JACQUELINE KENNEDY AND THE POLITICS OF POPULARITY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Although her role as first lady marked the real beginning of the American public’s fascination with her, Jacqueline Kennedy’s celebrity status endured throughout her life. Dozens of books have sought to chronicle that mystique, hail her style, and commend her contribution to the youthful persona of the Kennedy administration. She seems to be an object ripe for rhetorical study; yet, for many communication scholars, Kennedy’s cultural iconicity diminishes her legacy as First Lady, and she remains an exemplar of political passivity. Her influence on the American public’s cultural and political imagination, however, demonstrates a need for scholars to assess with greater depth her development from First Lady to American icon in the early 1960s. Thus, this dissertation focuses on three case studies that analyze Jacqueline Kennedy’s image across different media: fashion spreads in Vogue magazine and Harper’s Bazaar published immediately after the inauguration in 1961; her televised tour of the White House broadcast in February 1962; and Andy Warhol’s 1964 Jackie prints, which drew from her construction of the Camelot myth after JFK’s funeral. These case studies seek to show how “icon” becomes an inventional and conceptual resource for the role of a modern first lady and how Kennedy’s shift to public icon in her own right (after and outside of her position as first lady) was mediated in nuanced ways that both reflected early Cold War (suburban) culture and shaped the larger institutional discourses of which she was part.
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CHAPTER 1:
IMAGES OF JACQUELINE KENNEDY AND EARLY COLD WAR CULTURE: A SPACE FOR VISUAL RHETORICAL STUDIES

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (later Onassis) was just 31 years old when President Kennedy took the oath of office in 1961. Her beauty, glamour, and elegance, coupled with her well-documented knowledge of languages and the arts, soon secured her status as the most photographed woman in the world (only to be replaced in the 1990s by Princess Diana). ¹ Fashion historian Kathleen Craughwell-Varda contends that after having been absent for much of Kennedy’s campaign, “[Jacqueline Kennedy’s] impact on popular culture when she arrived on the public scene in 1960 was instantaneous: the dual American ideals of the sultry blonde and the prim, starched girl next door were immediately replaced by that of a cool, sophisticated brunette.”² For Craughwell-Varda, Kennedy’s influence on American “popular culture… redefined the role of First Lady, ensuring that every woman who followed her in the White House would have to carve out her own public image.”³ Almost immediately, Kennedy was featured in prestigious fashion magazines such as Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar and photographs and articles on her were ubiquitous in Life and Women’s Wear Daily. Department stores across the country featured “Jackie”-esque mannequins, and her expensive clothes were copied for ready-to-wear patterns and mass produced for middle-class consumers.⁴

Although her role as first lady marked the real beginning of the American public’s fascination with her, Kennedy’s celebrity status endured throughout her life. Her marriage to Aristotle Onassis shifted public recognition of her from the familiar “Jackie” to the more scandalous “Jackie O,” remaking her into a different kind of American icon: large sunglasses, silk scarves tied loosely around her (still) bouffant hair, and a persistent
glamour that fueled the paparazzi to hound her. Dozens of books have sought to chronicle that mystique, hail her style, and commend her contribution to the youthful persona of the Kennedy administration. As recently as 2012, “Jackie’s Secret Life” was the featured section of People magazine. She seems to be an object ripe for rhetorical study; yet, for many communication scholars, Kennedy’s cultural iconicity diminishes her legacy as First Lady, and she remains an exemplar of political passivity. Her influence on the American public’s cultural and political imagination, however, demonstrates a need for scholars to analyze with greater depth her development from First Lady to American icon in the early 1960s.

In this project, I suggest that study of Jacqueline Kennedy indicates a profound moment of convergence in the early 1960s between modern celebrity culture and national politics. Analyzing the interaction between images and texts of Kennedy during the early 1960s provides one way to locate that moment. Because mediation emerges conceptually as a key discursive trope of this era—in scholarly theory, in popular forms of art, in political campaigns, and in institutional/public roles—understanding Kennedy’s legacy entails examining how she chose to be mediated visually and discursively in ways that emphasized the prismatic role of First Lady within a modern Cold War presidency. Additionally, that pursuit requires situating her performance within the political, cultural, and gendered expectations of the early Cold War period. Studying such constructions of Kennedy has the potential to contribute to important conversations about the institution of the presidency, the role of popular media in creating and sustaining political images, the social milieu of early Cold War visual culture, and Jacqueline Kennedy’s performance as first lady. More specifically, I use three key questions to structure my approach to this
dissertation: (1) what do the selected imagetexts of Jacqueline Kennedy do rhetorically for the Kennedy administration?; (2) what do the selected imagetexts of Jacqueline Kennedy do rhetorically for the role of first lady?; and (3) what do the selected imagetexts of Jacqueline Kennedy do for contemporaneous cultural ideals of femininity?

To establish the significance of examining mediations of Jacqueline Kennedy in the early 1960s, I first review four sets of literature: (1) the modern presidency and the changing historical role of first ladies; (2) the visual culture of the Cold War; (3) biographical studies of Jacqueline Kennedy and her media presence before becoming first lady; and (4) cultural icons and rhetorical iconicity. I contend that the scholars studying first ladies typically have adhered to an oversimplified binary that defines the role either as politically passive or politically active. Examining Kennedy in the role complicates that binary because she was mediated in ways that bespoke the burgeoning intersection of national politics and celebrity culture. Second, I outline influences to my critical approach of this project. Finally, I provide a brief précis of the major case studies in this dissertation.

**Literature Review**

Examining Jacqueline Kennedy’s role in political and popular culture during her tenure as First Lady requires reviewing several sets of literature: the so-called “modern” presidency and the role of first ladies therein; the visual culture of the Cold War, with attention to the discursive and material role of mediation; biographical studies of Kennedy; and scholarship on icons and iconicity. Although each of these areas potentially contributes to our understanding of how Kennedy was mediated in the early 1960s, communication scholars have not investigated thoroughly her role in the
celebritization of the modern presidency and her capacity for rhetorical invention. My dissertation, therefore, contributes to scholarly investigation of the position of first lady through attention to Kennedy’s dual amplification of the administration and her own position therein. I thus theorize new connections between the aesthetics and politics of American culture during this era, using the Kennedys as a barometer.

The Rhetorical Emphasis in Studies of the Modern Presidency

Within the fields of American studies, history, political science, law, and communication (to name a few), scholars have examined everything from the definition of the office of the presidency to presidential campaigns to Constitutional powers of the president to specific events that mark individual presidents’ terms. More specifically, numerous scholars have shown that after World War II, the institution of the presidency resonated loudly in American public culture, particularly with respect to the rhetorical traditions presidents created and upheld for themselves. Assessing the import of the Kennedy administration requires a thorough understanding of that shift. The goal of this review, therefore, is to demonstrate how studies of the postwar presidency have increasingly defined its rhetorical and cultural aspects and broadened our conception of who encompasses the institution. Although literature about the presidency remains vast, my review of such scholarship from the postwar period to the present seeks to situate my dissertation at the interstices of the presidency, the role of first lady, and the development of a particular aesthetic of political culture.

Richard Neustadt was the first scholar to coin the term “the modern presidency,” which appeared in his text *Presidential Power* and reappeared in his *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. In later
introductory remarks reflecting on his 1960 edition, Neustadt recalls approaching the presidency “not [as] the office but rather the person as one among many in a set of institutions” that defined postwar power as “personal influence of an effective sort on governmental action.”\(^5\) Put simply, he writes that “presidential power is the power to persuade.”\(^6\) As a scholar of the presidency and an active participant in presidential politics, Neustadt examines the broad role that presidents’ personae play in determining their influence on audiences (e.g., Cabinet and staff, Congress, constituents, and the American public). Although he argues narrowly for the significance of “personal influence” to presidents’ relative effectiveness, Neustadt’s work proves helpful for its sensitivity to distinctions regarding how specific presidents achieved persuasive “power” in different modern contexts. Neustadt’s observations on a given president’s “personal influence” are conscious of the historical and cultural contexts that particularize that president’s persona and its capacity for effect.

For all its attributes, Neustadt’s work does not necessarily account for ways in which other people—e.g., Cabinet members or first ladies— influence presidential power, nor does he attend explicitly to the rhetorical nature of the modern presidency. Indeed, communication scholars since Aristotle long have recognized persona and/or “public image” as integral to rhetoric. In 1987, political scientist Jeffrey Tulis dedicated a book-length investigation to the “rhetorical presidency,” arguing that between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, presidents’ formal public speeches shifted from tools of governance to tools for popular (and mass) appeal.\(^7\) This title delighted scholars of communication, whose studies of presidential “rhetoric” were recognized within another academic discipline. Thus, Tulis’s work is important for its emphasis on presidents’
abilities to construct effective messages for a public whose needs and wants undergo change over time; however, his narrow definition of “rhetoric” to mean mainly oratory places limits on readers’ understanding of “rhetorical” tools of influence. By attending solely to “official” rhetoric such as inaugural addresses or messages to Congress, Tulis misses broader cultural implications that might be found, for example, in epideictic speeches or news coverage of a presidency. He treats the presidency as a purely political—rather than cultural—institution.

Rhetoric and Institution: The Presidency as Instrumental and Symbolic

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson similarly treat the presidency as a political institution enacted through “official” rhetorical moments, but they better account for its symbolic potential and provide key insights into the ways in which contemporary communication scholars assess the relationship between rhetoric and the presidency. Emphasizing the institution’s foundation in convention but potential for invention, Campbell and Jamieson write:

Only a president can issue a presidential inaugural and, in the process, become ‘the president’…the identity of the presidents as spokespersons, fulfilling constitutional roles and exercising their executive power, gives this discourse a distinctive character. In turn, the identity and character of the presidency arise out of such discourse.  

In addition to the historicity of a given presidency, rhetorical genres such as the state of the union or the inaugural address constrain the public roles a president can enact. Yet, when presidents give voice and embodiment to the institution, they change its shape and structure. Thus, Campbell and Jamieson provide an important point of departure from
scholarship of the presidency that sees rhetoric as a central *instrumental* component. More than just a tool at the disposal of presidents, these authors show that rhetoric constitutes the very notion of the institution.

In their comprehensive review of social scientific and humanistic inquiry into the rhetorical presidency for *Communication Yearbook*, Mary Stuckey and Frederick Antczak also note a change in understanding presidential rhetoric merely as instrumental. The authors situate contemporary study of the institution within two divergent academic paths, wherein “the more overtly restrictive division pits studies of the institution against studies of the individual; the more subtly subversive division segregates the analysis of instrumental functions of communication from considerations of their more constitutive consequences.”⁹ For the authors, a potential bridge between these two approaches defines presidential character more broadly as “image,” seeing the institution as larger than the individual, as interactively constructed, and as attentive to the productive tensions between its symbolic and instrumental capacities.¹⁰

An example of the kind of scholarship to which Stuckey and Antczak were referring may be Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn Parry-Giles’ *The Prime-Time Presidency: The West Wing and U.S. Nationalism*. In this book, the authors argue that “to completely appreciate the ideological meaning of the presidency requires engagement with the vast collection of discourses that also figure in the cultural meaning of the office and the people who occupy it.”¹¹ Defining “presidentiality” as “a discourse that demarcates the cultural and ideological meaning of the presidency for the general public,”¹² Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles suggest that mediated representations of the presidency on popular television programs like *The West Wing* influence how Americans
think the presidency ought be enacted and embodied. Keith Erickson also describes the presidency as “symbolic,” and more specifically, as having a visual history. He writes that “[b]y visually appropriating cultural and political symbols, a president is able to ‘make strategic choices about how to engage the popular imagination in any political situation.’” Presidents’ abilities to engage the popular imagination become powerful when coupled with what Anne Norton describes as the “vernacular” culture of the presidency, or the ways in which meaning for the institution is constructed and maintained through common culture.

Stressing the cultural dimensions of the presidency through its representations in media becomes an important justification for my perspective on John Kennedy’s presidency. More than just his personal influence, and more than just his public speeches, the Kennedy administration’s persona—which included Jacqueline Kennedy—shaped public notions of how to be a modern president. This was an act accomplished at least as much through news, television, and magazine coverage of the First Family as through President Kennedy’s major speeches.

The Rhetorical Presidency and Presidential Rhetoric

Following Tulis’s assertion of a new sort of rhetorical presidency, editor Martin Medhurst published a compilation of essays, written by scholars in political science and communication studies, that sought to move “beyond the rhetorical presidency” (as reflected in the work’s title). In his introduction, Medhurst distinguishes studies of the rhetorical presidency from studies of presidential rhetoric, arguing that political science and communication scholars differ respectively in their foci. Although keenly addressing “the matter of medium” for which many communication scholars have critiqued Tulis’s
work, Medhurst acknowledges classical and rhetorical theorists’ bias toward text and oratory. He nevertheless clarifies ways in which historical traditions intertwine with contemporaneous cultural influences to impart a complex rhetorical context for rhetors. He explains:

A rhetorical context is a unique array of forces—rhetorical, historical, sociological, psychological, strategic, economic, and personal—that exists at any given moment in time and that impacts the speaker’s selection and presentation of topics, the ways in which the message is composed and treated, and the manner in which the audience is invited to experience and understand the discourse.¹⁶

In this way, Medhurst gives form to the modes in which various scholars problematize their research on the presidency. Although some scholars might understand his definition of rhetorical context narrowly, for purposes of this dissertation, Medhurst provides a good analytic model for understanding how text and context interanimate one another within this institution.

The essays that follow Medhurst’s introduction either fall within studies of the rhetorical presidency or studies of presidential rhetoric. Several prove relevant for this project. For instance, political scientist Glen Thurow (an original author on the journal article that prompted Tulis’s book) identifies presidential character as a critical component of successful presidents (who thus signify a virtuous public).¹⁷ His recognition that presidents can serve as cultural models for public emulation outside of their constitutional duties supports my perspective of the role in this dissertation. Thurow, however, limits his discussion to evaluating how specific presidents model “good”
(virtuous) or “bad” character for their audiences, with his conceptualization of character akin to what communication scholars call “prudence.”

Bruce Gronbeck accounts nicely for the role of technologies in audiences’ access to the president/cy. By complicating how media scholars have theorized the institution, Gronbeck asserts that electronic media have “recast relationships between the presidency and its constituencies…enlarged the role of spectacle in politics…[and] all but destroyed the traditional distance that has existed between leaders and the led.”\textsuperscript{18} Thus, like my dissertation, Gronbeck’s chapter characterizes media as critical to public perception of the presidency. Moreover, my dissertation analyzes mediations of Jacqueline Kennedy as hybrid forms, aiming to discern how various iterations of her popular image worked with and against the political role she played.

Finally, in 2008, Martin Medhurst and James Aune published an edited book of essays considering “the prospect of presidential rhetoric.” In that compilation, John Murphy argues that presidential authority in a postmodern presidency rests in an individual’s “performance of legitimacy,”\textsuperscript{19} seen through speeches that “speak the presidents because such terms have a purchase on their minds and lives—and in the mind and life of the nation.”\textsuperscript{20} Drawing from Campbell and Jamieson’s discussion of generic components of the presidency, as well as Thomas Farrell and James Boyd White’s concepts of authority, Murphy provokes scholars to consider how authority acquires force when presidents reflect a particular historical moment but inflect the larger institution. Rather than using postmodern theories to critique the futility of “legitimacy” and “authority” as archaic concepts, Murphy suggests that “authority” has contingent and enduring components. Presidential public address, therefore, offers embodied snapshots
into contingent historical moments and draws upon larger discursive traditions. His work on the presidency continues an important analytic mode that navigates the complex terrain between rhetoric’s instrumental and symbolic functions and its contemporaneous and historical modalities.

The aforementioned scholars offer important perspectives on rhetorical components of the modern presidency. They examine contemporary cultural nuances and inventional resources available to presidents through institutional norms or reflected in broader social milieu. With the exception of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, scholars of the presidency typically view the institution as the enactment of one person. This dissertation instead takes seriously the role of first lady as an underdeveloped aspect of the modern presidency and as an important reflection of American public culture. As such, this project supplements research on the presidency but also complicates scholarship on first ladies beyond straightforward assessment of their political agendas.

