Jackie were turned over to the Presidential Library, the National Archives given the scope of the collection (1,570 linear feet), were forced to save only a portion (one-tenth) of all letters organized into a representative mass by archivists (Fitzpatrick, xx). This provides reason to assume that the hundreds of congratulatory telegrams in Jackie's files, were most likely trimmed from a representative sample of what may have been thousands of congratulatory messages.

displayed “a sureness of historical knowledge which established her beyond question as distinctly a person in her own right.”⁹⁹ Jack Gould of the *New York Times* also commended this sense of preparation: “Her effortless familiarity with dates and names attested to homework done for the occasion.”¹⁰⁰ In this vein, another letter writer noted: “[I] believe that more Americans have gained more knowledge on American history than they may have studied through graduation from universities.”¹⁰¹ The overall response prompted a delighted JFK to ask his advisors: “Can we show it in 1964?”^{102v}

Indeed, the effectiveness of the program in educating the nation’s children is the most prevalent theme that rises out of the onslaught of coverage. Jeffrey Vieira of Rhode Island, “as Vice-President of [his] class,” wrote to ask that the tour be provided to schools as “it was shown too late for me and other students to see.”¹⁰³ This is the kind of enthusiasm that JFK was hoping for when at the end of the tour he lamented:

I have always felt that American history is a sometimes dull subject. There’s so much emphasis on dates.... But I think if [young people] can come here and see – alive – this building and in a sense touch the people who have been here then they’ll go home more interested and I think that they’ll become better Americans and some of them may want to someday live here themselves which I think would be good – even the girls.¹⁰⁴

Much commentary has been made about his suggestion of girls wanting to live in the White House. Some scholars believe and use this as evidence of his progressive manner and forward thinking, perhaps alluding to possible support for a female president. Given the period, his hearty laugh, along with a lack of women in senior positions, and Jackie’s

^v Following the filming of the tour, the Kennedys retired with Perry Wolff to the film theatre in the White House and viewed the unedited reels. Witness to a rare moment of intimacy, Wolff described them as “very cuddly,” and knew from that evening “they cared deeply about each other,” despite all the troubles that would later come to light. Ultimately, after watching the tapes, JFK was unhappy with his closing interview and ever conscious of his image, asked to re-film his segment the next morning. Feeling his delivery was too forceful, he held up the cameras from another assignment until he got it just right (Watson, 94).

typical reserved statement to *Time* that the White House should inspire girls to “go out and make homes,”¹⁰⁵ this progressivism is in doubt.¹⁰⁶

It does allude however, to an interesting project that was received among the congratulatory letters from Miss Gaki’s third grade class at the Hockaday School in Dallas.¹⁰⁷ Gaki wrote that her “eleven [girls] were inspired to leave Texas immediately to become First Lady!” and attaches the subsequent assignment.¹⁰⁸ The letters themselves, to the modern scholar, are somewhat distasteful from the feminist perspective. We must be mindful however, of the era this project was conducted in, especially given Jackie’s adherence to traditional gender norms. One student writes that as First Lady she would “try to make [her] husband happy,”¹⁰⁹ while another began with: “When my husband is elected president.”¹¹⁰ In this vein, a third student wrote that she hoped “to be as pretty as Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.”¹¹¹ As such, the letters themselves are reflective of the duality within the restoration project.

Alice Kaplan asserts that the notion of “interior decoration” is frequently associated with the pretence of femininity,¹¹² and despite the level of planning, historical scholarship, and organization that Jackie placed into the White House, her efforts can easily be dismissed to the domestic sphere. The meek persona that the First Lady embodied whilst leading the tour, only furthers the notion that the restoration lay firmly within the duties of a wife and presidential spouse. As Joanne Meyerowitz asserts in her essay “Beyond the Feminine Mystique,” this use of “femininity and domesticity,” helped throughout the 1960s to “legitimate women’s public achievements.”¹¹³ It was safe, it was acceptable, and at the height of the Cold War it was reassuring to the nation.¹¹⁴ Yet, when the tour is viewed with the private knowledge of the extent of her efforts, it becomes as

Mailer addressed, a parody of itself. Jack Iams, writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, draws inspiration from both Mailer and Meader as he observes, “It had its faults.... Mrs. Kennedy tended to let her voice become monotonous and her smile rather fixed.... At some points, it made me think of ‘Schnitzelbank’ – ‘Is not this the famous East Room?’ ‘Yes, this is the famous East Room.’”¹¹⁵

Interestingly, returning to the class project in Miss Gaki’s homeroom, there are poignant examples of a more educated and active view of the First Lady. The letters of such young children indeed show an aspiration towards the academic and an appreciation for Mrs. Kennedy’s antiquarianism. In this sense, notions of proper feminine conduct perhaps affect them less at such a young age. Although none go as far as to strive for the presidency, some letters did focus on a desire to explore America’s past, as Jackie was doing. Young Karen Coyle wrote that as First Lady, she wanted “to discover the past and restore the past as Jacqueline Kennedy has done,” and planned to “study little cracks in the White House to find all the...secret trap doors to the past.”¹¹⁶ Her classmate Laura Bayoud similarly hoped to make the White House “interesting to all Americans and foreigners.”¹¹⁷ This last letter is particularly interesting, in terms of notions of cultural outreach, and Jackie’s understanding that America’s history could be utilized to infuse diplomacy with a sense of empire.

In this regard, Bayoud honed in on something the diplomatic community already knew, and that many Americans were quickly coming to regard as the most beneficial aspect of the tour – its value as a propaganda piece. Shipped by the United States Information Service (USIS) around the world, the 16-mm film was dispatched to one hundred and six countries, several of which lay behind the Soviet sphere of influence.¹¹⁸

One letter writer, following the tour, noted: “I [can] understand why people in foreign lands stand and just listen to her. What an ambassador for our country.”¹¹⁹ Her frenzied reception in Canada, Europe, and Latin America, coupled with the upcoming enthusiasm for her visits to India and Pakistan, motivated the USIS to capitalize on international fascination with the First Lady. What’s more, Jacqueline Kennedy, given her fluency in French and Spanish, filmed introductions for the reels – speaking to a wide section of crucial nations in their own language. It is thought that hundreds of millions saw the program, and fifteen countries including Canada, Brazil, Korea, and Lebanon aired it on television. Thirteen other nations, among them India, Pakistan, Israel, and the Soviet Union, chose to hold diplomatic screenings. Although the airings limited the number of individuals who personally watched the film, an agency memo outlines the value of a trickle down effect: “It [was] more important to reach one journalist than ten housewives or five doctors,” who would witness the program on television.¹²⁰

A declassified report from June 1962 shows careful observation by the administration of each country willing to air the program and government attitudes towards the content of the tour. Not surprisingly, the USSR refused a television airing, along with India, and even the United Kingdom and Sweden expressed concerns about its overly nationalistic tones.¹²¹ Nonetheless, it was received with excitement among many populations. The *Daily Mirror* called Jackie a “charming hostess,” and went on to remark, “She almost made [us] feel ashamed that the British burned the House in 1814, leaving very little more than a couple of mantelpieces.”¹²² The *Sunday Times* further commended “her profound knowledge and sympathy,” along with her “scholarship of the subject.” Meanwhile in Bombay, the *Current* praised Jackie’s “unerring good taste,

knowledge of antiques and a lively sense of history.” Government reports, from areas where gathering public perception through media proved more difficult, give a cursory indication (at least from the intelligence community) of the reception in the developing world. In Africa, the tour was hailed as effective and praised it as “useful in conveying a picture of the White House and Mrs. Kennedy’s personality.” In Caracas, similar reports commended the film for humanizing the White House, while a cable out of San Salvador conveyed “unanimous approval and admiration” for the First Lady’s efforts.¹²³

The popularity of the tour abroad led to a plea to the First Lady’s office from the Bureau of Public Affairs. In September 1962, Kate Louchheim, made a request for translated editions of *The White House: An Historic Guide*. French, she said would be useful for the newly independent African nations, while Spanish would provide an opportunity to reach into Latin America. She claimed to have already begun “urging our Ambassador’s wives to take plenty of copies to their posts with the idea of using them as gifts.”¹²⁴ Again, we see the desire, specifically among the neutral and newly independent nations, to shape perceptions of the United States. Jackie herself was aware of the need to impress foreign leaders, and as mentioned, this drove her work on the White House:

I cringe to imagine – All during their visits here, we are telling them that they should choose to go with us and not the Russians – They have probably just slept in gilded beds and eaten off Ivan the Terrible gold plates in the Kremlin – So it is important how you first affect them when they reach this country.¹²⁵

Although receptive to Ms. Louchheim’s appeal and in agreement that “it’s a great idea,” Jackie urges her to explore it with the USIS. Understandably, given the scope of the restoration Jackie would note, “We have enough work as it is [and] I can’t get involved with this.”¹²⁶

The guidebook itself had proven to be a tremendous endeavour for the First Lady. She supervised the project personally and often helped to select pictures, chose the wording of the text, the layout of the publication, and even wrote some of the photo captions. This passion foreshadows her future career as an editor and the guidebook developed out of her belief that visitors should be able to take something away that could tell them more about the history of the presidential residence. As Assistant Director of the National Parks Service, Nash Castro, remembers:

No one could have been more interested than the First Lady. Mrs. Kennedy studied every page of the [mock-up] with great care and thoroughness, making many suggestions, bringing to bear her own professional background in journalism.¹²⁷

Released several months after the tour, on July 16, 1962, the initial run of 250,000 copies, could be purchased for a dollar and contained two hundred pictures, three quarters in colour, across its hundred and thirty-two pages. It sold out in three months, and was on its fourth printing by March of 1963.¹²⁸

In a rather bizarre by-product that ultimately dates every such publication, a list of American presidents by term freezes the Kennedy presidency as current and ongoing in the first four editions of the guidebook.¹²⁹ It is an eerie feeling to open an original copy and see John Fitzgerald Kennedy listed as the current president of the United States. In a way, it draws parallels to our ability to continuously relive the moment of assassination through funeral imagery, and more importantly – the Zapruder film. This will be further addressed in the next chapter. However, following the departure of the Kennedys, a similar static nature engulfed the White House. As the years have gone by, practical changes have been made to the mansion, and successive presidencies have changed the décor – especially under the Nixon administration. Nonetheless, as mentioned, more

recent First Ladies have used the Kennedy-Boudin style palate as a source of inspiration in the decoration of the White House staterooms.¹³⁰ As a result, the Kennedy administration continues to linger in the halls. Not necessarily out of deference to some misplaced static martyrdom, but rather because of the historical value that the Kennedys infused into the White House.

In this regard, there are changes to the décor of the presidency itself that many Americans, and even the presidents themselves, do not realize date back to Jacqueline Kennedy's handiwork. These subtle touches start right at the top, in the Oval Office. Added by Theodore Roosevelt as part of the 1902 renovations, it was first used by Howard Taft as an office in 1909.¹³¹ With little regard for the superiority of the legislative branch or the fact that the president is always on the move, this room more than any other has entered popular culture as representative of American power. The few images we have of the FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower Oval offices highlight the drastic change the room underwent at the hands of Jackie. The original decoration scheme retained a lot of the furnishings carried over from the Truman administration. The carpet was pale green and matched the curtains. Jackie did however, have the walls painted white and brought in couches and chairs to fill the empty space in front of the fireplace. This last action effectively sectioned the Oval Office into two areas, a stylistic choice that has been carried forward by successive administrations. It transformed the room into a place to meet informally with administration officials and formally with foreign leaders.¹³² In their study of the restoration, James Abbott and Elaine Rice credit Jacqueline Kennedy with providing a sense of youth and comfort to the room.¹³³

Kennedy's early Oval Office was decorated in a nautical theme, reflecting the life and passions of the president. As advisor Theodore Sorenson would later describe it: "Ship models graced the shelves, and pictures of ships and naval battles dominated the walls.... Family photographs, a picture painted by his wife and bird models of two Cape Cod sandpipers varied the décor..." Sorenson's description goes on to mention one further crucial piece: Kennedy's desk.¹³⁴ Now known as the Resolute Desk, it was discovered by Jackie on the first floor of the White House, having been moved by FDR into storage. The piece, a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes, was meant to symbolize the growing friendship between former foes. A distraught Jacqueline Kennedy found it discarded and forgotten, buried under a green sheet. The desk itself was made out of the timbers of the HMS Resolute, whose wreck was found by American seamen in 1855 and returned to the British.¹³⁵ It was the First Lady who chose to place the desk in the Oval Office, and although her motivations remain unclear, the historical significance combined with its maritime heritage likely inspired the placement. President Johnson sent it to the Smithsonian, but Jimmy Carter returned it to the Oval Office where it has been used by every president except George H.W. Bush.¹³⁶

As the Kennedy administration aged, so did the sophistication of the image that was put before the American public. By 1963, the term "New Frontier" had fallen into disuse, and the young men that surrounded the youthful president desired to be presented as seasoned statesmen – especially following the handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹³⁷ The first demonstration of this new image came in October 1962 in the form of Air Force One. It was Kennedy's decision to release the Secret Service code name for the aircraft to the public, as he felt that there was something powerful embodied in the name.

Originally, JFK had used the Eisenhower-era plane¹³⁸ in combination with their private family jet, the *Caroline*, for domestic travel. The procurement of a new plane offered a chance to change the presidential aircraft's military-based image and he asked his wife to establish a new colour scheme with designer Raymond Loewy. The words "United States Air Force" were replaced with "United States of America," and a blue and white colour palate was chosen, ornamented with an American flag on the tail.¹³⁹ In fact, the splendour of Air Force One is why the Kennedys made the short flight from Fort Worth to Dallas in November 1963, as opposed to the much quicker drive. "Two fields," equalled "two landings and for a politician nothing except weather is more important than a good airport arrival."¹⁴⁰

That same month, Jacqueline Kennedy commissioned a redesign of the Oval Office. Given her influence on the mansion's staterooms, there is a sense that she was eager to do away with the musty green carpet, and enhance its sense of grandeur. Boudin's designs here are consistent with an attempt to display a more dignified and mature image of the presidency, and thus Kennedy. A majority of the work was to be carried out while the First Couple were out of the White House on a campaign stop to Texas, and unfortunately neither husband nor wife got to see the finished result. By the time Jackie made her way to the West Wing following the assassination, the office had been packed and President Johnson's possessions were being moved in. Fortunately, there are images that remain of the finished room. When compared with those photographs of the office taken during Kennedy's tenure, the change is subtle but striking. The red carpet, ironically thought to be too regal by Jackie, is a powerful force, while the simplistic window dressing (likely inspired by the Red Room) creates a

softened, seemingly diplomatic overtone. Though Johnson used the office initially, he changed it over time to suit his taste – which differed quite passionately from that of the Kennedys.¹⁴¹ The successive Johnson offices embody the tension between the ideals of the two families: Hyannis Port opulence with down-home Texas simplicity.¹⁴²

Although Jackie had made inquiries during her tenure as First Lady about reproducing the Resolute Desk for the eventual presidential library, following the assassination the plan was promptly dropped. Unlike most libraries, which contain Oval Office replicas, Kennedy's does not. Abbott and Rice surmise that the youthful 1961 Oval Office was inconsistent with the image that Jackie wanted to present to the public.¹⁴³ Although the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum eventually did choose to include a partial reproduction of the office, it is small and rather bleak. You face the Resolute Desk, which is roped off and surrounded by memorabilia. It is rather unimpressive and anti-climactic to visitors who have made their way through grand halls dedicated to the excitement of the campaign and the splendour of the administration. It is interesting to note that rather than merely fixating on the office itself, the exhibit chooses to highlight Kennedy's efforts towards civil rights. Materials and images are used to create the subtle link that it was the president's primary focus while behind that desk. Discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the president's approach to African Americans was lackluster at the start of his administration. The coming chapter will expand upon this, highlighting his growing consideration of the issue, and how Jacqueline Kennedy privately harnessed civil rights to enhance JFK's image in death.

Charles Collingwood, who led the tour of the White House for CBS, would speak to this issue of legacy years later, and situate the restoration's role in the emergence of the

Kennedy era as a refined and sophisticated period. In this regard, the television program and insights into Jacqueline Kennedy's work helps us to:

Understand the enormous sense of shock and loss that followed the President's assassination. [In it] we see the Kennedys in full possession of the mystique which surrounded them, full of grace and charm, concerned with the full sweep of American history.... Rightly or wrongly, that is still how many remember them.¹⁴⁴

What started out as a personal project for Jackie, to improve the executive mansion for the nation's visiting dignitaries and citizens, quickly grew into a national initiative that spawned a television special, two international goodwill films, and a guidebook that was so popular that by 1963 it had spawned knock-offs.¹⁴⁵ It is perhaps the best example history has of the First Lady's capabilities behind the scenes. The White House again became a symbol of national pride after the malaise of the previous two administrations, and Americans, who had begun to appear backward on the world stage, especially in the cultural realm, again had a history they could take pride in. Though not all citizens saw themselves in Jacqueline Kennedy, and although the tour and her efforts are cloaked in a feminine reserve, her actions and belief in the image of America established the White House as a permanent fixture of inspiration. So much so, that many still believe the interior hasn't changed since the First Lady left office.¹⁴⁶

Chapter Three

“Let Them See What They’ve Done”

“Jackie is my greatest asset,” John F. Kennedy would tell aide Dave Powers as the presidential motorcade wound its way towards the Rice Hotel in Houston, Texas. In the unofficial start to the 1964 campaign, the president and his wife were in the Lone Star State to shore up votes. Current polling placed the Kennedy-Johnson ticket a full one hundred thousand votes behind presumed Republican frontrunner, Barry Goldwater. That day, a comparable number of Texans turned out to see the First Couple, a much larger crowd than Kennedy had garnered when he had last travelled to Houston alone.¹ The *Chicago Sun-Times* predicted that it was “Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy [who] may turn the balance and win her husband the state’s electoral votes,” the following year.² It was Jackie’s first domestic trip as First Lady, and looking towards 1964, she promised her husband: “I’ll campaign with you anywhere you want.” Texas was the first stop, to be followed by California two weeks later. Her growing confidence within her role is evident, and while waiting for the motorcade in Fort Worth, she exclaimed: “Oh Jack, campaigning is so easy when you’re president!”³

It had all started off so innocently. Promising an upset John, Jr. that they would return in time for his third birthday, the First Couple departed Andrews Air Force Base on November 21, 1963.⁴ Boisterous crowds received them as they criss-crossed the state of Texas that day, and the following morning in Fort Worth.⁵ Heading to Dallas next, the First Lady was hoping that the bubble top would be used on the motorcade. So much work had been put into her outfit and hair, and she was worried about the wind and heat damaging her carefully constructed façade. As Powers would tell the couple that

morning, “You two look like Mr. and Mrs. America.” Unfortunately, though the weather had been temperamental as preparations began to depart Fort Worth, the order was given by Kennedy staffers to lose the plastic bubble top in Dallas. The sun had come out, a phenomenon seen in the 1960 campaign, known as “Kennedy Weather.”⁶ The only signs of trouble to an otherwise stellar looking day came from word of leaflets scattered throughout downtown Dallas that morning. They bore the president’s image under the headline: “Wanted For Treason.” Similarly, a full-page ad ran in the *Dallas Morning News* accusing Kennedy of subversive communist activity and the circumvention of the nation’s constitution. Taking the threat in stride, the president would playfully tell his wife: “We’re heading into nut country today.”⁷

There certainly had been concern about Dallas. Only weeks earlier Adlai Stevenson, Kennedy’s ambassador to the United Nations, received a hostile reception upon arriving to give a speech at Memorial Auditorium. He was shouted at, spat upon, and physically assaulted. Kennedy staffers and the Secret Service still remained uncertain about the stop. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. records Stevenson’s observation that there “was something very ugly and frightening about the atmosphere” of Dallas.⁸ Senator William Fulbright, admitting a personal fear of the city cautioned Kennedy: “I wouldn’t go there. Don’t you go.” Similar warnings poured in from preacher Billy Graham, Texas congressman William Yarborough, and state DNC member Byron Skelton.⁹ Nevertheless a nonchalant Kennedy maintained that little could be done to shield him if someone wanted to take aim at the president - anywhere. The First Couple both felt that the Secret Service was too cautious, and running boards and plastic tops kept him from the public. “He removed that bubble [top] from the limousine because he knew the ultimate safety of

an American President lies in the people's respect for the office to which they have elected him."¹⁰ Hours later, he was dead.

Despite the odd placard bearing such grammatically incorrect or hostile phrases as: "YOUR A TRAITER" and "YANKEE GO HOME," the crowd was surprisingly warm as the motorcade made its way through Dallas at noon on November 22. Twice, Kennedy even stopped the car to speak to some young children and a group of Catholic nuns.¹¹ Jackie too was in rare form, enjoying herself despite acknowledging that "one day's campaigning can age a person thirty years" whilst looking in the mirror that morning.¹² One can almost imagine her pulling at her face, searching for wrinkles.¹³ "Her presence defused the violent political atmosphere. She was so evidently non-political, simply a star whom everyone wanted to see."¹⁴ In a glimpse of her coy side, the First Lady amused herself in areas where the crowds thinned by waving at billboards. The weather was insufferably hot, and she kept pulling out her trademark sunglasses, only to have her husband tell her to take them off.¹⁵ People would want to see her face. Every vote mattered. Soon, the motorcade was deep in the heart of Dallas and the overpass at the far end of Dealey Plaza offered much needed respite from the sun.¹⁶

Waving to the crowds from the left jump seat, Governor Connally's wife turned towards the president to remark: "You can't say that Dallas isn't friendly to you today." As Kennedy answered her, a loud crack reverberated through the plaza. Could it have been a motorcycle backfiring? Or perhaps a rebellious teenager throwing a firecracker? Before anyone had time to react, the second of Oswald's bullets tore through the president's throat. It moved on to shred the Governor's chest, coming to rest in his thigh. The noise made Jackie turn towards her husband, who bore a quizzical look and began to

slump into her lap.¹⁷ Another shot came in quick succession and the president's skull exploded in a spray of blood and gore. Jackie screamed: "Oh my God, they have shot my husband... I have his brains in my hand!"¹⁸ⁱ as the limousine sped towards Parkland Hospital. She desperately attempted to hold his skull on, "but from the front there was nothing."¹⁹ John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth president of the United States, was declared dead at 1 p.m. local time, and barely an hour later, his vice-president, Lyndon Johnson, took the oath of office aboard Air Force One. The newly widowed Jackie at his side, Johnson raised his right hand and photographer Cecil Stoughton captured that grave moment, now forever shrouded in the trappings of history.²⁰