A Two-Person Presidency: Theorizing the Role of First Lady

In rhetorical studies, much has been written on the role of first lady and the women who enacted this position. Although scholars in several fields (e.g., history, art and architectural history, and cultural studies) have analyzed Jacqueline Kennedy, I seek better to theorize existing research on first ladies and better to historicize Kennedy’s performance as first lady. I contend that Kennedy complicates a common binary established in first lady scholarship that views the position either as a reenactment of traditional gender norms or as an expansion of women’s political roles. Unlike emerging scholarship on the presidency, scholarship on first ladies often limits their rhetorical potential to their apparent political agendas.
Karlyn Kohrs Campbell most explicitly understands the institution of the presidency as “a two-person career” and the role of first lady as “vital to the presidency.” In her chapter in Medhurst’s compilation and subsequent journal articles, Campbell seeks to remedy scholars’ conceptual exclusion of the role of first lady within the larger “corporate entity” of the institution—comprising, for example, press secretaries, speechwriters, and cabinet members. Specifically, Campbell contends that first ladies have the complex task of modeling traditional gender norms (typically located in the “private” sphere) within an institution that necessarily oscillates between public and private roles, political and cultural import. She writes: “[B]ecause of the nature of the U.S. presidency, the First Lady and First Family are viewed as ideals or culture types, a problem exacerbated by the intense press scrutiny they now receive in what Richard Schickel calls our ‘culture of celebrity.’” Campbell’s work provides valuable arguments for the gendered expectations and requirements of the presidency, which I hope to assess through my project. Additionally, however, I want to complicate the assumption that contemporary presidents somehow operate separately from but are affected by a newfound “culture of celebrity.” Instead, we might locate parts of that dualism—the celebrity politician, the political celebrity—within mediations of the Kennedy presidency.

In a significant article on the rhetorical role of first ladies, Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair contend that “[t]he first lady pulpit can act as a site for the performance of archetypal femininity; it can also function as a location of feminist advancement that challenges gender stereotypes, expanding women’s political space.” The authors then comprehensively examine well-known first ladies such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Mamie Eisenhower and lesser-known first ladies such as Grace Coolidge and Florence Harding.
to assess their relative influence on an era’s prevailing gender norms. The
aforementioned binary permeates much scholarship on first ladies, and Parry-Giles and
Blair mention Kennedy as a “performance of archetypal femininity.” They write:

Certain first ladies articulated commitments to a more traditional conception of
motherhood and domesticity, locating women’s power within the privacy of the
home…Reminiscent of the nineteenth century’s cult of domesticity, Jacqueline
Lee Bouvier Kennedy (1961-63) told a Saturday Evening Post reporter that what
she really wanted was ‘to be behind him [her husband] and to be a good wife and
mother.’

Here, the authors emphasize Kennedy’s domestic role. Although their perspective
provides immense insight into the ways in which the first lady “pulpit” has been
performed historically, they discount how public perception of Jacqueline Kennedy
shifted with expectations for a “modern” Cold War president. Attention to the social
milieu in which Kennedy operated nuances the cultural and historical dimensions of her
performance, as she emerged during a time when femininity often formed the stage on
which the two major political systems engaged in symbolic theater.

*The First Lady and Popular Press*

Scholars have generally understood Jacqueline Kennedy’s performance as first
lady in two ways: either she enacted the role traditionally (read: she was not overtly
political) or she carefully crafted her glamorous image to complement the larger persona
of the Kennedy administration. Myra Gutin, for instance, supports Parry-Giles and Blair’s
interpretation of Kennedy as normatively feminine. She writes:
Jacqueline Kennedy did nothing to advance the cause of women. In her unique position of not just creating news but being news, she might have altered the perception of ‘women as decoration’ held by most Americans at the time (most notably her husband). Instead, she reinforced the view that women’s predominant concerns were ‘taste, fashion, superficial culture and ceremony.’

Gutin contends that because Kennedy failed to alter “the perception of ‘woman as decoration’…[perpetuated by John Kennedy]” and thereby create the type of “news” that advanced “the cause of women,” Kennedy necessarily reinforced normative gender roles. Her work continues an important mode of feminist scholarship on the role, but Gutin’s perspective equates Kennedy’s rhetorical emphasis on visuality with political impotence. Moreover, Gutin’s observation that Kennedy was “not just creating news but…[was] news” construes her agency too broadly and narrowly, imagining her image as solely self-constructed and diminishing shifts in culture and media that influenced Kennedy’s performance.

Maurine Beasley studies the ways in which first ladies have interacted with audiences through new technologies. She too contends that television enhanced Kennedy’s popularity because she looked “like a queen,” but Beasley also acknowledges Kennedy’s agency in performing the role and examines the press’s impact on construction of her presidential persona. Beasley writes: “Even at [John Kennedy’s] funeral, [Jacqueline Kennedy] was the director and stage manager…she had orchestrated her own Camelot. After her, the position of the first lady would be a more scripted entry.” Her observations convey particular perspicacity because they not only
acknowledge Kennedy’s agency, but they also implicate the performative—and visual—impact of her rhetorical legacy.

Elizabeth J. Natalle most comprehensively analyzes Kennedy’s visual rhetorical influence by outlining several preeminent rhetorical strategies that Kennedy stressed as first lady: fashion diplomacy, protocol (decorum), and astute social prowess. Natalle contends that Kennedy’s clothes, her transformation of White House entertainment, and her orchestration of John Kennedy’s funeral are key components of her legacy. Most important, Natalle writes: “The dialectical tensions between public and private, imagery and silence, modesty and stardom, intelligence and restraint all characterize this first lady…she used image rather than words to convey messages that allowed public satisfaction while preserving her privacy as an individual.”

Natalle’s argument provides critical justification for analyzing mediations of Kennedy as first lady. She reassesses Kennedy’s significance by recognizing the importance of aesthetics to her public persona, which grounds an important assumption for my project. I hope to further such scholarship by interrogating more closely the ways in which Cold War culture provided particular conditions of possibility for Kennedy’s burgeoning iconicity. In turn, I argue, Kennedy’s performance provides an inventionial resource for subsequent first ladies.

**Identifying Key Issues for Theorization**

Scholars of the American presidency have provided important work on its postwar status that increasingly accounts for its rhetorical and cultural components. Scholarship from the 1960s to the present demonstrates not only that presidents appeal to the public to achieve political effect among different audiences but that the “rhetorical presidency” saw public speeches shift from tools of governance to tools for popular
appeal. Still, the rhetorical presidency has ideological and cultural dimensions that resonate beyond one individual and the speeches s/he makes, and some scholars have argued for a broader definition of the institution. Scholarship on the roles that first ladies play in a given presidency indicates that these women supplement a president’s political objectives and establish rhetorical norms to change public perception of the institution. Missing from such scholarship, however, are aesthetic dimensions: how first ladies reflect and constitute national identity through visual mediations that help sustain a modern presidency increasingly concerned with “public image.”

After reviewing literature on the presidency and first ladies, therefore, two central gaps emerge. First, studies of the “modern” presidency might benefit from examination of figures outside of presidents themselves who help shape public perception of the institution. Only fairly recently has some scholarship sought to broaden our conception of the presidency to include figures outside of a president’s cabinet or his speechwriters. In their book on the Clinton presidency, for instance, James MacGregor Burns and Georgia J. Sorenson argue that the administration’s “centrist” philosophy was fortified through Vice-President Al Gore and challenged by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who served as critical facets for “transforming leadership in the White House.” Like Burns and Sorenson, I seek to complicate our understanding of the institution. Second, rhetorical studies of first ladies typically remain limited to traditional notions of public address, leaving undertheorized those women who operate outside of “official” rhetoric and progressive political agendas. This dissertation helps remedy those deficiencies by deepening our conception of the modern presidency and by complicating our assessment
of the rhetorical culture in which this first lady operated. Thus, I next describe the ways in which the presidency, mass media, and visuality merged anew in postwar America.

Early Cold War Visual Culture: Kennedy’s Conditions of Possibility

Early Cold War political culture was nothing if not a breeding ground for visual metonyms. Studies of postwar American art, sociology, architecture, technology, and politics all emphasize a common theme: the importance of consuming images after World War II. Because this dissertation argues that a precedent of visual consumption provided potent conditions of possibility for a first lady whose “response to life was aesthetic” and for an administration whose persona depended largely on its projection of youth, vitality, and elegance, I contextualize key visual and discursive tropes of the time, narrowing to their import for the Kennedy administration.

Conformity and Taste: Suburban American Culture

Much has been written on the economic expansion and population growth of post-World-War-II America. As historian James Patterson writes, “Booms that had started in the late 1940s—in home-and school-building, suburban development, household gadgetry, automobiles, television, children’s wear and toys—expanded in the 1950s and early 1960s.” The GNP rose steadily from the mid-1950s through the early 1960s, unemployment was “remarkably low,” and by 1960, an average family’s purchasing power was 30 percent higher than in 1950, as median income had increased. By the mid-1950s, more than 60 percent of homes were owner-occupied, more than 80 percent of population growth was in suburbs, and young men who had returned from war and received federally funded college educations were rivaling average earnings of much
older men. Thus, Patterson observes: “The consumer culture surged ahead...enticing the upwardly mobile millions to develop ever-rising expectations about the Good Life.”

“The Good Life,” however, was not without its detractors, and economic prosperity stoked increased anxieties about mass culture. Critics of the newfound suburban middle-class decried the deterioration of cities; more important, such critics had “cultural concerns” about the effects of suburban development on their inhabitants and “deplored life in the suburbs themselves.” Because homes “long have been understood to have a close relation to the personality and character of those who lived within,” and suburban homes were seen as mass-produced likenesses, some critics in the 1950s argued that “suburbanites, in their pursuit of ‘adjustment,’ had traded away their individuality, their free will, their moral compass, and more” and that “by valorizing conformity and denigrating difference, society had lost the grounds and opportunity for articulating individual selfhood.”

Richard Yates’ *Revolutionary Road*, for instance, emerged from this “condemnatory” strain of literature to contrast individuality and conformity, as well as the realization and degradation of personal identity. His novel reinforced critical assessment of suburbia “as a culture beholden to industrial capitalism, mass production, and commodity consumption...[and the] increasing identity and alienation of selfhood.”

Intellectuals such as Jacob Riesman, William Whyte, and C. Wright Mills “worried about the all-pervasive sameness, blandness, unventuresomeness, mindlessness, and threat to individualism that they thought were flowing from the onrushing materialism of middle-class life in the suburbs.” Deemed “perhaps the most important work of suburban criticism in the 1950s,” Whyte’s *The Organization Man* described the suburbs as “not merely great conglomerations of mass housing. They are a new social
institution, and while the variations in them are many…there is an unmistakable similarity in the way of life." Whyte communicated this worry by using the visual logic of 1950s suburban architecture as an example:

The more vigorous the search for common denominators, the stronger the pressure to alikeness. Sometimes this extends even to house design. The architects have tried to vary the facades of each house, and one might assume that in putting up aluminum awnings, making alterations, repainting and the like, residents try hard to enlarge the differences. This is not always so; in some areas residents have apparently agreed to unify the block with a common design and color scheme for garages and such.

Parallel to such fears of conformity were fears of “modern mass culture,” as neo-Marxist capitalist critics such as Theodore Adorno and the Frankfurt School emerged among academics. American social critic Dwight Macdonald argued that “‘Mass society’ had arrived but, alas, it was driving quality from the arts and threatening to deprive even intelligent people of their ability to discriminate between what was artistically enduring and what was merely cheap and commercial.” Indeed, television “stood as an icon in American homes,” and by 1960, about 90 percent of households had at least one television set. Visual print culture such as magazines aimed at the suburban middle-class—and particularly women’s magazines—also largely flourished, an observation perhaps unsurprising, as television news formats were designed conceptually in the layout of weekly news magazines.

Preoccupations with paradoxes of conformity/individuality and quality/quantity permeated broader American culture during the 1960 presidential election. On the one
hand, the 1950s and early 1960s captured a ubiquitous feeling of optimism and American achievement in diverse areas such as medicine and health, military and space technology, and politics. On the other hand, areas such as the arts and architecture struggled to reconcile mass culture with individual “taste.” For instance, in her book *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*, art historian Karal Ann Marling provides numerous ways in which television acculturated Americans of the time: from Mamie Eisenhower’s patronage of American department stores that offered commodified versions of Christian Dior’s Parisian “New Look” to the popularity of paint-by-numbers sets for middle-class leisure to the staged “Kitchen Debates” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev. Describing Disney’s 1957 “Monsanto House of the Future,” which was sat inside a “giant TV set,” Marling notes its resemblance to picture windows in suburban homes, the television set per se, and even the window in standard ovens: “all provided framed views of what was going on inside.”

Put simply, these disparate culture objects coalesced into a gestalt salute to visuality.

Likewise, Fred Turner writes that avant-garde artists and labor leaders decrying new modes of automated technology in the 1950s demonstrated “similar understandings of human subjectivity.” Whereas technological practices originating from the period have “had a substantial cultural impact” on subsequent understandings of the relationship between person and machine, Turner argues against historians who attribute those perceptual changes to the technology itself. Instead, he writes that the art done by Jackson Pollock and others in this period shows parallel perception of the “individual” “poised between the chaotic, probabilistic forces of multiple systems—social, technical, psychological. And rather than stand frozen there, he or she could act creatively, with a
Romantic degree of agency.” Turner’s argument finds additional support in John Jordan’s contention that John Kennedy justified funding for going to the moon through Romantic imagery and in the way that fashion magazines of the 1950s used art (including Pollock’s) as backdrops for images of their models.

Like American fashion magazines’ practice of using art images to enhance their own photographed feature spreads, architectural historian Beatriz Colomina contends that Cold War modern architecture yielded into “architecture as crafted image…[which shaped] the structure into an image and images into structure.” She notes that spaces were influenced by the visual, patchwork quality of television and designed to provoke viewers’ attention—staging “the act of exposure” in a way that paradoxically staged fears of surveillance. Although fears of surveillance remain outside the purview of this dissertation, I argue that mediations of Jacqueline Kennedy were integral reflections and, in part, visual resolutions to larger domestic anxieties. Media staged the Kennedys through “the act of exposure” and shaped public expectations for a modern president (and more broadly, a modern citizen).