The president of the United States had been assassinated before, but this time it was different. It felt different, it sounded different, but most importantly, it *looked* different. America witnessed, in full view of its pulsating, frenzied media, its youthful president gunned down in a "bloody public wounding... riding in the back of a limousine beside his fashionably dressed wife."²¹ The now former First Lady would spend the remainder of the day covered in the result of the bullet's impact: her husband's blood and grey matter. Images of the blood-spattered First Lady descending from Air Force One, onto the tarmac at Andrews Air Force Base quickly gained iconic status. By allowing herself to be photographed in such a gory state, counter to the aims of the new

ⁱ While recognizing the controversy surrounding the Kennedy assassination, the author has chosen to depict the events as outlined and accepted by the Warren Commission (38-39, 107-112), while relying on the detailed account in Vincent Bugliosi's *Four Days in November* (58-65) and United Press coverage to enhance areas left inconclusive by the commission. In their study of the Secret Service memory of the assassination, *The Kennedy Detail*, authors Gerald Blaine and Lisa McCubbin offer a slightly different but respectable interpretation. According to eyewitness accounts, they assert that the first and third bullets hit the president, while the second bullet hit Governor Connally, with the third shot fatally wounding Kennedy (213-217).

president,²² ii William Manchester asserts that Jacqueline Kennedy was afforded the opportunity to shape the dialogue of the coming days:

For the present the focus of public attention would be the widow of the slain Kennedy. Martyrdom, in transforming the country's concept of him, had elevated her to a kind of temporary regency. How she behaved during the transition would have lasting implications for the United States.... Mrs. John F. Kennedy possessed a far greater power [than Lyndon Johnson] over men's hearts.²³

Jackie, a student of historical symbolism, would harness this “temporary regency,” as a chance to take the focus off the moment of her husband's death and privately instill in the American subconscious a more substantive legacy. She was terrified that history would forget her husband, and the very public funeral of John F. Kennedy became the launching point for this dialogue.²⁴

The process through which society shapes its historical memory and seeks to define an event within the global discourse is known as *rhetorical legitimation*. The term, coined by philosopher Max Weber, refers to a process that distills simplistic historical truths from a mountain of iconography, often supplanting more complex historical fact.²⁵ Barbie Zelizer expands upon this concept in her work: *Covering the Body* to include the theories of both Jürgen Habermas and Hayden White, who situate the power of legitimation with the authority of the speaker, and the textual interpretation of the media.²⁶ Concerned that historians, whom Jackie referred to as “bitter, old men,”²⁷ would

ⁱⁱ When originally asked by Lyndon Johnson to change her clothes, Manchester notes her reply as: “Oh, no. Perhaps later... But not right now” (316). The subsequent remark of Jackie's desire for the public to see the blood, has led to the belief that Jackie's aim was for Johnson's inaugural photograph to reflect the carnage of the assassination (Andersen, 10). What she remained unaware of, was that photographer, Cecil Stoughton was under instructions to hide the blood stains, and shot the photograph above her skirt (Andersen, 10). In Stoughton's words, his thinking was: “Bloodwise I'd better be O.K.” (Manchester, 324). Manchester attributes this order to aide Ken O'Donnell, however given Johnson's urging for Jacqueline Kennedy to change her clothes, he was likely conscious of the imagery as well. Robert Caro in volume four of his biography of Lyndon Johnson, *Passage of Power*, explains: “No single gesture would do more to demonstrate continuity and stability – to show that the government of the United States would continue to function without interruption despite the assassination of the man who sat at its head – and to legitimize the transition... than the attendance at his swearing-in ceremony of the late President's widow” (chap. 12, 447).

fixate on her husband's failures, she began a concerted process that would solidify the memory of the Kennedy administration in the American media, and thus in the minds of Americans. She would later remark that, "[Jack's] life had more to do with myth, magic, legend, saga, and story than with political theory."²⁸ In this regard, the same, very private attention to detail that fixated upon her foreign trips and restoration of the White House, now turned to shaping the mythological atmosphere that would surround her husband. Fusing the cultural largess of the Kennedy era to his actions, Jackie helped to enhance the unique narrative that surrounds JFK's historical memory. As such, she placed us in a situation where we now "confuse charisma with competence, rhetoric with results, [and] celebrity with genuine achievement," in regards to the administration's legacy.²⁹

Through careful examination of photos, media coverage, and the global outpouring of grief that surrounds those four days in November, historians can begin to strike at the foundations of this construct and utilize Jacqueline Kennedy's private agency as a way of unravelling fact from fiction. As one begins to peel back the layers, an image of a man emerges who became greater in death than he was in life; a man enlarged both by grief and the foresight of his wife. Quickly tied to another assassinated president, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy's legacy has transformed into one of emancipation, worldwide acclaim, and respected leadership. This often blatantly ignores historical realities, yet it survives to this day. One of the most recent examples of such ongoing legitimization can be found in a promotion launched by the Kennedy Library in 2011. The exhibit, entitled "JFK: 50 Years," opens with an introductory video, set to moving music that splices images of the civil rights movement with photographs of the recent campaign for same-sex marriage. The images are accompanied by the phrase: "This is what he did,"

along with Kennedy's words: "This country of the United States was not built by those who waited and wished to look behind them.... We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained and new rights to be won."³⁰

The audio clip is taken from the "Moon Speech," given at Rice Stadium in Houston on September 12, 1962. In his address President Kennedy reaffirmed his commitment to the nation to land a man on the moon within the decade.³¹ Its focus was on rivalling Soviet achievement during the Cold War. Yet, tied to those lofty words, the video pans from images of Dr. King's arrest, to civil rights marches, and finally into images of rainbow flags and a same-sex marriage, seemingly claiming all social progress as derived from Kennedy's enduring legacy. Beyond the Kennedy administration's slow response to desegregation, discussed briefly in chapter one, civil rights leaders felt that the president's efforts towards African Americans bordered on disingenuous.³² Martin Luther King, Jr. personally felt that Kennedy did not push forcefully enough for desegregation legislation in Congress. He sent several letters to the president stating such.³³ A year after the president's death, he rather cryptically told *Look*: "[Kennedy] was always ready to *listen*" while remaining blasé about the president's failure to act. JFK's personal reservations were fuelled by concern for his re-election and his obvious preoccupation with the Cold War.³⁴ Perhaps even more troubling are the associations this video makes between Kennedy and same-sex rights. It is presumptuous to judge Kennedy's view on gay marriage,ⁱⁱⁱ and is highly insensitive to attribute the success of the campaigns solely to his inspiration.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sarah Bradford in her exhaustive biography of Jacqueline Kennedy, *America's Queen*, references a response by John F. Kennedy to the question of ever having been in love: "No, but I've been *very* interested once or twice" (86). This was shortly before his death, following a decade of marriage to Jackie. While there was genuine affection between the pair, as Kennedy friend Charlie Bartlett describes Kennedy's

It may surprise many to learn that this lofty process of memory, directing us towards the genuinely progressive attributions of the Kennedy era, began even before the autopsy of the late president was complete. Waiting at Bethesda Naval Hospital on the evening of November 22, Jackie made reference to an image of Lincoln's lying in state, included in *The White House: An Historic Guide*. Her request, relayed to Richard Goodwin in the mansion, led to a series of calls by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. to the Library of Congress, along with historians David Mearns and James Robertson. The men recovered accounts of the Lincoln funeral from *Harper's Weekly*, and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* newspaper, before making their way to Goodwin at the White House.³⁵ It is important to highlight, that in the late hours of November 22, the widowed First Lady remained in shock, and was not as in control in these moments as *Life* and the *Associated Press* later made her out to be.³⁶ That being said, we get a look into the frame of mind that would encompass Jacqueline Kennedy in the coming days, when she is told of Oswald's capture and supposed communist sympathies. Turning to her mother, she bemoaned: "[Jack] didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights. It had to be some silly little Communist. It robs his death of any meaning."³⁷ Over the coming days, her planning would seek to counter this, and family friend Charlie Bartlett remembers Jackie "in complete control, remarkably poised – just unbelievable."³⁸

By the time John Fitzgerald Kennedy's casket arrived in the East Room in the early hours of November 23, the decor bore a striking yet modern resemblance to the previous century, as per Jackie's request. The room had been draped in black and the

womanizing, it was almost a "disease" (75). One factor, Bradford references that helped push Kennedy towards marriage, was the need to have a stable wife before seeking higher office. As the author notes, "a man who reached Jack's age but was still a bachelor risked being branded a 'faggot'" (87). While it does not speak directly to JFK's views on same-sex issues, the quote does accurately reference the overwhelming view of the time.

funeral bier that would hold the flag-draped coffin was positioned in the spot that Lincoln's lay in a century earlier.³⁹ Jackie's brother-in-law, Stas Radziwill, described the White House as "Versailles after the King had died."⁴⁰ It is an eerie throwback to the now former First Lady's restoration efforts, and this sense of grandeur now came to use in memorializing her husband. Taking Jackie's lead, linkages to Abraham Lincoln continued to resonate throughout the planning stages. As JFK's casket made its way down Pennsylvania Avenue with great solemnity to the Capitol, the catafalque that held the Great Emancipator's casket was pulled out of storage. It would now hold the body of John F. Kennedy as he too lay in state at the Rotunda.⁴¹ A quarter of a million mourners paid their respects that night,⁴² and when the body was taken from the seat of government for the last time the following morning, the procession to the cathedral made use of a riderless horse. It is a symbol dating to the age of Genghis Khan that honours a fallen warrior. Stirrups emblematically reversed, the tribute was last used in FDR's funeral march, drawn again from the procession that carried Lincoln's casket to the grave.^{43iv}

By focusing on the historical foundations of Lincoln's burial, Jacqueline Kennedy began her first motions that would subtly tie the two men together as heroes struck down at the height of their push for social equality. It was the first step in taking the focus off "some silly little Communist." Despite very obvious historical contradictions in symbolism, Jackie's tenure as First Lady consistently displayed an understanding that power lay in the look and perception of things rather than historical realities. The image

^{iv} According to the White House Historical Association this tradition dates beyond the most recognized instances that utilized a riderless horse – the funerals of FDR and Lincoln. The precedent may be drawn from the earliest presidential burials, as there is evidence from George Washington's personal secretary that a similar honour was afforded during burial. The record states: "The General's horse, with his saddle, holsters, and pistols, [was] led by two grooms, Cyrus and Wilson, in black." Further evidence links to the presence of a riderless horse to President Zachary Taylor's funeral (Faulkner, 7).

of the Kennedy administration as a progressive power never had much to do with action, but rather with a carefully cultivated program of memory, in which Jackie played a significant role. This continued throughout the funeral proceedings. Though African-American service members acted as pallbearers, JFK's coffin was purchased from a funeral home that did not sell to black customers. Moreover, at the time of Kennedy's burial, Arlington Cemetery remained segregated by race.⁴⁴ It was JFK himself who had inadvertently chosen the spot only weeks earlier while attending memorial services on Veteran's Day. Standing below Lee Mansion, Kennedy exclaimed, "This is the most perfect view of Washington. I could stay here forever."^{45v} Taken to the site on November 24, Jackie had only one condition: the grave had to be in direct view of the Lincoln Memorial.⁴⁶

The final, more concerted connection to the Civil War era on the part of the former First Lady came through her decision to lead a contingent of mourners, composed of two hundred and twenty dignitaries from ninety-two nations, on the walk from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral on November 25. This mirrored the procession of mourners that followed Lincoln to the grave.⁴⁷ Cloaked in a black veil, she wore the same suit as she did the day John F. Kennedy announced his desire to seek the presidency.⁴⁸ Only days after the president of the United States had been assassinated, followed by the fatal shooting of his killer on national television hours before, the Secret Service pled government officials and dignitaries to reconsider.

^v Various sources present unique versions of this moment. In *America's Queen*, Sarah Bradford quotes Kennedy as telling Robert McNamara: "This is one of the most beautiful places on earth. I think, maybe, someday this is where I'd like to be" (352). Meanwhile Bill O'Reilly in *Killing Kennedy*, refers to Kennedy telling Congressman Hale Boggs: "This is one of the really beautiful places on earth. I could stay here forever" (chap. 19, 197). Thurston Clarke in *JFK's Last Hundred Days*, subsequently backs up O'Reilly's version of events (288). The *Associated Press* misattributes the Kennedy visit to Arlington as occurring in March 1963 (96).

Gathered together in one small space [would be] many of the world's most influential leaders and the entire structure of America's government, including the Supreme Court justices, Joint Chiefs, national security advisors, and the new President of the United States. For anyone who wanted to evoke change and was inclined to violence, this would be like shooting fish in a barrel.⁴⁹

Jackie, however, remained determined to walk behind her husband's casket; if the dignitaries wanted to ride behind – so be it. The Secret Service quickly realized that “not even a howling hurricane would prevent her from striding up Seventeenth Street and Connecticut to the cathedral.”⁵⁰ Naturally, the world's leadership refused to let the grieving widow walk alone, and gave into Jackie's intention.⁵¹

In the days leading up to the funeral and in the weeks following, media saturation surrounding the assassination ensured that a global audience was immersed in the narrative that grew to reflect the former First Lady's wishes. Beyond focusing on the increasing culture of violence in the United States, newspapers and magazines fixated on the linkages between Kennedy and Lincoln. One of the most widely circulated cartoons in national newsprint was of the Lincoln Memorial by Bill Mauldin, the statue bent in grief, sobbing into its hands.⁵² The *Life* memorial issue ran an article by Dora Hamblin outlining Jacqueline Kennedy's efforts to ensure her husband's funeral had the same grandeur as Lincoln's.⁵³ Meanwhile, *Time* magazine provided similar coverage of Jackie's preparations.⁵⁴ The *New York Times* went one step further, with an extensive article on Lincoln's burial and funeral. Mixed in with Kennedy's funeral coverage, it gave a detailed play-by-play of the fifteen days following Lincoln's death. The narrative was accompanied by a sketch of Lincoln's casket in the East Room, which holds a striking resemblance to the photograph of Kennedy's coffin surrounded by military guard that appeared on the front page two days earlier.⁵⁵ A smaller paper, the *Miami News*, was

even less subtle. It placed images of the two caskets side by side under the headline: “New York 1865...Washington 1963.”⁵⁶

Many of the letters Jackie Kennedy would receive in the coming days and months, over one and a half million in total, harnessed these linkages to Abraham Lincoln, in an effort to find some solace in such a senseless tragedy.⁵⁷ Mary T. Bentley, whose family was influential in the civil rights movement in Rochester, penned perhaps the most powerful example when she wrote, “One hundred years ago, Lincoln died that all men might be free. One hundred years later, J.F.K. died that all men might be equal.”⁵⁸ Similarly, in a letter to the editor of *Time*, self-identified Republican Joseph W. Kimmel pled that:

After the horrible evil of President Kennedy’s assassination the American people will feel revulsion at the supporters and proponents of the foul extremes of right and left... and then rededicate themselves to the spirit and ideals of the American Revolution and of Lincoln.⁵⁹

America’s grief and the rapidity with which they bent to the First Lady’s aims is interesting given the observation of Kennedy aide and long time friend, Ted Sorenson. In his opinion, “It will not be easy for historians to compare John Kennedy with his predecessors and successors.”⁶⁰ The quote itself is curious, as it is that very linkage with a predecessor that has helped to perpetuate JFK’s historical legacy and provided Americans with a sense of closure.

The United States and the world drew much of its strength from Jacqueline Kennedy in these days. As biographer Christopher Andersen correctly surmises, “If she could hold her head high, what right did we have to fall apart?”⁶¹ Many letter writers commend the former First Lady’s sense of courage and grace.⁶² Jacqueline Kennedy, leading the world behind her husband’s casket was in marked contrast to the blood

covered, visibly shaken woman who arrived home from Dallas three days earlier. In reference to the procession to St. Matthew's Cathedral, teenager Patricia Boling referred to Jackie as her "model of a true woman." She admired that Mrs. Kennedy was "someone who can endure what [she] did and still stay calm out in public."⁶³ On behalf of all Americans, Estelle Sherman thanked Jackie for her strength and "for making people like me aware of what a wonderful country this is."⁶⁴ Two readers of *Time* nominated Jacqueline Kennedy for "Man of the Year," as a result of her "native intelligence, adventurous courage and quiet bravery."⁶⁵ "Her conduct in the face of tragedy," one said, "is an example for all Americans to follow."⁶⁶ Similarly, *Life* magazine praised her conviction: "Through all this mournful splendour [she] marched enfolded in courage and a regal dignity."⁶⁷ The most moving letter however, comes from thirteen-year old Teresa Bradbury who took pride in the image Jackie struck in comparison to other world leaders. "Mrs. Kennedy," she said, "when you walking behind behind the cassions you look like a general leading an army into battle.... You stood taller than Charles Degaulle" (sic).^{68vi}

Bradbury's reference to French President Charles de Gaulle is of particular importance to this exploration. One of the more striking images from the procession of dignitaries, later to appear in *Life* magazine as part of a photo compilation, is a large image of de Gaulle graveside, saluting the casket.⁶⁹ The French president had originally not planned to attend because of personal animosities with Kennedy.⁷⁰ De Gaulle's presence was indeed peculiar. Historian David Culbert recalls a childhood observation:

My classmates cried and cried. I was sorry that Kennedy was dead, but did not see much reason to watch the funeral, amidst so much emotion. One thing made a

^{vi} The grammar and spelling of several letters to Jacqueline Kennedy has been maintained in this paper in the interest of historical accuracy. It also provides context to the variety of letters Jacqueline Kennedy received and is a testament to her perceived accessibility by the public, despite the fact many admitted feeling foolish or not worthy of writing the First Lady (Fitzpatrick, 202).

powerful impression: I was dumbfounded to see Charles de Gaulle walking into St. Matthew's Cathedral for the funeral, and I realized that the assassination must have really meant something for de Gaulle, with his dislike of things American, to have flown over for the occasion.⁷¹

Part of what drove de Gaulle was French love for all things (Jackie) Kennedy. "They are crying all over France," he would say. "It is as though he were a Frenchman, a member of their own family."⁷² Though de Gaulle himself would later admit that JFK's funeral was an "over-produced and over-dramatized spectacle,"⁷³ history does not remember this. Frozen forever is the image of the French president saluting his former foe.

The reaction to Kennedy's assassination in France is indicative of a similar public outpouring of grief in many nations, with the administration's personal and political images differing drastically. As discussed in the first chapter, President Kennedy did not have overly friendly relations with the leaders of many of these nations. His desire to put anti-communism and American interests above his idealism caused a lot of resentment and hardship in the realm of foreign affairs. In the moment however, all that was forgotten, as leaders such as de Gaulle, the new British Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home, and First Deputy Minister of the Soviet Union, Anastas I. Mikoyan, walked together in representation of their grieving nations to pay homage to John F. Kennedy.⁷⁴ The United States Information Service (USIS), as per usual, was tasked with the broadcast of the funeral to the world, live, and even the censor-happy Soviet State Television streamed the feed.⁷⁵ In those moments, conflicts with Britain regarding Skybolt, France over British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), the Russians over nuclear proliferation, India over America's anti-communist fixation, and Latin America over insurgency were forgotten.⁷⁶ Kennedy instead was honoured as a leader of men.

It begs the question, what was Kennedy's reputation during his presidency, and how has it set the tone for his legacy? Perhaps the best assessment of his character comes from a piece by Fletcher Knebel in *Look* prior to the inauguration:

John Kennedy can quote from the classics, poke fun at himself, be as aloof as Charles de Gaulle or as convivial as an Irish baritone...fume like dry ice, drive a car like a fugitive from justice, go weeks without wearing a hat, read esoteric French philosophy, take three showers a day, face physical hazards without a ripple of nerves, lead others with assurance, [and] be casually gracious.⁷⁷

He was seen as both intensely human and beyond his passion for knowledge he was always weighing the options, and soliciting the opinions of a variety of individuals before making especially important decisions.⁷⁸ Following the Bay of Pigs, he had an incredible wariness of the military-industrial complex, and was perhaps seen as less keen on plunging the world into nuclear holocaust.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, this should not negate the memory of his ready willingness to order military intervention based on ideological grounds during the Cold War. Ultimately, Schlesinger would describe Kennedy as a "man devoid of hatred,"⁸⁰ and a recent study finds that JFK was seen as a man not interested in the "Democratic or Republican answer," but rather the "right answer."⁸¹ There appears to be a consensus that he was coming into his own, intensely reasonable and trustworthy, despite his critics. As advisor Theodore Sorenson describes, "[Kennedy] had learned more about the uses and limitations of power...he had undertaken large tasks still to be completed and foreseen future plans still to be initiated."⁸²

Worldwide, this sense of loss led to despair and a feeling of uncertainty. In response to public anguish and the special bond between their two nations, Queen Elizabeth II asked for the bells of Westminster Abbey to be rung. It was "a token of tribute usually reserved only for the death of a monarch...[yet] this time it tolled for the

great grandson of an Irish potato farmer.”⁸³ The decision draws memory to another rare use of the tenor bell – the funeral of Princess Diana.⁸⁴ Both instances saw a similar outpouring of public grief. As the Queen would say two years later at the dedication of the JFK memorial in Runnymede: “With all their hearts my people shared in his triumphs, grieved at his reverses, and wept at his death.”⁸⁵ A similar sentiment poured forth in many nations, perhaps most surprisingly in Russia. Nikita Khrushchev observed that Kennedy’s death signified a serious blow to the pursuit of peace between their two nations.⁸⁶ His people also recognized this, and *Life* magazine quotes one citizen: “We Russians honored this man, and trusted him, like no other American before.”⁸⁷ Expressions of grief poured into Jacqueline Kennedy from Americans abroad, noting similar connections from Germany to Ethiopia.⁸⁸