_Merging Politics and Culture: Selling America to the Masses_

The proliferation of images in American culture also coincided with the government’s “soft” sell of American democracy at home and abroad. Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye conceptualizes governmental “soft power” as “getting others to want the outcomes you want,” an attribute requiring “the ability to shape the preferences of others.” He differentiates “soft power” from influence, which could involve threats and/or coercion (“hard power” strategies), and from argumentative persuasion, although he acknowledges the importance of each. Instead, Nye defines soft power as “the ability
to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence. Simply put, in behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power.\textsuperscript{56} Not surprising, Nye uses Kennedy as the modern exemplar of the concept, linking Kennedy’s understanding of “soft power” to a broader public awareness of America’s international image during the early Cold War:

During a meeting with President John F. Kennedy, the senior statesman John J. McCloy exploded in anger about paying attention to popularity and attraction in world politics: ‘World opinion’? I don’t believe in world opinion. The only thing that matters is power.’ But like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy understood that the ability to attract others and move opinion was an element of [soft] power.\textsuperscript{57}

Changes to the institution of the presidency during the early Cold War occurred with intense public interest in the office. As Roderick Hart suggests, the “age of political reason in the early 1960s” was “that sudden, curious moment when a youngster comes to understand that presidents, movie stars, and athletes are not employed in exactly the same ways.”\textsuperscript{58} John Kennedy singularly “set the standard”\textsuperscript{59} for the modern presidency through his development of the role of “chief ceremonialist,” which Hart identifies as “the Kennedy precedent” that all subsequent presidents have attempted to follow.\textsuperscript{60} Hart suggests that more than just speaking frequently and with greater variety than his immediate predecessors (who spoke more frequently and with greater variety than theirs), “if he were presented with an anomalous political situation, JFK more often than not invented a rhetorical form suitable for dealing with it, a form attractive enough to soon become White House precedent (e.g., the live, televised press conference).”\textsuperscript{61} And as Robert Dallek notes in his biography of Kennedy:
Jack’s growing public appeal [in 1958]—and it was clearly growing—rested on more than his policy pronouncements. During 1957-58 he became emblematic of a new breed of celebrity politician, as notable for his good looks, infectious smile, charm, and wit as for his thoughtful pronouncement on weighty public issues.\(^{62}\)

Although presidential administrations certainly had cultural appeal before Kennedy’s, John and Jacqueline Kennedy “melded American informality with foreign glamour”\(^{63}\) in ways that differed significantly from the Trumans or Eisenhowers. For example, Karal Ann Marling notes that magazines fastidiously followed Mamie Eisenhower’s clothing choices and Dwight Eisenhower’s painting hobby. Mamie Eisenhower’s “shopping trips, and every item purchased, were considered newsworthy…Anyone could dress like Mamie and manufacturers counted on her down-to-earth taste to revive the retail end of the business.”\(^{64}\) Her style “was an American style, a newer, showier, happier, shop-‘til-you-drop New Look. It was everything that haute couture was not: pretty, busy, flouncy, clothes-proud, quirkily personal, oblivious of age, all decked out, studied but still a little slapdash.”\(^{65}\) For that reason, Kennedy campaign strategists worried that voters would see the cosmopolitan, French-speaking Jacqueline Kennedy as “a snob” who “hated politics.”\(^{66}\) The Kennedys were far from the “down-to-earth” Mamie and grandfatherly Ike; yet, as Marianne Means suggested in 1963, the nation approved of Jacqueline Kennedy because she eschewed the image of average housewife, even as the nation approved of Eisenhower for her ability to represent the ordinary.\(^{67}\)

*John Kennedy’s Campaign to Suburbanites*

While Americans always have been interested in politics, particularly at the national level, biographer Thurston Clarke contends that politics in 1960 were
particularly exciting. Early in his campaign for the presidency, Kennedy strategists deemed middle-class suburbanites a key demographic. In *The Making of the President 1960*, Theodore White notes:

> Of the 107,000,000 Americans old enough to vote in 1960, approximately 40,000,000, it was estimated, had not bothered to register...[and] the compelling consideration [for the Kennedys] was the generally accepted political guess that of the 40,000,000 unregistered voters, 70 percent would vote Democratic if they could be pushed to the polls.

As he campaigned, therefore, the suburban demographic became Kennedy’s concern and White describes them (albeit hyperbolically) as Kennedy’s “personal audience:”

> These are the men in work shirts and sports shirts, the women in house dresses with babies in arms, the farmers observing silently, the students listening intently, the bobby-soxers yipping and squealing...The candidate must feel the beat of the people he hopes to lead; their heart is his target. And no public-opinion poll or analysis can tell him half so well whether he has reached that target as can the people themselves, giving him the beat of their response.

White’s idyllic scene fuses Kennedy with “men in work shirts” and “women in house dresses with babies in their arms.” Despite the potential hagiography, White’s description of suburbanites’ identification with JFK finds support in other accounts of the candidate’s ability to inspire “fervor” at political rallies or in magazine coverage of his presidential inauguration that recounted throngs of women seeking a glimpse of “Jackie’s” ball gown. The increased availability of candidates’ images—particularly with the postwar middle-class—reflected and staged the Kennedys within an American public consuming
its national politicians in much the same way as its cultural celebrities. Therefore, this dissertation explores how media documented—reflectively and constitutively—the role of first lady within the emergent modern presidency. As such, this project complicates broad scholarly understanding of invention resources for the role but acknowledges the contextual conditions of possibility that uniquely infused the administration’s political and cultural import.

Studies of Jacqueline Kennedy

Despite her preeminence as an American icon and a key figure in the rhetorical construction of John Kennedy’s administration, only a few scholarly publications have considered Jacqueline Kennedy’s influence at all. In an early Cold War era marked by the expansion of presidential power, the rise of the middle-class, and the pervasiveness of broadcast television, the Kennedys undoubtedly signified a critical shift from the staid passivity of the Eisenhower years. Even so, we are remiss merely to conclude that their youth and elegance in the wake of the Eisenhowers’ age and plainness were the only means by which they gained popularity. Because Jacqueline Kennedy was notoriously private, especially after she left the White House, only recent work has illuminated how she saw the role of first lady. That work, I argue, demonstrates a need to clarify how and where her performance was constructed and by whom.

In newly released oral transcripts of interviews with historian Arthur Schlesinger a few months after the assassination, Jacqueline Kennedy projects a complex figure intent on preserving memory of John Kennedy’s presidency as uniquely “imaginative” while likewise highlighting her own “aesthetic” influence on his administration. She describes vividly the Kennedys’ difference from contemporaneous political figures (such as the
Eisenhowers, the Nixons, and the Johnsons) but observes that the tradition of the presidency endows its inhabitants with an ability to constitute a particular historical moment. For example, Kennedy stresses the role of the media in the shift between her status as a political liability during the campaign (at least according to several of John Kennedy’s advisors) to a public celebrity during his presidency:

I was never any different once I was in the White House than I was before, but the press made you different. Suddenly, everything that had been a liability before—your hair, that you spoke French, that you didn’t just adore to campaign, and you didn’t bake bread with flour up to your arms—you know, everyone thought I was a snob and hated politics…And when we got in the White House all the things I’d always done suddenly became wonderful because anything the First Lady does that’s different, everyone seizes on.74

Kennedy’s observation, interesting by the mere fact that she rarely spoke publicly about her role, highlights the importance of analyzing such mediations to better understand her enactment of the institution. Here, she slips from the personal pronoun “I” to the more detached “the First Lady” and “you,” which speaks to the complex rhetorical agency involved in constructing of her performance.

Book-length projects written about Kennedy group in roughly three categories: (1) biographies chronicling either her time in the White House or, more recently, her time as “Jackie O.”; (2) memoirs from people who knew her in the White House, such as social secretary Leticia “Tish” Baldridge and fashion designer Oleg Cassini; or (3) limited primary sources in which she espoused particular ideas as a public figure (such as her winning submission on fashion to Vogue’s Prix de Paris contest in 1951 or her
interview on women in the workplace for Ms. Magazine in the late 1970s). Although these sources provide insight into Kennedy’s influence on American public and political culture, rhetoric scholars typically do not author such publications. Even in journal articles and book chapters discussing projects she completed as first lady—e.g., the White House restoration or her “fashion diplomacy”\textsuperscript{75}—authors from fields like history and interpersonal communication largely are responsible for critical work on her. In the journal \textit{White House Studies}, Gil Troy argues that her televised tour of the White House “showed off a presidential residence that befit a superpower and a kind of gentility that suburbanites could mimic.”\textsuperscript{76} Likewise, in a book chapter characterizing Kennedy’s general influence as first lady (mentioned previously), interpersonal scholar Elizabeth Natalle suggests that fashion diplomacy, protocol (decorum), and astute social prowess were the dominant rhetorical means by which Kennedy enacted her role as first lady.\textsuperscript{77} Outside of these articles, however, few in-depth analyses exist concerning her rhetorical influence on the role of first lady.

In 1961, Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer published the only official biography for which Kennedy willingly submitted personal information (and later regretted). Her book, as several subsequent Kennedy biographers have noted, portrayed Kennedy as she wished to be seen—a bright, well-bred child who blossomed into a first lady with “special qualities.”\textsuperscript{78} Thayer’s text—dotted with photographs from Kennedy’s youth, as well as images of her as first lady—emphasized Kennedy’s enduring love and aptitude for the arts. Following Thayer’s work and much to Kennedy’s dismay, from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, acquaintances from Kennedy’s White House years published various books
on their time with her, the majority of which she dismissed as gossipy accounts, for instance, of John Kennedy’s sexual escapades.

From the mid 1990s to the present, however, scholars have exhibited renewed interest in Kennedy as first lady. Oleg Cassini’s *A Thousand Days of Magic: Dressing Jacqueline Kennedy for the White House* was published in 1994 and described Kennedy’s concept of fashion and his time as her designer. Tish Baldridge’s *In the Kennedy Style* reviewed social evenings at the White House during Kennedy’s tenure. Moreover, from 1994 to 2004, historians C. David Heymann, Lester David, and Sarah Bradford produced biographies of Kennedy that argued essentially what Thayer had argued much earlier (albeit in a less laudatory and more critical tone): that Kennedy was keenly intelligent and almost always remembered as somewhat “different” in school, work, or leisure environments (if not also deliberately naïve and moody).  

From her childhood, Kennedy possessed admiration and varying proficiencies for the arts—ballet, poetry, literature, and painting. In addition to her well-known expertise in multiple languages, Bradford notes that in school, Kennedy won writing awards and participated in the drama club. Throughout her life, she used painting and writing as a means of expression. For instance, during the early stages of their marriage, she gifted John Kennedy with paints, and they painted pictures for each other as Christmas gifts. She also painted a watercolor for the spurned Adlai Stevenson when President Kennedy did not offer him the Secretary of State position.

Lauding Sarah Bradford as Kennedy’s “most reliable biographer to date,” William Kuhn recently published a book on Kennedy that examines her love for literature and argues that an analysis of the books that Kennedy published as editor for Doubleday
explains much about who she was and what she liked. Kuhn likewise offers an important discussion about how her style informed her public persona. Quoting Diana Vreeland (a close friend of Kennedy’s and an acclaimed editor of *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue*), Kuhn writes that Kennedy remained influenced by Vreeland’s philosophy of fashion:

> [I]t was not about vanity, it was about aspiration…‘It’s a form of wanting to be. We all want to be. You are and you want to be. How is it you do it?’ You might deride this as social climbing or wearing clothes to get ahead, but in fact the best of us all aspire to be something bigger and better, smarter and wiser, than we were in the place where we were born.

Thus, for all their emphasis on Kennedy’s quick intelligence, these biographies support Arthur Schlesinger’s assertion that Kennedy’s “response to life was aesthetic rather than intellectual or moralistic,” which he wrote in an introduction to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibit entitled *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years.* Schlesinger’s astute observation about Kennedy’s “aesthetic” nature explains, in part, why those writers who assess visual aspects of her public persona provide the most robust insight into her enduring appeal. Hamish Bowles, the curator for the Met’s exhibit, deemed her a paradigm of old-fashioned dignity and a reluctant icon of popular culture, whose understanding of image was “intuitive.” From these perspectives, we see the importance of a rhetorical analysis examining Kennedy through popular media in the early 1960s. Not only does Kennedy note the role of media in public conception of her persona but her biographers and memoirists depict a woman for whom rhetorical effect was achieved through aesthetics. This project adds depth to her public persona, while the literature on
Kennedy’s public and personal life informs my understanding of her perception of the first lady role. Her awareness of the “power of image,” coupled with a postwar culture in which Romantic agency and visuality were celebrated, provided potent conditions of possibility for her popularity. Moreover, how she was mediated before becoming first lady set the foundation for her public image, a point on which I next expand.

*The Debutante, Inquiring Camera Girl, and Senator’s Fiancée*

Jacqueline Kennedy was no stranger to press by the time she became first lady. In 1947, her debutante season, she was covered in Newport, Rhode Island, by local society columns. That same year, “Cholly Knickerbocker” (actually Igor Cassini, Oleg Cassini’s brother) deemed her “Debutante of the Year” in a society column for the Hearst newspaper chain. His caption could well describe her public image as first lady: “Every year a new Queen of Debutantes is crowned. Queen Deb of the Year is Jacqueline Bouvier, a regal brunette who has classic features and the daintiness of Dresden porcelain. She has poise, is soft-spoken and intelligent—everything the leading debutante should be.” The *Washington Post* announced that she would be among the debutantes from her season to be presented to King George and Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace. And her appearance in society columns extended through her first engagement in 1952 to John Husted, who worked on Wall Street.

In 1948, Kennedy began studies at Vassar College, a prestigious women’s university for students serious about arts and literature. The environment suited her, as her ambition in high school (according to Miss Porter’s yearbook) was “not to be a housewife.” She was a talented writer and painter, in addition to her fluency with languages, and in 1951, she won first prize out of 1,280 applicants to *Vogue* magazine’s
Components from her entry would be reprinted during the inaugural moment of John Kennedy’s presidency. Her photographed portrait was featured in *Vogue’s* August 15, 1951, issue. In it, she stares confidently at the camera, clad in the typical “Seven Sisters” uniform of a sweater, suit jacket, and pearls. Although the contest won Kennedy a year-long junior editing stint in *Vogue’s* New York and Paris offices, she turned the prize down to finish her studies at George Washington University. In Washington, D.C., she worked for *Washington Times-Herald* editor Arthur Krock as an inquiring camera girl. Krock was a paid media fixer for Joe Kennedy and gave John Kennedy’s favorite sister, Kathleen, a job before her death. By March 1952, Kennedy held her own byline as an Inquiring Fotografer. Recollections of her employment at the *Times-Herald* emphasize her wit and intelligence. Her sample questions ranged from hypothetical scenarios like date conversations with Marilyn Monroe to more spirited queries, such as: “Do you think a wife should let her husband think he’s smarter than she is?” or “When did you discover that women are not the weaker sex?” Additionally, she sometimes would illustrate her own stories.

Kennedy’s time as an inquiring camera girl, however, was brief, and by 1953, the media was reporting her engagement to perpetual bachelor Senator John Kennedy. *The Boston Daily Globe*, for instance, introduced the Senator’s betrothed as a “post-debutante,” with author John Harris describing her more fully in text as a “painter and writer” who covered the coronation of Queen Elizabeth and was assigned to draw sketches of President Eisenhower’s inauguration. *Time* magazine deemed her a “sultry Socialite.” The young couple also was featured on the cover of *Life* in summer 1953, both windblown and sun-drenched in matching Bermuda shorts and polo shirts.
article “marked the public announcement of their engagement, though it never actually mentioned marriage.” They would continually appear in *Time* and *Life* throughout the 1950s (and, of course, during JFK’s presidency). After the two were separated by JFK’s campaigning and Kennedy’s trip to Europe in 1956, *Time* gossiped that Joseph Kennedy had offered Jacqueline Kennedy $1 million to stay married to his son. She reportedly quipped, “Why not 10 million?” Apparently, $1 million was hardly a bribe.

Still, by the late 1950s, Kennedy campaigned in various ways for JFK during his senatorial reelection bid in 1958 and during the presidential campaign. She participated in a staged family television show called *At Home with the Kennedys* and uncharacteristically allowed *Life* to photograph Caroline’s nursery in 1958. At the end of the same year, she and JFK were photographed in their Georgetown home for a *Time* feature on presidential hopefuls. And when JFK ran for president, Kennedy compensated for her inability to travel (she was pregnant at the time) by writing seven “Campaign Wife” columns distributed through the Democratic National Committee’s Publicity Division and carried by national newspapers. The Kennedys were featured in a number of popular magazines in the inaugural moment—including a *Time* article published a week before the inauguration devoted entirely to “Jackie.” Kennedy’s media presence before 1961, therefore, laid the foundation for her public image as first lady. With that understanding, I now review conceptual literature on cultural icons and rhetorical iconicity to better specify Kennedy’s “type” of first lady.