Teenagers openly wept in the streets of London, while university students in West Berlin organized a torchlit procession that attracted tens of thousands to mourn the fallen president, in the cold and sleet.⁸⁹ Even Cubans publically expressed empathy, while Fidel Castro was said to mutter: “Es una mala noticia” (This is bad news).⁹⁰ Although soliciting examples of grief from the developing world proves difficult, in correspondence with Lubna Aranki, Culbert unearths an interesting narrative about the news of Kennedy’s death in Palestine:

I remember that I cried when I heard he died and do not know why I cried. Perhaps it was because he was young and had a young family. We knew about the Kennedys because all the American magazines were full of pictures of their official functions and tours. All the girls fixed their hair in a Jackie style. We tried to have dresses made to look just like Jackie. I guess Jackie, by not being a typical blonde... seemed more accessible as a model for girls in our community.⁹¹

Particularly curious is the focus on Jacqueline Kennedy within Aranki’s description. Although her reference to clothes and fashion magazines speaks to perhaps a more

affluent lifestyle than the average Palestinian refugee, the cultural aura of Jackie's image and the way it continued to rival that of her husband, even in death, is worth noting. David Lubin, in his study *Shooting Kennedy*, speaks to the notion of global fixation with her public image, and how Jacqueline Kennedy's actions in these days, again helped to shape, perhaps most prominently, "perceptions and preconceptions around the world." Her transcendence before the "global village," Lubin continues whilst borrowing from Marshall McLuhan, was to an extent a façade that managed to harness public fixation. "No actress," he emphasizes, "had ever trod a greater stage before a larger audience."⁹²

Though perhaps a touch histrionic, Lubin's reference to Jackie-as-actress returns us to the notion of duality. The stoic, grieving widow that the public drew strength from, was again only partially representative of the role the now-former First Lady played behind the scenes. Beyond inspiring parallels to Lincoln and worldwide leadership, Jackie was careful to add her own dramatic touches that would ensure the ceremonies highlighted the respected military position her husband held when compared to his predecessors. Again, symbolism ignores the very real conflict his idealism bore against the military brass, especially in regards to Cuba, but even more importantly over nuclear weaponry.⁹³ Jackie once jested that the only classical piece that her husband was enthusiastic about was "Hail to the Chief."⁹⁴ As such, she succeeded in securing a performance of the military salute, despite concerns over protocol and tempo. When Kennedy's casket was carried from the cathedral, the order came from the White House that the tune would greet the former commander-in-chief one last time. Similarly, over Arlington, it was decided that Air Force One (accompanied by military jets) would tip its wings in homage to its slain commander as his casket lay in wait.⁹⁵ These symbols, rather

secondary, were wrapped together with one more overt move on the part of Jackie that became the most iconic cultural image of Kennedy as commander-in-chief – a simple salute, led not by military officers or de Gaulle, but by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr.

A month before the assassination, young John could be found wandering around the White House with a stick slung over his shoulder, saluting staffers passing by. Kennedy aide, Dave Powers, mentions that young John “was always great at saluting,” but there was one problem: “Sometimes he’d salute with his left hand.”⁹⁶ Photographs, which JFK commissioned for *Look* magazine in October 1963, back this claim. John, Jr. is shown giving a weak, left handed salute.⁹⁷ The former First Lady, always reserved about such use of their children, saw in death the value her son could play in helping cement the legacy of his father. Behind the scenes, efforts to teach him how to salute properly began in earnest.⁹⁸ The original plan included the three-year-old wearing white military gloves, like the soldiers in dress uniform. Robert Kennedy was the one to rebuff Jackie on this, worried that gloves on a young boy would look too feminine. Manchester records that while Jacqueline simply gave in on the issue, she remained convinced “if he was right, every marching unit in the cortege, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was effete.”⁹⁹

Through most of the funeral proceedings John, Jr. had to be distracted – taken to the Speaker’s office during the eulogies in the Capitol and preoccupied with a pamphlet at the cathedral. In the Speaker’s office, he collected decorative flags, pointing to one that resembled the president’s flag and stating confidently: “I want to take it home to my daddy.” At that moment, Jackie was kneeling in the Capitol Rotunda with Caroline, in front of JFK’s flag draped coffin.¹⁰⁰ Without this knowledge the photograph of the three

year old saluting takes on an aura of sophistication and wonder he clearly lacks. Nor does history often record that before John, Jr. was to give his performance, the young boy practiced his salute with a Secret Service agent in the foyer of the cathedral. This occurred as the funeral service was wrapping up.¹⁰¹ He then took his place beside his mother outside, where she leaned down and whispered into her son's ear. "John," she said, "you can salute Daddy now, and say goodbye."¹⁰² As told, the three year old carried out a perfect salute and charmed the world. He was no longer wandering the halls of the White House, childishly waving his left hand, but saluting properly with real military officers, saying goodbye to his father – a concept he did not yet truly understand.

There had been public fascination with young John since he was born to the First Couple to-be. It was only days before the assassination that *Look* ran the photo-spread commissioned by Kennedy in October. It appeared on newsstands on November 18. The piece itself is playful, entitled: "The President and His Son." Written mostly from the perspective of John, it is the source of the famous photograph of him peering out from the "secret door" in the Resolute Desk that he referred to as "my house."¹⁰³ Now, only days later, the American people had a successive photograph of John, Jr. to rival that playful moment. Presented in *Life* magazine alongside Jacqueline Kennedy's epilogue by Theodore White, it is utilized to highlight the linkage between John F. Kennedy and the military. The photograph's caption reads: "At the cathedral on his third birthday, John Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr. faces his father's coffin and salutes – exactly as he had learned to do all the times he had watched real soldiers salute his father."¹⁰⁴ The *New York Times* naturally beat *Life* to publication and made a similar comparison. It highlighted the parallels between the boy and the military officers whom he admired, who in turn

admired his father.¹⁰⁵

Former Sergeant Grady McNeil, in a letter he penned to Jackie following the funeral, insisted: “That photograph of young John John saluting his father should become a part of our history.”¹⁰⁶ Ellen Fitzpatrick, in her study of the letters written to Jacqueline Kennedy following the assassination, finds that this public outpour regarding the photograph was common.¹⁰⁷ A recent poll cited by Larry J. Sabato in *The Kennedy Half-Century* found the 73% of Americans, fifty-five or older, claim to have seen the salute live, and a majority chose it as the moment with the greatest emotional impact.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Jackie’s secretary, Mary Gallagher, would fondly remember the many paintings of this moment that flooded Jacqueline Kennedy’s transitional office.¹⁰⁹ Similar letters to Sgt. McNeil’s also filled editorial sections. In a letter to the editor of *Life*, Ruthie J. Pritchett commends the “Epilogue” by White and the photograph of John, Jr. as “the final touch of eloquence and dignity.”¹¹⁰ Alex S. Einstein mirrors this in the *Time* “Letters” section, observing that three-year-old John Kennedy, Jr. could easily rival his mother, father, Lyndon Johnson, and others for “Man of the Year.” His photograph, saluting the coffin, “symbolize[s] the eternal light, the resurrection of a new year, a new future, and new hopes in all our children.”¹¹¹ Others still, like C.O. Carriker wrote John Jr. directly, to ensure he could take pride in the memory of his father. Carriker writes, “You can be reminded that there was more heads of states & more heads of countries at your fathers funeral (and rightly so) than any other man ever layed to rest” (sic).^{112 vii}

^{vii} Although hard to verify the impression of Mr. Carriker that John F. Kennedy’s funeral was the most widely attended in world history by heads of state, given the rapidly globalizing world, it is rather likely. An article by Jack Raymond entitled “Mrs. Kennedy Will Walk Behind The Caisson,” that ran in the *New York Times* on November 25, 1963, observes that it would be “the greatest assembly of mourners since the funeral of King Edward VII in London 50 years ago.” His counterpart, Max Frankel goes on to confirm in the partnering column that it is the largest gathering of foreign dignitaries in American history (Max Frankel, “Officials of Nearly 100 Lands in U.S.,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1963). William

Conscious of the reaction the photo garnered, Jacqueline Kennedy orchestrated one final photo-op as they left the White House on December 6. Stepping outside, photographers captured John, Jr. leaving the only home he ever knew, holding an American flag.¹¹³ Though Jackie soon left Washington behind, her private influences remained in many ways. Her restorations to the executive mansion are the most overt, but there is a more pervasive symbol: in a final touch to the Kennedy gravesite, Jackie pushed for the installation of an eternal flame. Warned that it would cause a lot of controversy and that “some people might think it a little ostentatious,” she replied: “*Let them.*” When the Pentagon raised objections that it could not produce a mechanism that she could light the day of the burial, Kennedy aide Richard Goodwin stepped in. “Look,” he demanded, “if you can design an atomic bomb, you can put a little flame on the side of that hill, and you can make it so she *can* light it.”¹¹⁴ Bobby Kennedy was less than thrilled about the idea, but gave in. He comically complained: “I could understand a memorial but she [wants] a goddamned eternal flame.”¹¹⁵ No one could say no to the presidential widow. She was, as Manchester correctly identifies, regal – even when up against some of the nation’s most elite military commanders.¹¹⁶

Jackie would visit the grave again the night of the funeral, away from the glare of the cameras, to lay flowers in a private moment before the flickering flame.¹¹⁷ Her curt remarks to critics of the ever-lasting tribute are reminiscent of her outburst when asked if she would like to change her clothes following the assassination. “I want them to see

Manchester notes that “similar processions had followed the coffins of Washington, Lincoln, Grant, and the first Roosevelt” (485), but remains unclear on those in attendance. It would seem, given the eras and the text, that many were representatives from *within* the United States.

what they have done to Jack,” she exclaimed.^{118 viii} James Piereson asks an important query by questioning the “they” that Jacqueline Kennedy was referring to.¹¹⁹ In general, it is safe to assume that Jackie was referencing the American people and the press. As we have seen, as First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy was never fond of all the attention, unless it could be used to suit her purposes. Speaking of a recent Supreme Court decision involving the *New York Times*, Jacqueline Kennedy would tell Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in 1964 that “[now] it’s all right [for them] to print anything, even libel.”¹²⁰ Her stardom, which worked so heavily in the Kennedys’ favour, always functioned against the generally reserved Jackie. For all she accomplished, it is no secret that she found the duties of being First Lady exhausting, despite her growing respect for the position. Renting Glen Ora as a retreat from the White House, the press focused in on her frequent getaways and the costs of her travel. Her Secret Service Agent, Clint Hill, observes, “The more she resisted the spotlight, the more ravenous the press and the public became.”¹²¹

In attempting to privately shape the image of her husband’s memory, Jacqueline Kennedy went up once again against the media, whose strong counter impulse for the sensational challenged her for dominance. The very same issue of *Life* that ran memorial articles for the slain president displayed enlarged stills of the Zapruder film.^{ix} The magazine paid \$150,000 for the copyright and broke the gruesome images to the world

^{viii} There are several versions of Jacqueline Kennedy’s defiance in the face of being asked to change for the inaugural photo on Air Force One. Both Caro (chap. 12, 449) and Perry (180) attribute the conversation to Jackie and the Johnsons. A modified phrase, “Let them see what they’ve done,” is used by Kelley and Bugliosi. While Kelley misattributes it to Jackie’s conversation with Ken O’Donnell prior to the photograph (216), Bugliosi (188), citing Manchester (348), places the remark shortly after the photograph, when urged by Dr. Burkley to change her clothes. Manchester also states an alternate version of the phrase: “I want them to see what they have done,” uttered again by Jackie as she exited Air Force One (348). This is likely the utterance that both Caro and Perry use, with the “to Jack” added in for effect.