**Cultural Icons and Rhetorical Iconicity**

This dissertation does not argue that Jacqueline Kennedy’s political agenda rivals Eleanor Roosevelt’s civil rights advocacy or Abigail Adams’ political activism for
women’s education. What those women did as first ladies was important for the role, for women, and for the publics with whom they were concerned. Yet, limiting the criteria for effect to political activism places unnecessary boundaries on the role and the women enacting that role. Moreover, placing primacy on immediate political issues of a given era, while certainly worthwhile, often also narrows the rhetorical artifacts from which first lady scholars draw: i.e., we revert to treating the “rhetoric” of first ladies solely as textual or oratorical public address without considering the culture of images in which they appear. And as I have shown previously, early Cold War culture was ripe with visual appropriations of cultural and political symbols. By assessing Jacqueline Kennedy’s status as a cultural icon during Kennedy’s presidency, we have an opportunity to better account for a moment in which the political import of a first lady was figured largely through rhetorical iconicity. To borrow Marling’s general assessment of Cold War visual culture, we might say that the role of first lady was a prismatic frame within a frame of the presidency, itself a frame of American postwar culture. In this section, I contend that understanding cultural icons and their resultant iconicity is central to this dissertation for two key reasons: (1) the terms emphasize the visual form of an idealized subject as key to rhetorical potency; and (2) these terms highlight a mode of seeing particular to experiencing that visual form. In what follows, I review scholars whose conceptual work on icons converge with how I use the term in this project.

When describing secular icons of beauty, scholars stress visual form as an empirical index to socio-historical moments. This scholarship suggests that famous women (e.g., Cleopatra and Marie Antoinette) operate as visual placeholders of the aesthetic ideals of a particular culture. By highlighting “types” of female beauty, this
literature contends that female icons elicit strong reactions, reflect the situated essence of
a time and place, but also link together aesthetic traditions.\textsuperscript{109} Although admittedly broad,
this work’s emphasis on the female icon’s provocation of “strong reactions” and her
ability to “reflect the essence of a particular time” aligns with art historical understanding
of the genre of icon art. Furthermore, for scholars such as Debra Mancoff and Lindsay
Bosch, theorizing female embodiment of cultural and historical norms remains key to
understanding the \textit{kairos} of a given time and place, especially because “female beauty
serves as a supreme subject in the visual arts.”\textsuperscript{110} As Mancoff and Bosch contend,
“attributes of beauty are shaped by cultural preferences,” but more important, “the \textit{image}
of beauty can reflect cultural ideas”\textsuperscript{111} (italics mine). Like scholars of religious iconicity,
historians of female beauty icons stress the importance of concrete visual forms that
register abstract cultural ideals.

In rhetorical scholarship, the ways in which visual forms index cultural ideals
features as a way to theorize formal tendencies of iconic images. Robert Hariman and
John Lucaites note, for example, that photojournalistic icons concretely represent
political ideals such as autonomy/collectivity, hope/despair, and democracy/liberalism
and remain iconic through their widespread reproduction outside of their original
context.\textsuperscript{112} Their meaning, therefore, stems largely from their capacity for representing
content in a way that transfers that experience to readers. Vision and visual form,
therefore, features centrally in conceptions of icons and in achieving iconicity. Icons and
iconic images can serve as visual representations of higher ideals, as registers for
aesthetic norms, and as indexes of cultural moment. Conceptually, the terms are useful
for the larger argument I make in this dissertation about media’s construction of
Kennedy’s visual form to reflect rhetorical ideals of early Cold War American culture.

In his forthcoming *The Iconoclastic Imagination: Image, Catastrophe, and
Economy in America since the Kennedy Assassination*, Ned O’Gorman traces the
rhetorical paradigm pitting individual spirit against material culture from early-modern
Christian iconoclasm through Western romanticism and into neoliberal discourse. He
argues that this paradigm evolved into a political logic that elevated abstractions by
destroying the prevailing imaginaries of social and political institutions. O’Gorman
suggests a “common form” was “fully realized” first in the Zapruder film (showing
Kennedy’s assassination) and following in the Challenger disaster and the 9/11 terrorist
attacks. This “icon of iconoclasm” occurs when “a widely acknowledged icon—an
object created both to materialize and ‘symbolize’ the ideal—is spectacularly destroyed
in an image.” John Kennedy, O’Gorman contends, was “more so than his presidential
predecessors, a state administrator who was also an explicit image formed to embody and
represent higher, national ideals on the global stage:” a characteristic that provided
unique conditions of possibility for discursive meaning-making of his assassination and
introduced “a distinct politics of form [or formlessness] in America.” In his study of
contemporary institutional iconoclasm, therefore, O’Gorman highlights the importance of
visibility and repetition to identifying what will be in my project a different sort of
“politics of form”—the “politics of form” that shapes how we see public femininity and
affects rhetorical understanding of the institutions in which women appear. Furthermore,
like O’Gorman, I see in conceptions of icons and iconicity the rhetorical capacity for
fixing a concrete figure with a kind of historically specific visual logic, a point clarified through Eric Jenkins’ work with the terms.

Eric Jenkins stresses an icon’s visual form over its (re)circulation of political ideals (a la Hariman and Lucaites) as central to its rhetorical potency. He conceptualizes the icon as “a concrete embodiment of an abstract state” by suggesting that formal techniques work as productive visions showing “hypostasis of the spiritual and the material.” The icon’s form, then, does more than reflect cultural tropes—through its construction, the icon produces a “mode of seeing” that Jenkins deems “symbolic realism,” which works by holding in tension symbolic ideals and realist aims. More than just showing what the form of the visual icon means for audiences, he highlights what that form does within a broader cultural milieu. Jenkins’ case study—Apple corporation advertising—demonstrates that the company brands its “image” through visual advertising techniques resonant with Orthodox icons, “constructing a mode of seeing known as symbolic realism, somewhere between the concrete naturalism of a portrait and the abstract representation of a symbol” that inspires a “cult following.”

Jenkins suggests that “the icon portrays a hypostasis—a concrete representation of a spiritual quality.” He considers the icon’s “hypostatic” mode of seeing analogous to a visual enthymeme, whereby viewers supply their own meanings to “complete” their interpretations of an argument. That “visual logic” of hypostasis, for Jenkins, remains the overarching conceptual feature of icon images; what distinguishes icon images at different periods, therefore, are the modes that manifest historically specific forms of that
logic. In an “age of the global corporation,” Apple thus emerges as a preeminent corporation by which to measure a strategic “brand image.”

Jenkins’ view that icons produce a hybrid “mode of seeing” remains key to understanding the rhetorical nature of iconicity—that is, icons are publicly oriented, achieving their effect through viewer participation. Jenkins’ approach produces an analysis that neither prescriptively interprets the meaning of an iconic image nor overemphasizes its circulation. Such an approach nicely manages the tension between “looking through images to their meanings and cultural circulation and looking at images, focused on the particularities of their composition, features, and form,” which becomes particularly important for a project that understands visual icons as registers for rhetorical topoi. In this dissertation, I argue that Jacqueline Kennedy serves as a concrete embodiment of early Cold War ideals. Construction of her through participatory visual forms achieved rhetorical potency under a burgeoning merger of celebrity culture and national politics.

A brief review of four sets of literature demonstrates an important space for a visual rhetorical project on Jacqueline Kennedy that focuses on the interaction between images and texts. Analyzing mediations of Kennedy augments scholarly perspectives of the modern presidency and the role of first lady therein, as well as studies of Kennedy herself. This project also grapples with “types” of first ladies, examining iconicity as an available rhetorical resource and locating its emergence in early Cold War culture. Last, sustained analysis of Cold War visual culture benefits the robust interdisciplinary field of communication studies by combining rhetorical history with studies of visual culture.
Critical Approach

The central questions of this dissertation concern the role of complementary rhetorics—visual, textual, and oratorical—in the creation of modern presidential image. I combine close visual analysis with informed rhetorical history, as this project offers specific interpretations of images of Jacqueline Kennedy against the early Cold War visual culture in which she became iconic. Thus, this dissertation assumes a view of rhetoric as multimodal, operating in the productive tension between images, texts, and speeches, themselves influencing and influenced by political institutions and cultural conventions. In this section, therefore, I outline critical perspectives that shape my approach to the case studies in this dissertation.

Although Aristotle wrote his *On Rhetoric* in the fourth century B.C.E., his text has profoundly influenced how scholars of rhetoric position themselves critically. Whereas other Classical theorists—Plato and Cicero, for example—arguably dismissed rhetoric as mere cookery (Plato) or described rhetoric largely as a forensic instrument (Cicero), Aristotle defined rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion”\(^\text{125}\) or more clearly, as “the faculty [power] of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion.”\(^\text{126}\) His breadth of definition, along with his notation of symbolic “power”—a central question for scholars of rhetoric—ensured his continuing theoretical relevance, as different moments make available different “means” of producing and perceiving persuasive messages. In particular, Aristotle’s foundational ideas saw renewed vigor among “Neo-Aristotelian” communication scholars in the 1960s. Because these approaches to rhetoric often produced prescriptive work with a singular focus on speakers, however, scholars such as
Edwin Black and Lloyd Bitzer sought to reclaim the audience as a central component in the process of communication. Black’s “The Second Persona” questioned the speaker’s primacy in the process of persuasion, contending that successful persuasion relied not just on an agent’s intent but also (and more important) on the persona his/her audiences imagine. This persona, Black argued, told scholars as much about the speaker’s historical moment than did other forms of context. In Bitzer’s aptly titled “The Rhetorical Situation,” he noted that speakers do not produce utterances in a vacuum; instead, these speech acts are historicized, contingent, and responsive to the exigences of a particular moment. Both authors signaled a shift in understanding rhetoric as mutually constituting speaker and audience.

By opening the possibility for audiences to provide critical insight into a particular moment, Bitzer and Black (among others) spurred subsequent scholarly debate about the relative attention that ought be given to “text” versus “context” or historical work versus theoretical work. By the 1990s, Michael Calvin McGee was stressing the need to collapse analysis of text and context into a more fitting term—“fragment”—that better identified the perspectival role of rhetorical scholars. Michael Leff and Gerald Mohrmann promoted “close reading,” a critical method derived from linguistics that highlighted not history or biography (context) but instead focused almost exclusively on the rhetorical object per se (usually a speech or text). My decision to focus on Kennedy as my text rather than the publics to which she was circulated allows me the opportunity to account for how early Cold War rhetorical topoi interanimated visual images of her, forming an emerging aesthetic of political culture. The aforementioned approaches
emphasize the importance of localizing aspects of images and texts to best produce
judicious critical interpretations of their meaning.

Understanding the ways in which Kennedy was mediated in this moment
necessarily involves engaging multiple forms of media without reducing her significance
to the form of media in which she appeared. I thus use the term mediation in three
corresponding senses: (1) as meaning constructed in the interaction between text and
image; (2) as the underlying conventions through which forms of media take shape; and
(3) as mediatory, or “middle-ness” (to use a decidedly unacademic term). Jacqueline
Kennedy was nothing if not a “middle” figure: between political and popular culture;
between the elected representative to whom she was married and the consumer culture
that boosted her celebrity; between the speeches and debates that defined the Kennedy
administration’s political positions and the pictures and events that characterized its
presidential persona. My conceptualization of mediation therefore requires closer
examination of scholarship in visual culture.

W.J.T. Mitchell defines “visuality” as “practices of seeing the world and,
especially the seeing of other people.” Highlighting “practices” of seeing, Mitchell’s
understanding of “visuality” relates to rhetorical perspectives in its dual insistence on
contingency and repetition. His concept of the term stems from his work, Picture Theory,
in which he interrogates the complex relationships between words and images in the
processes of representation. His sense of these relationships is the first way in which I
assess the problem of mediation in this project. For Mitchell, at least three relationships
occur between words and images: image/texts designate “a problematic gap, cleavage, or
rupture in representation;” imagetexts are “composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that
combine image and text;” and image-texts depict “relations of the visual and verbal” (italics in original). Starting literally with the printed page as exemplar, Mitchell examines how modes of perception “mix”—not essentially but through perceived forms such as art and literature—to structure “important differences between visual and verbal media at the level of sign-types, forms, materials of representation, and institutional tradition.” As he later would clarify, he sees visual studies as a commitment to testing a fundamentally rhetorical “set of hypotheses:”

that vision is (as we say) a cultural construction, that is learned and cultivated, not simply given by nature; that therefore it might have a history related in some yet to be determined way to the history of arts, technologies, media, and social practices of display and spectatorship; and (finally) that it is deeply involved with human societies, with the ethics and politics, aesthetics and epistemology of seeing and being seen.

In this project, therefore, I assume that Kennedy’s import as first lady occurs between and within the words, images, institutions, and conventions that figured her as an exemplar of public femininity during the early Cold War.

Second, conceptualizing how Kennedy enacted the role publically also means critically locating the conventional forms of media historically available to her. Because I see Kennedy simultaneously subverting and reifying some of the conventions of her role, I explore her image through popular visual culture of the early Cold War to make sense of the “type” of first lady she represents. Understanding the contemporaneous conventions of a media genre (the fashion magazine, the television special, the work of fine art) highlights novel aspects of Kennedy’s performance.
Kenneth Burke describes “form” as an interactive capacity, “the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite.” Using the example of a work of art to illustrate how form constitutes the shared meaning-making of audience and actor, Burke provides: “If, as in a work of art, the poet says something…about a meeting, and then, if he places that meeting before us—that is form. While obviously, that is also the psychology of the audience, since it involves desires and their appeasements.” Such “desires” and “appeasements,” Burke would later write in his definition of rhetoric, stem not from singular public address but from “a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skills.” His emphasis on a general body of identifications that stage a relationship between audience and agent grounds my understanding of the role that formal conventions play in how public figures mean.

A project on Jacqueline Kennedy necessarily involves examining form in the interactive way Burke describes. W.J.T. Mitchell adds further clarity, working across mediated “forms” toward an assessment of “the visual” that does not pertain strictly to images. Instead, he argues that “image” more loosely means anything that emphasizes vision as a prime mode of meaning making. Mitchell explains that “all arts are composite art” and “all media are mixed media” because media do not have inherent meaning per se but rather function to emphasize certain located perspectives. He writes:

We think, for instance, that the visual arts are inherently spatial, static, corporeal, and shapely; that they bring these things as a gift to language. We suppose, on the other side, that arguments, addresses, ideas, and narratives are in some sense proper to verbal communication, that language must bring these things as a gift to
visual representation. But neither of these ‘gifts’ is really the exclusive property
of their donors: paintings can tell stories, make arguments, and signify abstract
ideas; words can describe or embody static, spatial states of affairs.\textsuperscript{139}

For Mitchell, the notion that technological modes differ dramatically or that they produce
different modes of vision begs the wrong questions; instead, scholars best complicate
their understanding of a given “text” when they address \textit{in what ways} these modes differ.
That assumption “leads us to the specificity of codes, materials, technologies, perceptual
practices, sign-functions, and institutional conditions of production and consumption that
go to make up a medium.”\textsuperscript{140} As Mitchell explains, “literature, insofar as it is written or
printed, has an unavoidable visual component which bears a specific relation to an
auditory component, which is why it makes a difference whether a novel is read aloud or
silently.”\textsuperscript{141} Such attention to the material modes that structure “ways of seeing,”
therefore, supplements projects concerned with the visual more broadly. His ideas gain
support from Cara Finnegan and Jennifer Jones Barbour, who suggest explicitly that
“situating visual discourse ‘in context,’ then, means not only acknowledging the role of
technology, but knowing something about how specific technologies work.”\textsuperscript{142} Finnegan
and Jones Barbour emphasize understanding material realities of media—how they
actually work—to inform critical scholarship about a scholarly object’s rhetorical
significance.

Mitchell notes that “distinctions between the arts and media are ready-to-hand, a
vernacular form of theorizing” that become problematic when “we try to make these
distinctions systematic and metaphysical.”\textsuperscript{143} To clarify his conception of “the pictorial
turn,” a key term from Picture Theory that describes public reception of images, he writes:

The pictorial or visual turn, then, is not unique to our time. It is a repeated narrative figure that takes on a very specific form in our time…a critical and historical use of this figure would be a diagnostic tool to analyze specific moments when a new medium, a technological invention, or a cultural practice erupt in symptoms of panic or euphoria (usually both) about the visual.144

This perspective, as Finnegan and Kang also show in “‘Sighting’ the Public,” warns scholars against iconoclasm or iconophilia; “panic” or “euphoria” about “the visual” signifies a persistent rhetorical trope more than the inherent danger or worth of a new technological mode. Our responsibility as visual rhetorical scholars is to “locate” those moments and account for their contingency.