^{ix} Taken by Abraham Zapruder on Elm Street as the Kennedy motorcade made its way through Dealey Plaza, the film is perhaps the most complete visual record we have of the Kennedy assassination. While *Life* acquired the initial rights, it did not take long for bootleg copies to make their way onto the black market (Warren, 564-65). As Craig Warren observes, part of our fascination with the film, beyond its carnage, is the fact that it lacks a “villain” and offers no concrete resolution (575).

only days after the assassination. The moment of impact was initially excluded, but has since become the object of grotesque fascination. The missing stills show a red mist around the president's head following the entry of Oswald's bullet. In its place, the magazine opted to emphasize the similarly voyeuristic and now iconic footage of Jackie attempting to leave the carnage.¹²² Captioned "Jackie Crawled For Help," there is something terribly morbid about these very public, yet personally tragic images. Wayne Koestenbaum alludes to the fact that it is because "the world saw Jackie crawl.... His insides [were] opened up, and contaminated his clean wife. A border of propriety was crossed, publicly: we saw the President brought down, and Jackie's pristine public image messed up."¹²³ One reader condemned *Life* in the December 13, 1963 editorial section, observing that while "the act of assassination is certainly appalling [the] printing of photographs of that act is almost ghoulish."¹²⁴ Another went on to say they were "ashamed to learn of your payment to Abraham Zapruder for the exclusive rights."¹²⁵

Life ultimately chose to release frame 313, known as the impact frame or "red mist frame," only eleven months after the assassination. Timed to match the release of the Warren Report, the October 2, 1964 issue ran it with several enlarged colour frames seen for the first time. Five were placed on the cover, and eight inside the magazine.¹²⁶ Again, letters to the editor speak volumes. Linda Alfuso asked, "Was it absolutely necessary to print, in color, that horrible picture...in which Kennedy's skull was ripped open by a bullet? Isn't [the Warren Commission] painful enough...?"¹²⁷ The problem is, as Craig Warren observes, "a wounded and dying president is far more exciting than an intact one"¹²⁸ and the Zapruder film affords us the ability to relive the moment of death indefinitely. Warren ties the fascination with the images of the assassination and the

autopsy (which have unofficially leaked) with society's desire to assert control in an uncertain and troubling world. The most iconic autopsy image, which has gained a cult following on the internet, is known as the "Stare of Death." It shows Kennedy's corpse, lying face up with his eyes open.¹²⁹ There is something haunting in the powerlessness of the expression, the empty shell of a man that hours before controlled the largest nuclear arsenal in the world.

Beyond our voyeuristic impulses, our obsession with images of carnage and horror surrounding the Kennedy assassination may stem from the fact that we lack a definitive culprit. Returning to the "they" that Jacqueline Kennedy refers to, its vague nature calls the problem of responsibility and motive into question. The death of Lee Harvey Oswald at the hands of Jack Ruby, along with the subsequent inconsistencies in the Warren Commission's report only fuel the flames of discontent and conspiracy.¹³⁰ The *New York Times*, the morning after the assassination, ran an article entitled: "Kennedy Victim of Violent Streak He Sought To Curb In The Nation." The piece, by James Reston, sits on the front page of the paper next to a column that references Lee Harvey Oswald's communist sympathies. Reston blames the culture of violence in the United States for the death of Kennedy, citing the president's efforts to "restrain those who wanted to be more violent in the cold war overseas."¹³¹ Following Jackie's lead, Lyndon Johnson and Kennedy historians have subsequently attempted to downplay Oswald's involvement and political sympathies, focusing instead on utilizing Kennedy's legacy as a champion for peace and racial equality.¹³²

It is worth mentioning here the religious parallels that emerged following the assassination, as the notion of martyrdom Jackie pushed began to fuse itself to the public

consciousness. Beyond Lincoln, some drew reference between the images of a bloodstained Jackie, descending from the plane with the casket, to Christ's descent from the cross.¹³³ Invited to deliver a eulogy at the Capitol by Jacqueline Kennedy, Chief Justice Earl Warren's speech reads much like a sermon, and indeed the president and a religious figure could be interchangeable. Speaking of Kennedy as a leader who was struck down whilst in the pursuit of peace, he says:

The martyrdom of our beloved president might even soften the hearts of those who would themselves recoil from assassination, but who do not shrink from spreading the venom, which kindles thoughts of it in others.¹³⁴

For mythologist Joseph Campbell, further religious symbolism can be found in the traditional horse-drawn caisson that drew Kennedy to his grave. An act steeped in presidential tradition, Campbell likens the horror of those four days to the following passage from Revelations: "And I looked, and beheld a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over [the world]."¹³⁵ "It seemed," he said, "[here were] the seven ghostly steeds of the gray Lord Death, here come to conduct the fallen hero youth on his last celestial journey."¹³⁶

Letters written to Jacqueline Kennedy at this time reflect the religious impulses of many Americans and their attempt to find solace in the story of Jesus' crucifixion. Ellen Fitzpatrick chose to open her exploration, *Letters to Jackie*, with one such message from Katherine Jackson of North Carolina. The writer observed that Kennedy did "for his country what God did for his World[.] They killed our Lord an Father. an now they have killed our Presentend an Father" (sic).¹³⁷ Spiro Stamos, who was on tour with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in Europe at the time of the assassination, mirrored Jackson, sorrowfully stating that "they did the same thing to Christ, to Lincoln – and now to

Kennedy – may God help us in this hour of great darkness.”¹³⁸ Simon and Garfunkel perhaps best captured this dark fervour in “Sound of Silence,” written in the period immediately after the assassination.¹³⁹ A year later, in *Look*’s memorial issue, even Jackie had turned towards painting her husband in such a mythological light. She quotes a passage from a letter:

The hero comes when he is needed. When our belief gets pale and weak, there comes a man out of that need who is shining - and everyone living reflects a little of that light - and stores some up against the time when he is gone.¹⁴⁰

For many, it was now Jackie who was responsible for reflecting this light, far beyond the period in which she led Americans through their period of mourning.

As Jacqueline Kennedy began to settle into her new life as a single mother, her husband buried and his legacy beginning to take shape, she summoned journalist Theodore H. White to Hyannis Port, where the family had gathered for Thanksgiving.¹⁴¹ The former First Lady was given complete editorial control over what would become “An Epilogue” in *Life* magazine’s funeral tribute.¹⁴² Drawing on her husband’s love of the Broadway musical “Camelot,” she recited one of his favourite lines: “Don’t let it be forgot that once there was a spot, for one brief and shining moment known as Camelot.” She went on to paint the glory of King Arthur’s court as a direct relation to the Kennedy administration: “There’ll be great Presidents again... but there’ll never be another Camelot.”¹⁴³ For his part, White would later acknowledge his contribution to this misreading of history. As he would almost regretfully remark, “I was her instrument in labeling the [Kennedy] myth,”¹⁴⁴ but “she put it so passionately that, seen in a certain light, it almost made sense.”¹⁴⁵ Indeed, in the letters, editorials, and media coverage that surrounded the Kennedy assassination, we see an ever present need for closure. Some

Americans grasped at religion, while others related to the Lincoln parallels that Jacqueline Kennedy would conjure out of both grief and a desire to legitimate her husband's short tenure. Larry Sabato perhaps puts it best when he dismisses Camelot as "brilliant fiction," but Americans were willing to utilize it because "Camelot gave us a happier story to summon up and heroic possibilities to realize."¹⁴⁶

Camelot is a romantic ideal that would engrain itself in America's collective subconscious over the next fifty years and would give an identity to a presidency that for all intents and purposes was far too immature to properly define. Overall, this legacy has been extremely effective in guarding the memory of John F. Kennedy against those who would seek to criticize his administration. In a November 2011 article, Ross Douthat calls out "the cult of John F. Kennedy," noting that it "has the resilience of a horror-movie villain." It seems able to survive any historical judgement thrown at it.¹⁴⁷ Mirroring this sentiment Sabato expands by articulating that, "The bullets of Dallas have made Kennedy's image bulletproof."¹⁴⁸ It is an enduring testament to Jacqueline Kennedy's attempts to fuse the culture she swept into the White House with a nation's grief, giving them continued reason to stand proud and hold their heads high. Not surprisingly, beyond two private sets of interviews with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and William Manchester, Jackie rarely spoke publically again of her time with JFK. The pieces of Camelot had begun to come together as a collective whole, and as notions of social progress, worldwide respect, leadership, and martyrdom fused into one, she went silent.

Polled twenty years after the assassination, nearly two-thirds of Americans believed that the United States would have been different had Kennedy survived the attempt on his life. The Kennedy presidency has come to be seen as a period of stability,

especially following Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War and Nixon's resignation to avoid much-deserved impeachment.¹⁴⁹ The early sixties are remembered not for the arms build-ups,¹⁵⁰ covert military coups in Latin America,¹⁵¹ or a half-hearted approach to civil rights. Rather, the Kennedy-era was, and remains a golden age. Under the guise of Camelot, his legitimation developed a strong mythological quality. JFK continues, until today, to hold the highest marks in the public's ranking of post-WWII presidencies. His mere thousand days, eclipse the very productive, multiple-term tenures of many men who came after him.¹⁵² This is especially true in regards to the presidency of Kennedy's immediate successor. Bequeathed a troubling circumstance in Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson maintained that his policies were based on JFK's belief in the "domino theory," and that his advisors remained the same as those Kennedy employed. Nonetheless, guardians of JFK's legacy such as Theodore Sorenson maintain Kennedy's judgement differed strongly and he was moving towards pulling out of Vietnam.¹⁵³

It is the typical "what if" scenario, but in fairness Vietnam offers the perfect example of the kind of insulation the construct of "Camelot" provided to the presidential legacy of John F. Kennedy. What we do know is that as president, JFK was responsible for placing sixteen thousand troops into Vietnam. The resulting escalation then drew the American military into combat.¹⁵⁴ Everything beyond this is conjecture, but against the historical argument that Kennedy was moving towards pulling troops out of Vietnam, historians often highlight the president's fierce anti-communist tendencies, and the political climate of the United States at the time. It can be argued that the turmoil in the region may have drawn him into the need for further action as well. As Denise Bostdorff and Steven Goldzwig emphasize, "[While] we can never know what further actions John

Kennedy might have taken in regard to Vietnam had he lived... The President's public talk stands as testimony of the troubling direction in which he (and with him, the nation) was headed."¹⁵⁵ Sensitive to public opinion, JFK would tell friend Charlie Bartlett, "I can't give up a piece of territory like that to the Communists and then get the American people to re-elect me."¹⁵⁶