Finally, I understand mediation in the classical sense: as middle or mediatory. Sixth-century Latin linguistics defined media as voiced stops, “intermediate in their degree of aspiration,” and likely drew from ancient Greek roots that specified a “middle” category dividing “rough” and “smooth” consonants.145 The modern term, of course, denotes something “intermediate between two degrees, amounts, qualities, or classes; a middle state.”146 That general understanding of mediation as “between” informs, in part, how I examine different threads of this dissertation: the role of first lady within the institution of the presidency, Jacqueline Kennedy’s import as text and image, and the tensions between “art” and “commerce” (“taste” and “mass culture”), including the emergence of Pop, which explicitly complicated those tensions. As a popular image, Kennedy gained increased visibility in media outside of newspapers and so-called official
discourse, particularly in the way I defined earlier—as a prismatic view of the presidency and American culture.

The prism is a worthwhile metaphor for the ways in which the Kennedy administration built its cultural image. In optics, the term is defined as “a transparent object in the form of a geometrical prism, especially a right prism whose ends are identical acute-angled triangles, used for refracting light that passes through the sides.” Note several important facets of the definition (pun intended) that align with the assumptions I make about the Kennedys: (1) the general context of optics, the branch of physics dealing with properties of light often in relation to sight, and more currently, common parlance for how a situation appears to the public, and (2) the recognition of identical triangles that work to refract light (together). The Kennedys, as I show repeatedly in this dissertation, were image-makers, and Jacqueline Kennedy especially was concerned with “aesthetics”—in her political platforms, her clothing choices, her mediated construction of the role of first lady. To further discuss the utility of the prism as a metaphor for the Kennedy’s role in the administration’s image, a simple sentence about what prisms do seems appropriate. When white light hits a prism, its speed and energy changes, diffusing into a spectrum of color. As a metaphor, therefore, I am arguing that the comprehensive image of the Kennedy administration, and Jacqueline Kennedy’s role therein—the white light, if you will—engaged the prism of media in a way that dispersed the image into a set of smaller images more potent and singular once amplified.

For my project, assessing the challenge of mediation she presents provides me additional grounds for discussing broader issues of rhetorical form—her compositional
form, the media forms in which she participates, and the ways in which such forms engage or subvert the normative forms of the institution of the presidency. To that extent, this project requires a view of visual rhetoric generated in the hybridity of text and image, with careful attention to the historical context in which Kennedy operated. Thus, through close visual analysis situated within relevant rhetorical history, this project aims to understand Kennedy’s mediated public role as a source of invention—a “type”—for subsequent first ladies and public figures.

Summary of Chapters

These theoretical perspectives all help focus the central questions of my dissertation: how and where was Jacqueline Kennedy mediated during her tenure as first lady? What do those mediations do for her public image, for the role of first lady, and for the status of American female icons? These questions only can be answered by examining Kennedy within the rhetorical context of early Cold War culture.

This dissertation focuses on three case studies that analyze Jacqueline Kennedy’s image across popular media: fashion spreads in Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue magazine published immediately after the inauguration in 1961; her February 1962 televised tour of the White House; and Andy Warhol’s 1964 Jackie images, which drew from her construction of the Camelot myth after JFK’s funeral. These case studies seek to show how “icon” becomes an inventional resource for the role of a modern first lady and how Kennedy’s shift to public icon in her own right (after her position as first lady) was mediated to reflect early Cold War (suburban) culture and shape the larger institutional discourses of which she was part.
Jacqueline Kennedy’s spreads in *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* magazines were “firsts” for a first lady in their visual focus. Despite public memory of a glamorous “Camelot,” Kennedy’s popularity never was a given—she was absent during much of John Kennedy’s campaign because of her pregnancy and maligned as snobbish by his strategists. As Marianne Means suggested in 1963, the nation’s approval of Kennedy was based on vastly different criteria than Mamie Eisenhower. Kennedy’s enactment of first lady, therefore, was more complicated than first lady scholarship suggests. Rather than merely rearticulating the nineteenth century’s “cult of domesticity,” as Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair conclude, her public image during the early Cold War era richly reflected a transitional femininity that was neither 1950s housewife nor 1960s feminist. Scholars of the position typically measure a given first lady either as a “performance of archetypal femininity” or for her ability to “challenge gender stereotypes.” In my first chapter, I thus draw from Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s understanding of rhetorical invention to show how Kennedy complicated that binary, integrating and undermining conventional images of femininity to amplify John Kennedy’s presidential persona and subversively mark the role of first lady as integral to the institution. Locating her inventiveness in the inaugural moment, which sets the rhetorical vision for a presidency, I closely examine Kennedy’s appearances in two major American fashion magazines. I contend that their depictions portray Kennedy as a cosmopolitan ideal of restraint.

Kennedy’s televised tour offers another important “first” for the position, as only President Truman had given a televised tour of the White House before her. In my third chapter, therefore, I set Kennedy’s tour against the backdrop of early television, showing how she exploited the rhetorical *topos* of taste to help define American cultural identity.
during an early Cold War era bent on selling “Americanism” abroad and at home.

Kennedy animated a discursive “commonplace” (a topos) resonant with (1) the international community, including ideological foes (Russia) and cultured Western allies (Great Britain and France), and (2) domestic audiences anxious about modern mass culture. As such, Kennedy’s tour fulfilled public expectations for a “ceremonial” Kennedy presidency that represented America’s cultural “coming-of-age”的 but likewise enhanced the visibility of first lady within the institution of the presidency. She granted the administration social power by positioning the president and first lady as arbiters of aesthetic norms.

In my fourth chapter, which focuses on the assassination and funeral moment, I argue that Kennedy used the formal power of myth to characterize the Kennedy administration as “Camelot,” a “symbolic condensation” of associations already built by 1963. I contend that Kennedy (1) sought to cement the administration’s legacy, which (2) crafted and condensed her representativeness as Woman, an ideal that (3) Pop artist Andy Warhol destabilized and subverted through his Jackie paintings and prints.

Exploring the conceptual connections between mythology and iconicity, I suggest that “Camelot” and its accompanying media images bolstered Kennedy’s visibility in the wake of JFK’s death but likewise constrained possibilities for Kennedy’s public persona thereafter. Against the mass-mediated backdrop of the funeral weekend, I closely analyze two versions of Warhol’s Jackies, suggesting they complicated her institutional associations and spoke to her iconicity as one placeholder in a bipolar notion of white public femininity. Kennedy’s projection of restraint during the funeral and evocation of nostalgia during White’s Life interview enhanced rhetorical strategies already identified
in this dissertation’s preceding case studies. More broadly, though, Warhol’s *Jackies* foreshadowed the destabilization of her image of femininity in public culture, and as such, offer a prescient glimpse into Kennedy’s historical and rhetorical agency.

Finally, in chapter five, I conclude with implications of Jacqueline Kennedy’s legacy as first lady. I situate Kennedy within the larger debate about the gendered expectations of the position of first lady in the modern presidency, discuss aspects of early Cold War culture that tempered her institutional and gendered performance, and analyze her rhetorical agency. I conclude that Kennedy’s role cementing JFK’s legacy and Warhol’s subsequent appropriation of her image for his art proves telling for her capacity as agent: she sought to craft a specific public persona but continually fought for ownership of that image.

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20 Murphy, “Power and Authority,” 34.
33 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 312.
34 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 330.
35 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 313.
36 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 315.
37 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 337.
John Archer, “The Place We Love to Hate: The Critics Confront Suburbia, 1920-
1960,” in Constructions of Home, ed. Klaus Stierstofer and Franziska Quabeck (New
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Patterson, Grand Expectations, 337-38.

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Marling, As Seen on TV, 36.

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Jacqueline Kennedy, “Transcripts of The Fourth Conversation,” in Jacqueline
Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy, interview by Arthur
70 White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 255.
71 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 438.
72 *TIME* magazine, January 27, 1961, 10.
74 Kennedy, “ Transcripts of The Fourth Conversation,” 141.
75 Natalle, “The Rhetorical Construction of Camelot.”
81 Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 94.
86 Ibid.
91 Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 56.
94 For that issue, please see *Vogue*, “Special Feature: Mrs. John Kennedy,” February 1, 1961, 133-37.
95 The Seven Sisters colleges were a collection of prestigious women’s “Ivies” and included Smith, Vassar, Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Radcliffe, Mount Holyoke, and Wellesley. For an excellent discussion of campus styles of dress at these colleges, please see

103 Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 111.
104 Ibid.
105 Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 120.
106 Ibid.
110 Mancoff and Bosch, “Introduction,” xi.
111 Mancoff and Bosch, “Introduction,” ix.
115 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Jenkins, “My iPod, My iCon,” 467.
120 Jenkins, “My iPod, my iCon,” 467.
121 Ibid.
122 Jenkins, “My iPod, my iCon,” 480.
123 Ibid.
124 Jenkins, “My iPod, my iCon,” 484 (footnote).
133 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 161.
136 Ibid.
138 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 94-95.
139 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 160.
141 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
149 For a simple guide to prisms, please see the University of California Santa Barbara’s site: http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=1542


CHAPTER 2: AMPLIFYING THE ADMINISTRATION, AMPLIFYING THE FIRST LADY: JACQUELINE KENNEDY’S RHETORICAL INVENTION IN HARPER’S BAZAAR AND VOGUE

When John Kennedy took the oath of office on January 20, 1961, he was the youngest president in American history. Jacqueline Kennedy was absent much of the campaign because of her pregnancy (she gave birth to John Jr. just two weeks after Kennedy’s election),¹ and the presidential inauguration likewise was her debut as first lady. The resultant images of the youthful Kennedys juxtaposed starkly with the elderly Eisenhowers: that was a deliberate effort evident in photographs from the day, which showed JFK without a hat or coat while speaking, even though the weather was especially cold.² For her part, Jacqueline Kennedy’s fashion designer, Oleg Cassini, purposely created a visual contrast between her simple, fawn-colored coat and the “heavy furs” worn by Mamie Eisenhower, Lady Bird Johnson, and Pat Nixon.³ Thurston Clarke recalls that once JFK began his speech, Cassini “realized that her [Kennedy’s] outfit perfectly complemented his spare and elegant prose.”⁴ Add a song from African-American singer Marian Anderson and a reading by poet laureate Robert Frost, and the presidential administration suitable for the sixties had arrived.

Inaugurations set the tone for a given administration. The event was especially important to JFK, who had won by one of the narrowest margins in history because of concerns about his youth, experience, and Catholicism,⁵ but also for Jacqueline Kennedy, whom campaign strategists had maligned as snobbish.⁶ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson describe the significance of inaugural addresses to a president’s assumption of the role:
Only a president can issue a presidential inaugural and, in the process, become ‘the president’…the identity of the presidents as spokespersons, fulfilling constitutional roles and exercising their executive power, gives this discourse a distinctive character. In turn, the identity and character of the presidency arise out of such discourse.7

Of course, “becoming” the President involves a lengthier process from the announcement of candidacy through the general election, but Campbell and Jamieson contend persuasively that inaugural addresses enact a “ritual of transition”8 that establishes a “unique problem of invention”9 for their rhetors (i.e., simultaneously highlighting continuity and change). Moreover, in their repeated discussions about the importance of “investiture” to the address, Campbell and Jamieson implicitly suggest the broader visual requirement of presidential inaugurations. From medieval Latin, investiture means “the action of clothing or robing” or “clothing in or enduement with attributes or qualities; establishment in any state of privilege and honour.”10 Thus, part of the “unique problem of invention”11 that presidents face during the inauguration stems from enacting a particular image that highlights American tradition but likewise establishes an individual administration. Because inaugurals rely on the symbiotic connection between the audience and the rhetor, who unifies and thereby creates a collective national audience, they must resonate appropriately with the political and cultural climate in which they are given. That moment, for the Kennedys, was increasingly internationalist, and the stark contrast between the prevailing Cold War political ideologies (American democracy and Soviet communism) was constructed partly in aesthetic terms.
Jacqueline Kennedy well understood the importance of dress “to the complete presentation of a specific moment in time.”\textsuperscript{12} She consulted Diana Vreeland, fashion editor at \textit{Harper’s Bazaar}, and Oleg Cassini, her clothing designer, months in advance about her clothing choices, especially because her “Francophilic” tendencies proved controversial during the campaign. American fashion designers had become a burgeoning point of national pride during WWII when the Nazis occupied Paris,\textsuperscript{13} so by summer 1960, Kennedy lamented to Vreeland that she needed to start buying American clothes and “‘have it known where I buy them.’” “Newspaper articles had been reporting that she wore Parisian designs,” Kennedy sniffed to Vreeland, “while Mrs. Nixon was running up her finery on the sewing machine.”\textsuperscript{14} Even the head of the International Ladies Garment Union had contacted JFK about the situation, prompting Kennedy’s quip that she needed her own “little Mollie Parnis” (Mamie Eisenhower’s designer). She thus consulted with Vreeland on her vision of her inaugural ball gown before JFK was elected in November, envisioning her gown to be “‘so simple and beautiful—not lots of Nettie Rosenstein paillettes.’”\textsuperscript{15} That jab contrasted her vision for the dress with Mamie Eisenhower’s inaugural gown, a “long dress in a rather dull color”\textsuperscript{16} that had been covered in what looked like rhinestones.

The inaugural address, albeit important to president and first lady, was John Kennedy’s, but Jacqueline Kennedy played a major role in creating a vision for the administration during the inaugural moment. The First Family was photographed for and Kennedy was featured in two major American fashion magazines—\textit{Harper’s Bazaar} and \textit{Vogue}—in February 1961. Although the inaugural festivities had been covered at length in various print media, the Kennedys officially sanctioned these feature spreads, and
Harper’s would be the last magazine for which the president and first lady formally sat during Kennedy’s administration. Originally, Kennedy also agreed to be photographed by Cecil Beaton for Vogue but ultimately she cancelled the shoot (and left Vogue to scramble for its feature content), only keeping the Harper’s sitting as a gesture of thanks to Diana Vreeland. These spreads, therefore, are central to understanding Jacqueline Kennedy’s role in the administration’s presidential persona for three reasons: (1) they indicate that she took seriously the visual presentation of the First Family and thought carefully about the means by which they did so; (2) they introduce one facet of Kennedy’s rhetorical legacy as first lady—fashion icon; and (3) they set the tone for her prismatic role in the Kennedy administration, doing strategic political work through a cultural agenda. In short, if the inaugural address was the centerpiece to JFK’s political coronation as president, the Harper’s and Vogue’s feature spreads form the cornerstone to Jacqueline Kennedy’s cultural coronation as first lady.

In this chapter, I argue that both sets of images depict Jacqueline Kennedy as an ideal of cosmopolitan public femininity for white upper-middle class women. By contrasting conceptual understandings of rhetorical invention, I show that Kennedy’s image utilizes the conventions of the fashion magazine—and Richard Avedon’s photographic style, more specifically—to present the Kennedys (and thus the American presidency) as global and worldly, not just a political force with which to be reckoned but a cultural one. Kennedy’s projection of restraint and balance in these images works paradoxically, amplifying John Kennedy’s inaugural “vision” for the administration while simultaneously marking the role of first lady as integral to its fulfillment. In turn, I contend, her image evokes signifiers of a collective anxiety about the role of images and
Invention, Convention, and Gender

While much feminist scholarship makes the argument that being seen and not heard historically approximates Western political expectations for women in public, such scholarship indicates an important formal convention for women—that is, for many women (with means and power), public visibility largely has stemmed from images that delineate the socio-political ideals to which women are held. As Cara Finnegan reminds us, images are pictorial representations (concrete) and mental pictures or products of the imagination (abstract). Thus, beginning with Christian icon art, which featured paintings of the Virgin Mary as a venerable subject alongside Christ and male saints in the early Roman church, visualizations of appropriate femininity have served as a double-edged sword to women’s public place in Western society. On the one hand, “imaging” women has exacerbated problematic paradigms of femininity that restrict women’s access to other forms of visibility, such as political oratory. On the other hand, such images have the capacity to reconfigure a range of public ideas about femininity and to place women, at least formally, in equivalent positions of visibility. As rhetorical scholars like Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp and E. Michele Ramsey have shown, so-called “conventional” images of femininity can be rhetorically complex—inventive, in the way Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes, by harnessing and subverting their era’s gender expectations.
Jorgensen-Earp’s essay on Emmeline Pankhurst’s “Importance of the Vote” speech shows that Pankhurst marshaled three dominant images of Victorian womanhood—the Perfect Lady, the Fallen Woman, and the Redundant Woman—to argue for women’s suffrage as a means to enhance those roles.\(^{19}\) Similarly, Ramsey’s analysis of suffrage cartoons in *The Woman Citizen* during WWI explores the ways in which traditional American roles of femininity, such as motherhood, were exploited visually to promote women’s access to public citizenship.\(^{20}\) In this chapter, I argue that *Vogue*’s and *Harper*’s images of Jacqueline Kennedy present a seminal moment of her rhetorical invention as first lady, one that advanced the Kennedy administration’s political agenda, validated women’s cultural forms (the fashion magazine) as important locations for showcasing the presidency, and amplified the public visibility of the role of first lady.

Jacqueline Kennedy publicly articulated her roles as wife and mother as central to her duties as first lady.\(^{21}\) Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair thus conclude that she was “reminiscent of the nineteenth century’s cult of domesticity,” which located “women’s power within the privacy of the home.”\(^{22}\) Kennedy’s cosmopolitan public image, however, complicates that assessment for a couple of reasons: (1) because the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century promoted complex types of modern femininity from which Kennedy’s persona draws and (2) because her image contrasted starkly with contemporaneous representations of 1950s suburban housewives. As Marianne Means reminded readers in 1963, “the nation has approved of [Jacqueline Kennedy] because she dares to be different from the popular image of the average American housewife; paradoxically, just as it had approved of Mrs. Eisenhower because she was typical.”\(^{23}\)

Unlike even April Wheeler—Richard Yates’ dystopian image of the American suburban
housewife, begging her husband for a chance to work and live in Paris. Kennedy rejected the dominant white ideal of provincial housewife, content with her kitchen gadgets and television, by reimagining modern femininity.

The concept of rhetorical invention has a rich history as one of the five canons of classical rhetoric. At its core, the term implies an act of creation. Rhetorical scholars, however, have described its generative capacity variously as individual genius, as a discursive system of “commonplaces” or topoi from which rhetors can advance persuasive arguments, and as a complex form of mimesis or imitatio. For purposes of this chapter, I delineate contrasting visions of rhetorical invention most clearly identified in Michael Leff’s and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s work. Michael Leff assesses the role of hermeneutical strategies in political rhetoric through a review of the relationships between invention, imitation, and interpretation in the rhetorical tradition. Leff reminds us that in classical education, imitatio was an important concept not just for recognizing persuasive strategies and rhetorical forms but also for reembodying them in new “compositions” addressed contemporaneously. In a recent article reevaluating the Sophists, Nathan Crick concurs: “Given its inherent quality as a productive link between the old and the new, a successful practice of imitatio naturally demands a keen and creative memory capable of bringing elements of the past into the present.” In this view, “the interplay between understanding and production creates an organic connection between the historical text and the new composition; the old text leaves its impression on the rhetor’s product, but the rhetor’s productive act has left its interpretative impression on the original.” In other words, the inventive process is dynamic, using traditional “texts” to impart new meaning on a subject or subjects. Leff illustrates his point through
discussion of Abraham Lincoln’s well-known Gettysburg Address, in which Lincoln exhorts his listeners to merge the “historical distance between the Founding Fathers and his own generation” by reinterpreting and making relevant the essential ideal of equality to their collective identity. Thus, for Leff, invention integrates preceding peoples and ideas into the contemporaneous landscape, akin to Maurice Charland’s notion of “constitutive rhetoric”—that is, communities “change themselves and one another by renewing and revaluing moments in their history.”

Whereas Leff stresses integration as key to rhetorical invention, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues for the centrality of subversion to our understanding of the term, especially when examining women rhetors. She writes that “[i]nvention exploits the past…it is parasitic; it adapts, reframes, juxtaposes, associates, satirizes, reverses, ridicules, and appropriates dominant discourse, using and misusing every means by which meanings are corrupted and contested.” Campbell contends that achieving any sense of public *ethos* requires women to invent their own modes of *imitatio*. Thus, she situates invention in terms of its counterpart—convention. Although convention generally influences the rhetorical possibilities available to any given rhetor, women historically have more limited (and limiting) contexts through which their public selves are seen as “appropriate” or “fitting” to a particular situation, an assumption that forms the cornerstone of classical rhetorical theory. Thus, women speakers have had to “undermine and redefine existing genres in order to fashion spaces in which their voices could emerge.”
Campbell’s view of invention draws heavily from Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who writes about subversive invention in African-American literature, and specifically, the “Signifying Monkey” poems:

The narrator’s technique [in the Signifying Monkey poems], his or her craft, is to be gauged by the creative (re)placement of these expected or anticipated formulaic phrases and formulaic events, rendered anew in unexpected ways. Precisely because the concepts represented in the poem are shared, repeated, and familiar to the poet’s audience, meaning [the manifest content of the Monkey stories] is devalued while the signifier [speaker or writer] is valorized. Value, in this art of poesis, lies in its foregrounding rather than in the invention of a novel signified.”

Put simply, Gates stresses the ways in which simultaneous deviation from and reference to convention highlights “forms of figuration rather than intent or content,” incorporating repetition and difference to invoke “an absent meaning ambiguously ‘present’ in a carefully wrought statement.” Although Gates rightly remains concerned with what this theory does for understanding African-American literary texts, his theories have some resonance for other historically marginalized groups (e.g., women), whose very bodies are rhetorical problems with which they must deal creatively. That unique exigency manifests in fascinating ways, as Campbell notes. In a speech given in 1802, for instance, Deborah Sampson Gannett, who fought as a man in the American Revolution, utilized a masculine and a feminine voice paradoxically to acknowledge and apologize for her act. She ended the speech by performing the manual of arms in full Continental Army uniform.
In an inaugural moment articulating the rhetorical vision of the Kennedy presidency and, specifically, Jacqueline Kennedy’s role therein, I argue that *Vogue* and *Harper’s* emphasize key components of JFK’s presidential persona: propriety, restraint, and cosmopolitanism. These spreads lay the foundation for a “ceremonial” administration (a term I discussed in my introduction) and depict the first lady as a central bridge between politics and culture. Furthermore, Jacqueline Kennedy operates within and against early Cold War expectations for her role by redeploying a particular tradition of modern femininity for her own purposes. Understanding her image in the inaugural moment, therefore, requires a brief review of the visual culture within which that image operated. Then, I turn to ways in which images in *Vogue* and *Harper’s* reinforced the rhetorical vision of the administration’s persona but also used its key components to depict an aspirational version of public femininity with increased institutional status.

The early-twentieth century notion of the Gibson Girl contributed to 1950s images of the Vassar Girl, the “type” of femininity Jacqueline Kennedy represented. Because I argue that *Vogue’s* and *Harper’s* depiction of Jacqueline Kennedy draws from a particular modern aesthetic of femininity, in this section, I identify three central characteristics of this aesthetic: an emphasis on fashion, arts, and culture as a means of visibility; depiction as an aspirational ideal of normative femininity; and the capacity to register collective anxieties about women’s public status in a given era. While I mainly focus on the Gibson Girl turned Vassar Girl, I should note that this aesthetic has origins in modernism more broadly, especially with representations of the Parisienne in Impressionist painting.  

Heidi Brevik-Zender, for instance, aptly explains the emergence
of the “New Woman” in French society (a term later used synonymously with the Gibson Girl as well):

As the concept of the emancipated ‘New Woman’ entered mainstream French vocabulary, and women became increasingly vocal about the desire to reform education laws for girls, ensure protection for women workers, and vote in national elections, many authors were critical of the change they perceived in women’s public and private roles, framing their disapproval of women’s actions through discussions of their garments. [Émile] Zola, recognizing the rise of women as primary consumers in the modern department store, distorted them into the hysterical shoppers and kleptomaniacs of his novel Au bonheur des dames (The Ladies’ Paradise; 1883).  

Indeed, the department store was an important disjuncture between writers like Zola, who explicitly ridiculed its effect on modern society, and painters who implicitly expressed their anxiety about the commercialization of art by rendering the department store completely absent in their work.  

The Parisienne image, therefore, was a complex amalgam of consumer and political culture, women’s bodies, art, and fashion.

Like the Parisienne, Charles Dana Gibson’s illustrated American girl offered a popular image of femininity that subtly derided the direct politics of the suffragette but expanded the cultural contexts in which women might participate publicly. As a liminal figure between the “Victorian woman” and the “flapper,” the Gibson Girl “worked to produce children, not political change;” she “might play golf but she certainly didn’t play politics;” and her commercial success indicated her ability to “co-opt and market those aspects of ‘New Woman’ ideology most threatening to patriarchal consumer
capitalism.41 In part, that dynamic formulation included what Martha Patterson
catalogues as seven types of Gibson Girls, each serving as a potential ideal with which
female readers of Collier’s Weekly (where she first appeared) were asked to identify:
“The Beauty, the Boy-girl, the Flirt, the Sentimental, the Convinced, the Ambitious, and
the Well-balanced.”42 Her looks, coupled with the myriad “types” she might be, and the
many social contexts in which she might appear, rely on a similar enactment of the
Parisienne’s cultured sensibility. Daniel Delis Hill describes her aesthetic:

She was taller than most women depicted in illustrations of the era, many times
shown at about the same height as her male companions. Her facial features were
solidly articulated: heavy-lidded eyes, sometimes with a defiant glint, arched
eyebrows, full lips, and a strong jawline (see Fig. 2.1).43

Like the Parisienne—and, I will argue, like Jacqueline Kennedy—the Gibson Girl was a
transitional public femininity, inventively working within conventional political forms for
women but also subverting her gendered expectations in social contexts. Similarly, the
Gibson Girl became one figure on which socio-political ideals about modern politics and
culture were located.

The sportiness of the Gibson Girl and the worldliness of the Parisienne became
traditional aspects of popular representations of the Vassar Girl, dually imagined as a
rich, fashionable member of an Ivy League women’s college and a bookworm.44 As
Rebecca Tuite writes, Gibson’s girl was smart and athletic, and between the late 19th
century and the 1930s, “Seven Sisters” students (women who attended colleges
considered to be equivalent to men’s Ivies) were real-life exemplars of that image.45 They
used clothing as a “tangible representation of everything the Seven Sisters stood
for…[which could be] passed on to a new generation, much like the traditions shared between Ivy League fathers and sons.” Tuite aptly traces the evolution of the Seven Sisters image through material culture, focusing especially on style as the central means by which these women developed their identities and served as popular idols of collegiate femininity. Indeed, according to Tuite, Jacqueline Kennedy became the “ultimate pin-up girl for Seven Sisters style without even graduating from Vassar…with her equestrian embellishments on the campus classics, perfectly waved pageboy haircut, enduring ability to dress with refinement, and cultured, intellectual charisma, she became the imprint” of that style. In several instances, Tuite references Kennedy’s adoption of the style: e.g., wearing plaid skirts and Peter Pan collars as a newly married student at Georgetown or a cashmere blend suit and pearls in her 1951 *Vogue* portrait for winning the Prix de Paris. She also mentions the symbolic importance to Seven Sisters students of a “good camel-hair polo coat” for East Coast winters, an item reworked into collegiate wardrobes from prestigious preparatory schools such as Miss Porter’s— and the very same type of coat Kennedy would help Oleg Cassini reimagine for her for JFK’s inaugural address. Kennedy’s year studying abroad at the Sorbonne in France (an exchange program administered through Smith and Vassar) and her well-documented love of French culture and couture contributed Parisienne elements to her aesthetic in the inaugural moment. For during the early Cold War era, images of Kennedy would reframe dominant understanding of ideal public femininity to emphasize elegant cosmopolitanism over stay-at-home suburban domesticity. I next turn to the internationalist moment that gave an educated, cosmopolitan aesthetic such potency.
Internationalism and the Inaugural Moment

John Kennedy was a foreign policy president. His inaugural address set that precedent, focusing primarily on foreign affairs and America’s leadership in the world. His principle speechwriter, Theodore Sorenson, writes that Kennedy wanted to deliver “a short speech focusing on foreign policy, avoiding partisanship and pessimism, and dispensing with the usual cold-war rhetoric, but letting the Soviets know he would not be bullied.”51 “Dispensing with the usual cold-war rhetoric,” however, does not mean JFK ignored the primary ideological battle of the era. On the contrary, in phrases characteristic of his speech style (including pervasive light-dark metaphors and balanced structure, or chiasmus), JFK saturated the inaugural address with references to the “two great and powerful groups of nations”52 lead either by the United States or Russia.

JFK’s concern with international affairs was part of a broader postwar moment during which the United States rejected isolationist policies and instead helped create a web of international organizations that bolstered its presence abroad. The most recognizable of these was the expanding North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which advanced democratic values to encourage “worldwide peace,” through “deterring Soviet expansionism, forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and encouraging European political integration.”53 The United Nations similarly took a global approach to conflict resolution; its Relief and Rehabilitation Fund, along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, provided international channels through which the American government could aid European recovery and encourage American prosperity.54
Furthermore, JFK’s own pilot Peace Corps program (later enacted into legislation by Congress) encouraged students to pursue public service in developing nations worldwide.

The sense of political internationalism that staged the Kennedy administration constituted and was constituted by aesthetic norms during the Cold War’s tenuous escalation of nuclear armament and dually emphasized freedom and restraint. When the Russians launched the satellite Sputnik in October 1957, the political event immediately influenced American consumer culture. Karal Ann Marling documents exhaustively the changing visual culture of the 1950s, from consumer obsession with “Mamie” or “Elvis” pink (the bubble-gum color of the inaugural dress Jacqueline Kennedy derided in her memo to Vreeland), to the advent of television trays, which were designed and modeled on the visual exemplar of the television set itself. Although automobiles with prominent (rocket-shaped) fins and colorful embellishments were popular in the early 1950s, Marling suggests that visual restraint prevailed after the Russian satellite launch:

In the aftermath of the ascetic Sputnik, the sensuous and organic shapes that had seemed so enticing in 1955 looked pretty silly on the 1958 [Ford Edsel]…[which] failed to communicate much of the ‘personality’ [its market researcher David Wallace] had endeavored to attach to the design through consorting with poets: brash, ambitious, highly visible. Or, perhaps, those were the very qualities that had begun to offend the discriminating eye in the fall of 1957, when the Edsel and the sack dress were both greeted with hoots of derision.

At the same time, the federal government was constructing elaborate international exhibitions visually showcasing American culture. We now also know, for example, that
the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) actively was promoting abstract expressionism internationally\(^58\)—even as Communist hunters like Senator Joseph McCarthy domestically were disparaging the “Communist” implications of the art movement.

Kennedy had articulated the power of restraint in a September 1960 speech, saying “if we recognize that self-government requires qualities of self-denial and restraint, then future historians will be able to say, ‘These were the great years of the American Republic.’”\(^59\) His inaugural address, with its crisp concision, would reiterate that message, as would Jacqueline Kennedy’s minimal elegance in the ubiquitous media images that followed. The Kennedys’ “American Versailles” directly contrasted Richard Nixon’s (and Dwight Eisenhower’s) plainspoken provincialism. After all, to quote Nixon’s infamous “Checkers” speech, Pat Nixon did not own a mink; instead, she had a “respectable Republican cloth coat.”\(^60\) By the late 1950s, though, “respectable” seemed too narrow for an institution that served as a potent synecdoche for American political and cultural clout abroad.