Thus, despite historical evidence that JFK may have planned a full withdrawal in 1965 and was incredibly hesitant to commit further troops, public opinion, even after re-election may have swayed his decision. This was a man who, in the words of historian David H. Donald, was "determined to go down in our history books as a great President, and he want[ed] to know the secret."¹⁵⁷ Indeed, only hours before he was killed, Kennedy gave a speech to the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, where he reminded them that the outcome in Vietnam was directly tied to the struggle between democracy and communism. He was set to make a very similar speech at the Trade Mart in Dallas that afternoon. In the text of the speech that he never got to give, Kennedy was to tell the crowd, "America today is stronger than ever before...we have the military, the scientific, and the economic strength to do whatever must be done for the preservation and promotion of freedom."¹⁵⁸ He was also to urge them that,

Our assistance to [nations like Vietnam] can be painful, risky and costly – as is true in Southeast Asia today. But we dare not weary of the task... A successful Communist breakthrough in these areas, necessitating direct United States intervention, would cost us several times as much as our entire foreign aid program – and might cost us heavily in American lives as well.¹⁵⁹

It is extremely hard to step back from such virulent rhetoric politically, especially when it was designed to match public opinion. Indeed, his words read startlingly similar to later

sections of a speech given by Lyndon Johnson on March 31, 1968, as he attempted to justify his actions, which cost thousands upon thousands of lives.¹⁶⁰

For her part, Jacqueline Kennedy appears to have felt that her husband would never have let the war escalate.¹⁶¹ Her anger culminated in an assault on Defence Secretary, Robert McNamara, at a function, punching him whilst screaming: “Stop the killing, stop the killing!”¹⁶² Her frustration and horror is perhaps understandable on more than one level. Despite differences in their approach, many of Johnson’s advisors were Kennedy appointees, and the Vietnam War certainly threatened her husband’s legacy. Except she, nor he, was in a position to control it.¹⁶³ Indeed, in recent years, historical revisionism has begun to crack through the walls of Camelot and attempt to “bring the late President before the bar of history for his part in the disaster of the Vietnam War.”¹⁶⁴ In this vein, David Lubin asks, “Was the Kennedy funeral a moment of peace and healing and moral inspiration, or was it simply neoclassical theater on a giant scale, a spectacle that mesmerized the public and diverted its attention...?”¹⁶⁵ The answer is a complicated one, not only because of historical constructions surrounding the assassination, but also because of careful stewardship over the narrative. To this day, the Kennedy family carefully guards the image of JFK’s presidency. Only recently were the Schlesinger tapes released, while the Manchester interviews remain sealed until 2067.¹⁶⁶ Jacqueline Kennedy’s personal papers were only released in part in February 2012, and like her husband’s, they maintain a disconcerting level of censorship.

As we gain historical distance from the cognitive processes that allow for mythology to outweigh fact, this protectionism coupled with a carefully guarded legacy, continues to forcefully challenge critical opinions of the Kennedy administration.

According to Patricia Felkins and Irvin Goldman, myths “serve critical individual needs that include establishing personal identity, creating a sense of community, [and] supporting moral values....”¹⁶⁷ Jacqueline Kennedy led a nation in mourning and harnessed their grief to ensure that the legitimization of her husband would be nurtured and developed by her. Yet, in the end, Jackie would ultimately ensnare herself in the legacy of Camelot, for she wrapped historical mythology so tightly that the nation expected her to play the role of presidential widow for the rest of her life.¹⁶⁸ To this day, the cult of Kennedy fights any attempts at unravelling his presidency’s complex secrets and work remains to be done. However, as we continue to fight to understand the true legacy of a man who held the Oval Office for little more than a thousand days, it is crucial to look to his wife. To forget her agency in shaping his funeral is to miss a significant and crucial part of the narrative.

Conclusion

“An All-Seeing Eye and Ruthless Judgement”

In 1964, Robert Kennedy stood before the Democratic National Convention to honour his late brother. Finding no better words to surmise the Kennedy presidency than those of *Romeo and Juliet*, the former Attorney General told the world:

When he shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars, and he will make the face of heaven so fine, that all the world will be in love with night, and pay no worship to the garish sun.¹

America could never return to its past, and President Johnson, try, as he might, could not replace John F. Kennedy in the eyes of the American people. Lyndon Johnson became the “garish sun,” to the splendour of the Kennedys’ legacy. This very public rebuke of the new president is not surprising, given the historical animosity Bobby had for his brother’s vice president.² However, Jacqueline Kennedy’s supposed encouragement of the line,³ is somewhat bizarre and appears out of context with her previous actions. Her early use of mythology, following the assassination, did not involve a smear-campaign against Johnson. Indeed, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, the new president was able to use Jackie’s construction of Camelot to secure much of JFK’s existing legislation. This was part of the problem. Only months after his succession, everything had changed, and the Great Society ran the risk of eclipsing the New Frontier.

In her time occupying the White House, Jackie had a fairly affable relationship with the vice presidential couple. In fact, it is said that the First Lady was the only dissenting vote when top-level advisors held serious discussions about replacing LBJ in 1964.⁴ It is very possible, given her previous political observations, that again Jackie was worried about her husband’s presidency should Johnson be tossed from the ticket. Author

of *JFK's Last Hundred Days*, Thurston Clarke, points to the critical importance of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket carrying Texas.⁵ Without Johnson, Jackie may well have believed (and rightly so), a second term was in jeopardy. In the days following the assassination, a number of warm phone calls highlight the continued presence of a comfortable relationship between LBJ and the former First Lady.⁶ On December 2, while Jackie remained in residence, she called to thank the president for a letter. Her voice broke as she exclaimed: "I *know* how rare a letter is in a president's handwriting. Do you know that I've got more in your handwriting than I do in Jack's now?"⁷ Extending his love, Johnson is able to make her laugh despite her grief and the pair manages to share a few jokes. Again on December 7 they spoke, with Johnson praising the former First Lady's dignity, courage, and grace. He urges her to return to the White House anytime.⁸ Naturally, she did not, despite assurances to the contrary. Jackie would cite in a further conversation that it was just too painful.⁹

Strangely, it was only months after these phone calls that she came out swinging against her former confidante. Though Jackie's tapes with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. remained sealed until recently, the animosity that would encourage her support of the Shakespeare quote, is evident in both the June 2 and June 3 recordings. Relaying the words of US Ambassador to France, Charles Bohlen, into history, she reiterates his view of Johnson: "You all may have made a mistake about that man."¹⁰ She goes on to assert,

Lyndon can ride on some of the great things Jack did, and a lot of them will go forward because they can't be stopped – civil rights, the tax bill, the gold drain stuff... But when something really crisis happens, that's when they're going to miss Jack. And I just want them to know it's because they don't have that kind of president [anymore] and not because it was inevitable.¹¹

Indeed, her entire oral history is peppered with small digs at LBJ, as Jackie lays out her husband's dread that Johnson would one-day succeed him to the presidency.¹² Despite the fact that aides to Johnson attempted to counter all claims of a negative relationship, in the opinion of historian Larry Sabato, the Schlesinger tapes offer a crucial look into the evolving thought process of Jacqueline Kennedy in mid-1964. Her change in tone likely stems from the obsessive fear that she had about her husband being forgotten. Camelot was in danger, and her oral history, along with Bobby Kennedy's speech at the Democratic Convention sought to counter this.¹³ Lyndon Johnson, in 1964, was making progress that JFK could only have dreamed of, and it bothered Jackie.

Mythological constructions can only hold for so long. Though the White House furnishings may have remained static, society does not. In this vein, the Kennedy family hired historian William Manchester to write the definitive account of the assassination. The hope was to control the narrative, and thus JFK's memory. By 1966 however, both Jackie and Bobby became concerned that close confidants were sharing too many private details with Manchester, which ran contrary to their mythological image, and tried to pull the plug. Years later, Jackie would say, "In hindsight, it seems wrong to have ever done that book at that time. Don't forget, these were people in shock."¹⁴ The ensuing legal battle saw the former First Lady become "hysterical and violent"¹⁵ as she clung to the veil of Camelot. The ultimate result saw only sixteen hundred words removed from *The Death of a President*, and had the counter-measure of increasing publicity for the 1967 release. In fairness, expunged references trended towards the sensational, one of which only recently has come to light. Manchester supposedly wished to expand upon the President and First Lady enjoying one "last moment of serenity" aboard Air Force One

on November 21, 1963.¹⁶ The revelation that the author planned to include reference to sexual relations between the couple does bring Jackie's anger into context.

As very human details of America's royal couple began peaking out at history, the next fifty years of Kennedy historiography have fixated on sensationalism in the creation of counter-narratives. In attempting to deconstruct and understand what has become known as "Camelot," there are generally two scholarly justifications for a sensational approach. The first focuses on the fact that the Kennedy administration, and Jacqueline Kennedy in particular, put forth a constructed image that both fed upon and embodied the dramatic. As a result, it can be argued that any exploration of elements that do not run counter to such a construct is fair game. Secondly, it can be disputed that sexuality and narcotics, elements not present in the original Kennedy image, are relevant components to understanding their time in office. Opposed to these aims, this thesis has sought to acknowledge and explain such fantastical constructs, while condemning the sensational as a distraction. Issues of extramarital relations and the use of painkillers play no part in the original narrative, and only serve to deter from a discussion about Jacqueline Kennedy's private actions and their influence on the Kennedy brand. Indeed, more often than not, rabid attempts to deconstruct the dramatic, take away from room for dialogue that pays homage to her achievements as First Lady. In the need to analyse the mythology surrounding the Kennedy administration, we fail to give adequate attention to the fact the Jackie helped to create much of it.

There is a modicum of truth to the fashionable wife and mother image that she presented to the world as First Lady, but it is also important to remember that Jacqueline Kennedy was one of the original women to the office that held a college education. After

her, it would become a virtually standard practice.¹⁷ In the introduction to this thesis, a set of portraits by artist Aaron Shikler was referenced. While the official selection clashes with the historical memory of Jackie, it embodies her agency. The study for the painting, which was later dismissed, is more conservative, and representative of her public image – but was not used for that reason. It did not match Shikler’s private encounters with the former First Lady. Purposely omitted from the discussion is the presence of a third painting. It shows Jacqueline Kennedy, reclined on a couch, reading a book. Indeed, it is the portrait that she preferred to be hung in the White House. Although it was not, author of *Reading Jackie*, William Kuhn, cites that by “choosing an image of herself for public portrayal depicting her bookish intelligence... [Jackie] connects all these different selves.”¹⁸ Indeed, intelligence has been a constant theme throughout this exploration of her time as First Lady. It was Jackie’s sense of history that coupled with conscious decisions regarding her image, which helped to put forth the idea of an interested and engaged American leadership. Domestically, this same sense of culture drove her aim to present the White House as a repository of the nation’s past.