**“Fashioning” Cultural Conventions: Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, and Photographer Richard Avedon**

For all its status as the enduring high-fashion magazine, *Vogue* was stalled in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Founder Condé Nast died in 1942, and his longtime editor, Edna Woolman Chase, retired in 1954 (and died in 1957). Chase’s 40-year service as editor between 1911-1954 was characterized by strong support for the American fashion industry, especially during both World Wars. Until his death and sometimes against financial wisdom, Nast was insistent that *Vogue* be the best—he encouraged art directors and editors to find the best photographers and illustrators and “was so obsessed with the
[magazine’s] quality of printing that he refused to allow any color photography covers for
*Vogue* until 1932, when his photoengravers demonstrated to his satisfaction that they
could provide the results he demanded.” From 1954-1962 (when Diana Vreeland
became fashion editor of *Vogue*), Jessica Daves was editor-in-chief and Alex Liberman
was art director (he began in 1943). Liberman stressed a journalistic approach with
rougher lettering, no white space, crowded pages, and messier layouts. And although
*Vogue* still employed a cache of talented fashion photographers, Liberman was somewhat
inhibited creatively by Daves, an “archconservative with regard to images of fashion.”
At 60 years old, she was considered a “transitory” editor because of ageist and sexist
presumptions about her lack of originality, lack of beauty, and lack of international
presence in the fashion world.

In contrast, *Harper’s Bazaar* was considered more avant-garde at the time.
*Vogue* art director Alex Liberman, for instance, admired its design and content but felt
that “*Bazaar’s* focus was wrong, for it continued to see fashion magazines as luxury
products for upper-class readers.” Additionally, *Harper’s* had been characterized by
larger-than-life public personalities such as editor Carmel Snow (who originally worked
under Chase for *Vogue*), art director Alexei Brodovitch, and fashion editor Diana
Vreeland. Brodovitch’s editorial eye differed starkly from Liberman’s; he created
*Harper’s* Didot typeface logo and developed a signature use of white space.

*Harper’s* turnover, however, was equally chaotic in the late 1950s. In 1958,
Snow’s niece, Nancy White, took over as editor (a move that was considered a snub to
Vreeland, who would shift employment to rival *Vogue* several years later). Although
White was less “daring” in her creative direction than Snow, *Harper’s* continued to
cultivate its artistic talent with illustrators like Andy Warhol and fashion photographers like Richard Avedon, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, and Man Ray. In 1959, Henry Wolf succeeded Brodovitch as art director and concurrently served as art director of men’s magazine *Esquire*. If two jobs were not enough, in 1961, he also became art director for the avant-garde magazine *Show*. His style, like Brodovitch’s, showcased modern elegance through expressive typography, surreal photography, and conceptual illustration.69

The two photographers selected to shoot the Kennedys for *Vogue* and *Harper’s* were Cecil Beaton and Richard Avedon, although eventually Kennedy would cancel the Beaton shoot. Richard Avedon was a favorite of Diana Vreeland. Like Andy Warhol (another prominent artist in this dissertation), throughout his career, Avedon would toe the line between art and commerce, his innovative fashion photography paired with a fine arts career in portraiture. Thus, Avedon continued to photograph fashion for *Vogue* (he joined Diana Vreeland there in the mid-1960s), and he directed Versace’s ad campaigns through the 1980s. Likewise, his portraiture was featured in prestigious museums like the Smithsonian Institute (1962), the Museum of Modern Art (1974), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1978, 2002).70

The Kennedy images closely resemble Avedon’s portraiture style. Whereas Avedon’s fashion photographs consistently pictured models in motion—the defining quality of his work in fashion71—he insisted that his portraiture feature white backdrops and people without props.72 As Poul Erik Tøjner writes, “he intensified presence by removing what surrounded it. The portraits are against a white background, so that the person—the persona—takes all.”73 Avedon’s philosophy as a portraitist was controversial. Helen Whitney’s documentary on his work claims he changed the
relationship between portraitist and sitter. Rather than view the images as collaborative, he claimed control of the sitter, viewing photography as “real” imagery but also “malleable as clay.” This perspective, for instance, angered some of his famous subjects. Isak Dineson found the unflattering image he made of her “unforgiveable.” Avedon also photographed American divorcée Wallis Simpson and King Edward VIII, both well known for their carefully controlled images, with faces contorted in grimace. Feeling he had not yet captured a different facet of the infamous couple in his photographs, Avedon had used the knowledge that they both loved animals to invent a story about his taxi running over a dog. SNAP! The picture was made.

As this chapter will show, Richard Avedon was an apt choice for the Kennedys, because his portraiture style reinforces the elegant minimalism of the administration. Cecil Beaton, an icon of photography in his own right, had a style less compatible with Kennedy imagery: “the defining characteristic of his work and his contribution to fashion photography was the romanticism of the background and use of exotic supporting materials, such as folded gauze, screens, and a profusion of flowers.” Beaton’s photographs, therefore, were intentionally staged through the conventions of painting, with props and posing. Positioning the Kennedys a la Beaton’s characteristic style might have obscured the presidential authority Avedon transmitted effortlessly through spare backdrops and close shots. While I do not mean to suggest that Jacqueline Kennedy eschewed the Beaton sitting because of his photographic style—indeed, the more likely reason was her fierce privacy and the feeling that two fashion shoots might be overdone for the administration “plagued by fashion stories”—Rene Bouché’s “vivacious and
witty line”\textsuperscript{80} in the eventual \textit{Vogue} illustration of her seems better to complement the inaugural image the Kennedys’ hoped to project.

**Amplifying the Presidency, Amplifying the First Lady: Analyzing the Kennedy Aesthetic and Jacqueline Kennedy’s Image in \textit{Vogue} and \textit{Harper’s Bazaar}**

In 2007, Shannon Thomas Perich published a catalogue about Richard Avedon’s shoot with the Kennedys, which produced images for \textit{Harper’s Bazaar}, \textit{LOOK}, and later, the Associated Press (the AP was included after complaints from United Press international editor Frank Tremaine about a commercial photographer profiting from images of the president and first family).\textsuperscript{81} Perich notes that details about the shoot are uncertain: we do not know who coordinated the schedules, we have no direct correspondence about the shoot from the magazines or from the daily schedules of the Kennedys, and even the date—January 3, 1961—remains questionable.\textsuperscript{82} We do know that Jacqueline Kennedy wrote Diana Vreeland to correct media speculation about why the Kennedys chose \textit{Harper’s}: “no one says the real one [reason] which is you.”\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Harper’s} Editor Nancy White confirmed that the magazine was interested primarily in the first lady, but Richard Avedon’s daybook emphasized “President-elect John Kennedy and family.”\textsuperscript{84} Regardless, Robert Dallek suggests that Avedon’s photographs dually “humanized” the First Family and “encouraged the view that here was a man and a woman who were America at its best and were born to govern,”\textsuperscript{85} especially after a narrowly won election. Perich suggests that while “[Avedon’s] photographs for \textit{LOOK} complied with the expectation and comfort level for Kennedy imagery,” the photographs in \textit{Harper’s Bazaar} “stand respectfully against those in \textit{LOOK} to represent Avedon’s ideas about fashion and photography at that particular moment in time.”\textsuperscript{86} While the
Kennedys already had graced the pages of *Life* and *LOOK* throughout their 1950s courtship and marriage—the wedding! sailing on a yacht! touch football!—*Harper's Bazaar's* (and *Vogue's*) features were singular in their formal presentation of the First Family.

Avedon intentionally distinguished the shoots, first taking the artsier *Harper's* photographs inside the Kennedys’ Palm Beach home and scheduling the more candid *LOOK* shots outside. Beyond this difference, we know that Jacqueline Kennedy had “a keen understanding of the semantic of dress and the ways in which she could use her public image to help communicate the more abstract ideals that were important to her...[by] projecting a vision of dynamic modern elegance.” For John Kennedy, whom Campbell and Jamieson note exploited literary language in his inaugural address almost to excess, the photographs remain consistent with the rhetorical vision he presented during his inauguration. And although *Vogue’s* feature focuses solely on the first lady, that “dynamic modern” vision coheres across both magazines. She portrays conventional roles but exhibits moments of “subversion” (to use Campbell’s term) that complicate her significance to the visual presentation of the presidency and to contemporaneous ideals of white public femininity.

In this section, I delineate three features common to both magazine spreads: (1) a sense of balance and restraint; (2) a projection of cosmopolitanism; and (3) a register for collective anxiety about the image, generally, and for the role of women in early Cold War culture, specifically. I argue that Kennedy utilizes and undermines normative femininity in ways that amplify JFK’s presidential persona but likewise elevate her status therein. In turn, like many public women whose bodies become sites on which concerns
about modern culture and women’s visibility are pinned, Kennedy’s body registers the Cold War cultural uneasiness about the status of images and women at this time.

Picturing Balance and Restraint

*Harper’s* entitled Avedon’s photoessay “Observations on the 34th First Family” and captioned his spread as “the first in a monthly series of observations by Richard Avedon on aspects of contemporary life” (Figs. 2.1-2.3). The images unfold as a series of doubles: first, Avedon shows two images of Caroline Kennedy in a frilly white dress, standing next to her father, whose presence is rendered only through his hand and side (Fig. 2.1); then, a profile image of Jacqueline Kennedy holding baby John, Jr. sits opposite a full-page shot of Caroline holding her little brother (Fig. 2.2); and finally, the first lady, dressed in a floor-length white gown, stands on the left side of the page, and on the right, she sits with the president, both dressed conservatively in black (Fig. 2.3). Beyond the title, which appears on the left side of all three pairs of images, *Harper’s* offers no textual “observations” regarding its well-known subjects.

In Avedon’s photographs, the first lady largely portrays conventional gender roles: mother, fashion model, and wife. Her white dress was one in a series of white dresses she wore during the inauguration because, as Oleg Cassini recalls, she felt white was the most ceremonial color (and thus the most appropriate). Indeed, white dresses were symbolic in ceremonies across the so-called women’s Ivy League colleges (including Vassar). Kennedy’s pre-inaugural gown, with its French rosette at the hip, reiterated her identity as educated American woman and projected a sense of aristocratic European elegance, even as JFK and John Jr.’s presence highlighted her role wife and mother.
Additionally, the bare backdrops and graphic look of the photoessay singularly highlight the familial relationships in the images. That “look,” of course, was Avedon’s signature. Unlike social realist photographers such as Ansel Adams, his negatives “became the basis for photographs [sic] treated more like canvases wet with oil paint.”93 Many of his celebrity portraits were black and white compositions, albeit startlingly complex.94 The photograph of Kennedy holding John Jr. provides an apt example of Avedon’s subtle manipulation of his images. In its published form, Kennedy’s hair appears darker, and the shadows on the left and right side of the image enclose the stark contrast between the shape of her hair and the gray backdrop, producing the effect of light radiating around her head. John Jr.’s white gown looks brighter, with less material dimension than its original depiction, and Kennedy’s back and waist have been shadowed so that the fringed overlay of her dress arcs conspicuously, following the line of her bent head and mirroring John Jr.’s rounded backside to create the visual quality of circularity between the two bodies. Aesthetically, this photograph recalls Madonna and Child images in its noticeable circularity, its depiction of pure motherhood, and its focus on mother and infant son. Shannon Perich reads Avedon’s picture this way: Kennedy figures as a devoted, loving mother, and John Jr. represents “hope for the future.”95 Coupled with the disembodied images of John Kennedy holding Caroline’s hand that precede the mother-son photograph, Perich argues that the president emerges as an “abstracted…sense of paternal nationalism,” strengthened by a first lady who can “hold court” (a reference to the single image of Jacqueline Kennedy in her pre-inaugural gala gown) but “knows her place as wife” (seen in the image of her and Kennedy).96 Thus, her
depiction as wife and mother in these images balances the photograph in which she stands alone, ensuring visible constraints to her public identity per se.

Yet, for all its reference to traditional images of femininity, I would complicate that read, attending to the ways in which the photograph “exploits the past” inventively in the “parasitic” way Campbell highlights.97 If we abstracted the basic forms from their human subjects, viewing Avedon’s photographs as expressionist “canvases wet with oil paint,” the gestural blackening of components of the image highlight its graphic study of opposing shapes. The photographer flattens an iconic image—the Madonna and Child—into the interplay of dark and light circles and squares, simultaneously drawing attention to and detracting from its humanity. As photographic subject and formal object, Kennedy embodies a liminal visual space between archaic (Madonna and Child) and modern (circle/square), real and ideal, concrete and abstract. Indeed, her ability to balance these ideas characterizes the version of public femininity she promotes.

Holding in tension these opposing ideas imbues Kennedy’s image with a sense of balance that works nicely with the president’s favored style—antithesis—especially in his inaugural address. John Kennedy’s most famous lines—“ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” and “let us never negotiate out of fear but let us never fear to negotiate”—capitalize on A-B-B-A structure to present two ideas at once. More important, antitheses invite their audiences to change perspective. In the first phrase, for instance, the president shifts the onus of political action from country to citizen, highlighting an approach to civic engagement that requires individuals strive to be the best versions of themselves. Thus, the visual and textual dialogue between the inaugural address and the images in these magazines amplifies the administration’s
overall image of balance, restraint, “irreverence, and cool, detached intelligence.”

Richard Avedon concurred about the first lady: “She knows when to hold herself back while everyone else you know gives too much of themselves at one time. So when she comes out, it’s a great tour de force.”

Balance and restraint figure prominently in Vogue’s spread, too, strengthening Jacqueline Kennedy’s prismatic reiteration of the inaugural image of the Kennedy administration. The magazine describes Kennedy as a “straight-out beauty with three extra qualities: brains, gentleness, and charm,” emphasizing her intelligence to segue into its reprint of her award-winning Prix de Paris essay from 1951. Although her “beauty” holds weighted significance, Vogue highlights her “extra” “brains, gentleness, and charm,” features that echo Charles Gibson’s girl, who “brought about a change in social attitudes…by emphasizing self-reliance and gallantry as charming and legitimate feminine characteristics.” That girl was reincarnated in 1950s representations of the “Vassar Girl,” of which Kennedy served as prominent figurehead. Additionally, as Jennifer Greenhill notes, some of Gibson’s illustrations were “austere, even minimal,” foregoing “ornament to visually reinforce the text’s argument for restraint,” an argument I want to echo in my assessment of Avedon and Bouché. Like Richard Avedon’s “minimal” photographs depict the austerity of a post-Sputnik American culture, René Bouché’s first lady foregoes ornament to offer a complementary presidential vision of restraint (Fig. 2.4). Sketched lightly in pencil, she perches, body slightly tilted, in a pale, short-sleeved shirt with an asymmetrical neckline. In the left corner, viewers can see what may be the outline of a flouncy skirt. Although Kennedy’s body turns away from viewers, her face is positioned forward as the central focus of the
sketch. Elegant, arched brows frame her almond-shaped, wide-set dark eyes, and her cheeks are rouged. A small, confident smile plays at the corners of her full lips, and her slender neck and narrow shoulders convey a sense of feminine grace. A shock of dark hair sweeps across her forehead, and her typically helmet-like coif looks slightly wild, with loose tendrils of hair framing her face.

The immediate visual likeness to the Gibson Girl is striking: “heavy-lidded eyes, sometimes with a defiant glint, arched eyebrows, full lips, and a strong jawline”105 (see Fig. 2.5). Bouché emphasizes Kennedy’s face and neck, which are drawn deliberately, and her features are penciled symmetrically in dark, precise lines. Her gaze meets ours, and flecks of light dance in her (overly) large eyes. She sits confidently, approvingly, regally, with sure, upright posture. Like Avedon, Bouché pictures Kennedy as a woman singularly able to “hold court,” a projection of cultured femininity. *Vogue* identifies her, after all, as “Mrs. John F. Kennedy, wife of the president of the United States,” refusing even her first name to bind her image to the president’s.