As we have seen, Jackie’s efforts helped tremendously in presenting an idealized image to the American people (and the world) at the height of the Cold War. This served to capture the imagination and gloss over many global conflicts. The short tenure of the Kennedy administration, just one thousand thirty-six days, makes these efforts at image-making all the more relevant. This is especially important, when one considers that Johnson, negating all perspective on the kind of bills Kennedy would have passed, achieved the bulk of his predecessor’s legislative agenda.¹⁹ Ironically, Jackie’s “tremendous awareness, an all-seeing eye and ruthless judgement,” in creating an

historical legacy that distorts her husband's prominence, seemingly runs counter to her efforts while in office to enhance the nation's sense of self and renew a sense of pride in the past. To return to the words of David Lubin, her talents always had some basis in "neoclassical theater," through which she "mesmerized the public and diverted its attention."²⁰ Though she abhorred the press, her actions always handled the media as a useful nuisance that could assist her aims. This is especially true in regards to the White House renovations, and her publicized tour.

Incredibly conscious of her public image, Jackie once dismissed it as this "little cartoon that runs along the bottom of your life... one that doesn't have much to do with your life."²¹ Beyond a devoted attention to her children, she was far from the affluent housewife who appeared in that October 1960 *Life* photo spread. Indeed, cousin Louis Auchincloss would later remember how bizarre a construct it was:

She had no public persona, of course, in those days, but when in after years she developed one, it amused me that it was so soft and gentle. Indeed, she could demonstrate those qualities, and delightfully, but there was another side of her nature that made her an even more interesting and vital person. She could be very strong, even wilful.²²

Remarkably, even at the height of grief, the Jacqueline Kennedy of the White House tour is not apparent in the recordings of her December 1963 conversations with President Johnson. Instead, she is rather jovial, though a touch reserved, and her tone has playfulness to it, often made reference to, but seldom heard publically. Despite the fact that Jackie was described as mischievous from childhood, and took great relish in shocking the press as First Lady, to hear her laugh is a concept foreign to her public self. Only weeks removed from the horror of Dallas, there is an amazing strength that Norman

Mailer and other intimates allude to. Similar political nuances emerge in the Schlesinger tapes, with a touch of ruthlessness.

As journalist Theodore White reminds us, Jacqueline Kennedy “had a very definite sense of her place in history.”²³ In the sixties, this comment speaks to the issue of action on the part of the First Lady. A common criticism of her time in office, to counter this “ruthlessness,” is of course that she could have done much more. As *Redbook* magazine claimed, her submission to gender norms was “somewhat startling in this day of the emancipated female.”²⁴ In her thirties she was certainly no feminist, much to the frustration of White House Social Secretary, Letitia Baldrige, who desperately tried to encourage her boss to take a more active approach to women’s rights. The problem, she said, was that Jacqueline Kennedy “never had to fight for anything in a man’s world.”²⁵ Ultimately though, what history tends to forget, is that in her study of eighteenth century France, Jackie knew how to achieve her objectives through men. Publisher Harriet Rubin goes so far as to boldly claim that this approach was “a better strategy than feminism’s defiance.” At the time, Rubin claims, “a too-smart woman need[ed] a man as cover,” and in a sense Jackie was a “master puppeteer.”²⁶

When viewed in this light, the argument melds succinctly with the direction this study has tried to take. Though far from a radical during her time as First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy’s passive and reserved public image was a blend of self-preservation and calculation. Even behind the scenes, Jackie knew when to flaunt her femininity to achieve her aims, and as White House Chief Usher J.B. West remembers: “I soon learned that Mrs. Kennedy's wish, murmured with a 'Do you think...' or 'Could you please...' was as much a command as Mrs. Eisenhower's 'I want this done immediately.'”²⁷ Years later,

in her time as an editor for both Viking Press and Doubleday, now Jacqueline Onassis, she would reflect, almost mournfully on that period of her life. “What has been sad for many women of my generation,” she said, “is that they weren’t supposed to work if they had families. There they were, with the highest education, and what were they to do when the children were grown?” Jackie would go on to exclaim, “I have always lived through men. Now I realize I can’t do that anymore.”²⁸ She further told Oliver Bernier that life as a Kennedy had not been easy.²⁹ The woman she became as social norms evolved, offers a clearer picture of the strength and influence she had all along, hidden behind the reserve of her persona as “proper” First Lady.

It is part of the reason that Jackie ignored pleas to write her memoirs later in life. Beyond claiming, “I think I’ve honored my obligation to history,” she would maintain that the thirty year old Jacqueline Kennedy people wanted to hear about, was quite different from the sixty year old Jacqueline Onassis she had become.³⁰ A degree of this difference, certainly stems from her allusion to the crushing gender norms of the time, but also relates back to the notion of duality that has permeated this thesis from beginning to end. How was the successful editor, who ultimately was responsible for the production of nearly one hundred books,³¹ supposed to adequately capture the person she had been? This is especially true when one considers the notion that “Jackie O,” can be interpreted as the liberated version of Jackie Kennedy³² – and that this influential and capable editor was always there, beyond the “difficult and dangerous” façade that she summoned from “deep within herself” as First Lady.³³ Indeed, her time as editor and the care an attention she placed into each work, harkens back to her careful planning of the restoration, and her edits of *The White House: An Historic Guide*. Furthermore, the sense of culture and

history Jackie sought to infuse the nation with during her time as First Lady, remained a passion throughout life. Her editorial publications include works on slave narratives, Napoleonic Europe, Tsarist Russia, Ancient Egypt, and naturally, post-WWII France.³⁴

The Jackie we remember, through media coverage and biography, is a far cry from the woman she was. Intelligent, mischievous, capable, and cunning, Jackie was able to exert a curious but concerted amount of influence on the image of her husband's presidency, and the perception of the United States abroad, all the while remaining a tableau of affability. Her adherence to gender norms made her no less capable, though given her success later in life, one must ask what she could have achieved in the absence of that barrier, or with more time? Surmising the call by many historians for a re-examination of her time as First Lady, William Kuhn chides history's failure to recognize that Jackie was "a more intellectual, better-read, and better-informed woman than we had known before."³⁵ In closing this exploration, it is important to note that the myth of Camelot has created an ironic barrier of romanticism, attempting to bar us from humanizing John and Jackie. It is the same barrier she carried, throughout her time in the White House, the divide between the public and the private.

There are no better, or fitting words to close this thesis than those of twentieth century playwright, John Cocteau. The remark itself, could have been written about America's thirty-seventh First Lady specifically:

For when beauty, grace, elegance, intelligence, power, and love of art join almost incredibly in a single person, so rare a privilege outshines the spotlights of the moment.³⁶

It is the perfect poetic flourish, to surmise a woman who once claimed that she wanted to be the "Art Director of the Twentieth Century." The task, and burden, of the historian is

to find a way to look past that spotlight, towards the impact of Jackie as First Lady. In a small way, this exploration has aimed to reconsider her legacy, drawing on a wealth of biography, first-hand accounts, along with her own words and papers. Much like her restoration of the White House however, the work of history remains unfinished, and as further sources become available, this author hopes that we can continue to move away from the sensationalism surrounding JFK, and keep rethinking the private world of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy.

Post Script

“God Will Have A Bit of Explaining to Do”

In the late spring of 2014, as this work was nearing initial completion, a series of letters between Jacqueline Kennedy and Father Joseph Leonard entered the public eye.¹ To much fanfare, a wide number of journalists and scholars hailed this long forgotten correspondence as Mrs. Kennedy’s pseudo-autobiography. Such enthusiasm is reminiscent of the excitement surrounding the release of Jackie’s oral history with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in 2011, similarly heralded as her unwritten memoir. Indeed, it was the latter that inspired the direction of this thesis. These letters are the latest in a series of new discoveries that continue to fuel both fascination with Jacqueline Kennedy, and serve a continued need to pull back the historical veil that shrouds her tenure as First Lady.

Despite the fact that the possession of this collection has entered a legal custody battle, care of the Kennedy family, in time there is hope that this correspondence will become available, and receive scholarly consideration.² Fortunately, certain excerpts have managed to make their way into the media, though the brief passages seemingly do little to enhance what is already the crux of this exploration – Jackie’s private abilities. As Larry Sabato recently stated, “What these letters make fascinatingly clear,” is that Jacqueline Kennedy, “from the very beginning...knew what she was getting into,” when she married John Fitzgerald Kennedy.³ She demonstrates an awareness not only of her husband’s flaws, but of the political world she was about to enter.

She noted that she craved a “glittering world of crowned heads and Men of Destiny,” and felt that she had a greater purpose than to serve as “just a sad little housewife.”⁴ This is likely why she chose to end her brief engagement to stockbroker,

John G.W. Husted.⁵ She was drawn to JFK's ambition, ironically describing him in one letter to Father Leonard as Macbeth-like, consumed by a raw desire for power and a ruthless determination that would ultimately lead him to the presidency in 1961.⁶ In this regard, Jackie, though inadvertently, places herself into the position of Lady Macbeth – a woman drawn to power, yet forever cursed by the results of her ambition. Torn between two worlds, a mixture of old world femininity and reserve set against an innate intelligence and incredible awareness, she is a paradox. As this thesis has addressed, such circumstances often proved troublesome for a First Lady, who more than anything wanted to maintain her independence in the eye of the political storm.

Although letters to Leonard from her time as First Lady remain inaccessible, her candid nature in earlier years, suggest that her writings between 1960 and 1963 may offer further insight into her interpersonal state. Certainly, in her last letter to the priest following the assassination, she quite emotionally reveals that: "I always would have rather lost my life than lost Jack."⁷ These words certainly hint towards the fragile emotional state she was in for months on end.⁸ Understandably in a crisis of faith, she not only voiced disillusionment with God, but also questioned his motives with Father Leonard. Yet, again we see the rumblings of attempted rationalization through Camelot as she states: "I think God must have taken Jack to show the world how lost we would be without him – but that is a strange way of thinking to me."⁹

Even in brief surmise, in the words of journalist Peter Foster of the *Telegraph*, these letters continue to support the notion of a woman who was "deeply self-aware."¹⁰ Yet despite her ambition, her struggles, and the horror she lived through there remains that ever-present sense of wicked humour. She somehow startlingly manages to make the

joke that “God will have a bit of explaining to do...if I ever meet him.”¹¹ Yet one can’t help but feel that this satirical observation is rooted in more than bemusement. Perhaps more than most, Jacqueline Kennedy is deserving of answers for the horrors she had to face. As we continue to struggle to understand her complexities, one can only hope she is looking down with interest, having received her answers. She certainly would be more than a little amused at her enduring fascination in the public realm, as historians grapple with a multitude of attempts to understand her private world. Perhaps the complexity of her legacy can be viewed as her last act of mischievousness: a woman who relished shocking others, and having fun, will perhaps forever keep us guessing.

~ July 2014

Endnotes

Introduction: “Campaign Wife”

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Chapter One: “Queen of America”

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- ²⁷ J.B. West, *Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Ladies* (Norwich, UK: Fletcher & Son Ltd., 1974), 191-92.
- ²⁸ Lawrence, 4.
- ²⁹ Kuhn, 51.
- ³⁰ Kuhn, 67; Lawrence, 180-81.
- ³¹ Kuhn, 5.
- ³² Wayne Koestenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin: Interpreting An Icon* (New York: Picador, 1995), 142.
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- ³⁶ Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations In The 1950s and Early 1960s," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 2 (2013): 47.

Post Script: "God Will Have A Bit of Explaining To Do"

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