Alongside Bouché’s artfully unfinished portrait, Kennedy’s reprinted Prix de Paris essay demonstrates another significant moment in which she amplifies the president’s persona and enhances her own. Their concise but elevated writing styles echo one another, and her essay (like JFK’s inauguration ceremony) emphasizes the integrative capacity of the arts. She identifies French poet Charles Baudelaire, Irish playwright Oscar Wilde, and Russian ballet impresario Serge Diaghileff as people she most would like to meet because of a “common theory” in their work promoting “the interrelation of the arts.”106 Her writing deserves quotation at length:
Baudelaire in his sonnet ‘Correspondances’ developed the theory of synesthesia, a tendency to associate the impressions given by one of the senses with those of another. He speaks of perfumes, ‘green as prairies, sweet as the music of oboes, and others, corrupted, rich and triumphant.’ Wilde did not intend it but I find the same interaction in his poetry…[and] though not an artist himself, he [Serge Diagheliff] possessed what is rarer than artistic genius in any one field, the sensitivity to take the best of each man and incorporate it into a masterpiece all the more precious because it lives only in the minds of those who have seen it and disintegrates as soon as he is gone. 107

This passage references Kennedy’s admiration for integrating impressions to achieve a potent but novel image. The word impression has several different meanings, but foremost, impression stems from French, and the Oxford English dictionary defines the term as “the action involved in the pressure of one thing upon or into the surface of another; also, the effect of this.”108 Impressions thus occur from amplification, from layering one thing atop another to form an opaque but lasting “effect.” In these magazine features, Kennedy reiterates balance and restraint as two corresponding impressions of the First Family, visually and textually. Likewise, her image reinforces the role of the arts in the overall “masterpiece” of their inaugural vision. Those impressions, as I discuss next, supplement her embodiment as an aspirational ideal and reimagine cosmopolitanism as part of the American presidency and normative femininity.
Balanced restraint figures prominently as an ideal to which viewers should aspire in both magazines, particularly in images of the first lady, but not without moments of inventive subversion. As Beatriz Colomina has written, “[i]mages in the 1950s were the new architecture, ‘the unclassified background against which we pass our lives.” Colomina’s observation was true of both magazines, as their fashion features piled images upon images. For example, *Vogue*’s major fashion spread in the Kennedy issue, entitled “White and What to Wear with It,” first shows a white shoe stuffed with jewels sitting atop a painting, before depicting shoes and jewels dripping from a fruit basket, itself suspended against a painting backdrop with a mirrored surface underneath, like some sort of hyper-modern still life. In another *Vogue* article, Dorothy Sara examines ten artfully haphazard facsimiles of handwritten notes from “Famous Americans” for “clues” about their personalities. Throughout the magazine, fashion models wear patterns—stripes on florals! chunky necklaces and wide-brimmed hats!—and they stand against giant canvases of swirls and hearts and leaves, painted by Richard Giglio. Within and against the sheer abundance of *images* in these pages, “Mrs. John F. Kennedy” appears simply in penciled sketch and small photograph. Like Avedon’s photographs in *Harper’s*, she rests against plain backdrops in black-and-white. Even the sketches Oleg Cassini submitted for *Vogue* depict abundant white space, centered by a dress in gray and white, and flanked by linear swaths of red and green on each side of the page (the color of the outer dresses) (see Fig. 2.6). The sketches look graphic, almost Mod, even as the silhouettes of the dresses and the layout of the pages appear tailored and
classic—a look that reinforces Kennedy’s dual embodiment of tradition and invention, past and future at once in the present.

In ancient Greece and even in nineteenth-century works by Lord Alfred Tennyson, deeming someone a “cosmopolite” was pejorative and contrasted with the term “patriot.” In its adjectival usage, though, the word cosmopolitan denotes a belonging to all parts of the world; a quality, I argue, that manifests visually in the way both magazines render absent signifiers of space and time. (As an interesting side note, in mid-twentieth century Soviet usage, “cosmopolitanism” retained its pejorative association and connoted the disparagement of Russian traditions and culture. When I use the term, however, I mean to imply an adherence to cosmopolitan principles and worldliness). Those same components reflect a key formal feature of Christian icon art (which arguably depicts the ultimate Western ideal of aspiration). Martin Kemp suggests that the “clichéd sense that icons are ‘timeless’” stems from their purveyance of “eternal verity, outside the time and space of the temporal viewer in the here and now.” Michael Leff describes this formal timelessness as a distinction between perspectives grounded in “secular” or “sacred” time. The former “proceeds in a singular direction…[and] is homogenous, continuous, and irreversible,” whereas the latter “calls us to a moment of origins…[and] is the ‘primordial mythical time made present.’” The presence of sacred temporality “manifests itself recurrently as an interruption in our normal sense of temporality, and thus sacred time is cyclical and discontinuous: it is something always there that we occasionally recover.” Kemp contends similarly that timelessness remains “profoundly embedded in the function of the sacred image,” which helps explain “why the images are ‘spaceless’ in terms of the measured optical spaces of
a perspective painting.”119 Of course, as Campbell and Jamieson also remind us, “[g]reat inaugurals achieve timelessness. They articulate a perspective that transcends the situation that produced them, and for this reason they retain their rhetorical force.”120

That the Kennedys are depicted across both magazines this way, against the image-saturated conventions of the magazines, and that Jacqueline Kennedy achieves dominant presence in both sets of images, renders a study in contrasts. Viewers are offered only their figures for contemplation, and the qualities they project—balance and restraint—reiterate the message Kennedy articulated in parts of his inaugural address, particularly concerning America’s image as a world leader. While Americans should ask what they could do for their country, “fellow citizens of the world” should ask “what together we can do for the freedom of man.”121 In 1961, everyone had a responsibility to fight against “the common enemies of man: poverty, disease, and war itself.”122 This world required that we feel a responsibility to each other, and cosmopolitanism—the notion of oneself as a citizen of the world—was an apt concept for promoting international cooperation while elevating American superiority.

With all his appeals to humanity, however, JFK constituted three main audiences in stark terms that delineated the ideological divide of the early Cold War: Americans, “friends” (e.g., old allies, new “free” states, developing nations, South America, the United Nations) and “foes” (the Soviet Union and its allies). His pervasive use of light-dark metaphor bespoke the apocalyptic terms of the political ideologies in a nuclear age, and that cold austerity signifies powerfully in these black-and-white images, loaded with Kennedy’s reminder that “man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of
human poverty and all forms of human life.” JFK’s disembodied hand shown against Caroline’s little figure, from this perspective, seems eerie.

Avedon’s negatives from Jacqueline Kennedy’s solo shoot show the paper backdrop on which she stood pierced abundantly with holes from her heels. For obvious reasons, those imperfections were not visible in the published image, and in part, we can attribute the shoot’s spare backdrops to Avedon’s minimal photographic style. Yet, as The New Yorker’s Winthrop Sargeant wrote, Avedon’s primary interest was “‘not in fashion, but in women’” and specifically “‘beautiful women…[that, in his pictures] take on the semblance of leading ladies on the stage. They may, in passing, also make the clothes they are wearing seem desirable, but what principally attracts the eye is the spirited way in which they seem to be participating in psychological drama.’” Fashion historian Nancy Hall-Duncan attributes Avedon’s success as a photographer to his ability to remain “acutely attuned to changing social conditions and public taste,” and describes his “revolutionary ‘look’” as “his conception of the model as a glamorous but ‘real’ girl.” Avedon himself described Diana Vreeland’s imagination for fashion features as having “no geographical or historical limits;” but we are remiss to conclude that uses of timelessness and spacelessness are insignificant to Jacqueline Kennedy’s status as a gender ideal beyond her institutional role. Particularly in her solo shot, she simultaneously projects a subversive boldness and a deliberate restraint. The columnar dress she wears enhances her statuesque silhouette, and her gaze confronts viewers directly, in tacit complicity with the symbiotic nature of her image. Like Claude Monet, who created a “flat, decorative pictorial effect through figures that [stood] out against their background as clearly delineated silhouettes,” Avedon’s photographs depict a
“carefully selected subject in a deliberate, conscientious composition.” In another play from Monet’s modernist handbook, Kennedy’s figurement as mother, wife, and model recalls the artist’s (Parisienne) Camille Doncieux, who modeled for each of his four Women in the Garden. While Monet’s “women” specifically expressed time—“that fleeting modernity”—Avedon’s Kennedy rejects the historical situatedness. Even as she appears in Harper’s “Americana” issue, nothing about the Kennedys’ photoessay suggests contingency. They are “observations of contemporary life,” yes, but bound not by nations or years and instead imagined as citizens of the world who “could have lived at any time” (to use Jacqueline Kennedy’s summation of Baudelaire). Unlike Mamie Eisenhower, who gifted trendy items like Sally Victor “airwave” hats to appalled foreign dignitaries such as Nina Khrushchev, this first lady embodies the country’s sophisticated sense of propriety.

Timelessness and spacelessness in these images does not preclude relational associations per se. As Cassini wrote, “Having studied painting in my youth with Giorgio De Chirico, I was very sensitive to color, balance, and harmony in my creation of Jackie’s look, her fashion ‘portrait.’ I always thought of her as part of a painting, a quadro. I thought of how she would look with other people.” Again, in order of their appearance in Harper’s, viewers first see images of little Caroline Kennedy clutching her father’s (disembodied) hand; then, the first lady and Caroline holding John, Jr.; and finally, a single image of Jacqueline Kennedy adjacent to one of her and the president. The pictures have a visual coherence, a narrative or filmic quality, in which viewers might imagine that a little girl (Caroline) has grown up to inhabit different women’s roles (Kennedy’s). Yet, to use Colomina’s words, the visual “information is arranged and
rearranged as it comes in: a space the reader navigates in his or her own way, at a glance, or by fully entering a particular story.” Moreover, the photographic “essay” does not logically follow the progression of roles in the “contemporary lives” (Harper’s term) of early 1960s women. If so, then ought images of Kennedy in the ball gown and her and JFK sitting together be placed before the images of Kennedy and Caroline each holding John, Jr.? Instead, the significance of (non) sequentiality in Avedon’s photoessay “seems to lie less on itself, its particular form, its innovative organization, than on its capacity to provoke a discussion.” These photographs are “a provocation,” and in her dual singularity and multiplicity, Kennedy’s image appears to “open up the fixed contour, by existing as a kind of proposition in the process of formulation.” In the same way Colomina argues that modern architecture in the postwar period shaped “the structure into an image and images into structure,” material “reality” in Avedon’s photoessay—that is, a traditional narrative of domesticity—seems to give way to crafted “image”—or a visual impression of domesticity. Kennedy’s image of femininity amplifies and undermines the gendered (and raced and classed) expectations of American domesticity for which she serves as an ideal.

Even more than Avedon’s photoessay, which arguably binds Kennedy’s image to the family, Bouché’s sketch definitively decontextualizes her and highlights her figuration as an ideal. The sketch lacks frame, and the image of her is just that—only her. Her clothes fade into the background, and her shirt and skirt are sketched lightly and hastily. They serve neither as prominent aspects of the drawing nor do they project a specific context (i.e., her top could be formal or informal, a shirt or a dress). No background exists to suggest that she is real and in a real environment. Rather, a plain
gray backdrop contrasts starkly with her dark hair and features. Thus, *Vogue’s* (or Bouché’s) presentation of her in the form of a sketched portrait combines, for instance, historical portraiture of nobility with the twentieth-century American circulation of the illustrated Gibson Girl as a cultural icon. Alternately, we reassociate *Vogue’s* typical depiction of current trends and ready-to-wear patterns on sketched models with the role of First Lady. She moves from role to role, maintaining form, but showing *Vogue’s* viewers how to embody several “types”—fashion model, cultural beauty, noble aristocrat, and young writer. For his part, Bouché deviates from his normative style of illustration by repudiating color, backdrop, and texture in favor of stark pen-and-ink contrast and emphasis on her face. Likewise, in photographs where Kennedy features as the main subject, Avedon highlights her figuration through a frame within a frame: visually narrowing (or perhaps doubling) viewers’ attention to her. In these ways, Kennedy’s image of restraint works paradoxically. She amplifies the vision of the administration but suggests an integral space for the role of first lady and women writ large in public culture.

**Early Cold War Collective Anxieties About the Image and Female Visibility, or, The Case of the Disappearing Hands**

Although Kennedy’s image in both magazines subversively promotes normative femininity to amplify JFK’s presidential persona and her own institutional status, these feature spreads capture a sense of collective anxiety during the early Cold War about the status of images and women’s visibility in public culture (something to which I return in more detail in Chapter 4). Thus, in this section, I want to emphasize even more strongly what her body does in this space.
Academics in the 1950s decried the effects of mass culture on American identity. Academics in the early 1960s were more concerned with the role of the image, particularly in politics. Writing in 1961, Daniel Boorstin lamented the rise of the “pseudo-event”—that is, the phenomenon in American political and popular culture in which citizens were “harboring, nourishing, and ever enlarging our extravagant expectations…[to] create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves.” Put simply, Boorstin wrote, pseudo-events work in direct contrast to state propaganda; the former complicates while the latter simplifies. Thus, pseudo-events “make simple facts more subtle, more ambiguous, and more speculative than they really are.” Murray Edelman concurred, albeit less equivocally. He wrote extensively in 1964 about The Symbolic Uses of Politics, suggesting:

For most men most of the time politics is a series of pictures in the mind, placed there by television news, newspapers, magazines, and discussions. The pictures create a moving panorama taking place in a world the mass public never quite touches, yet one its members come to fear or cheer, often with passion and sometimes with action.

By the early 1960s, therefore, the relationship between materiality and visuality was influenced by cultural changes. Beatriz Colomina suggests that television collapsed traditional boundaries between public and private space—typically conceived as “men’s” and “women’s” spaces respectively—which “not only brings the public indoors…but also sends the private into the public domain.” Modern architecture, likewise, shifted conceptual focus from “architecture as building…to architecture as crafted image [by] shaping the structure into an image and images into structure.” Magazines like
Playboy, which first was published in 1953, placed women’s overt sexuality in more public circulation, and the Kitchen Debates between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev visibly showcased domesticity as a battlefield for political ideology. General anxieties about the image, therefore, were bolstered by specific changes to women’s visibility in public and political culture.

We find traces of that collective anxiety in Harper’s solo image of Jacqueline Kennedy (Fig. 2.3). Despite its excessive framing—the effect of which shrinks the size of the photograph but paradoxically highlights its presence—the photograph resists an easy read. The frames indicate Kennedy’s symbolic restriction to traditionally feminine roles as much as they stress her singular appearance. Yet, her image in both magazines continually commands its own space. In Vogue’s reprint of her essay, (above which the magazine identifies her loudly as “JACQUELINE LEE BOUVIER), Kennedy positions herself hypothetically as the “Over-all Art Director of the Twentieth Century, watching everything from a chair hanging in space.” Her intensely modern and vivid description of space (written 10 years before JFK’s “Romantic” moon speech) juxtaposes against the historical works of art she espouses. Viewers are asked to see the first lady as the arbiter of artistic taste in mass culture, and the “types” she displays, however “normative,” legitimize her own authority as a formal subject.

Her authority, I suggest, finds resistance in both magazines’ strange treatment of hands. The Kennedys’ disappearing, dismembered, and claw-like hands figure as visual signifiers of these cultural anxieties concerning the image and the visibility of women during this era. Fragmented body parts achieve an odd presence in both magazines. Kennedy’s head becomes the focus in Bouché’s sketch (Fig. 2.4) and Vogue’s small
photograph of her younger self (not reproduced in Figures), her body the focus of Cassini’s colorful illustrations (Fig. 2.6), and her pointed toes prominent in Cassini’s sketches (Fig. 2.6) and Avedon’s solo shot of her (Fig. 2.3). The trope of visual disembodiment attains the most intensity, however, through the visual echo of Kennedy’s claws in Cassini’s sketches (Fig. 2.6) and her disappearing hands in Avedon’s photographs (Figs. 2.2-2.3). This move, manifested differently but to similar effect, connotes the instability of the modern woman’s body and images *per se*. Notice that JFK’s hand achieves hyper-presence in its disembodiment, a lingering reminder of material power. In photographs and sketches, Kennedy’s image stabilizes only through the interchangeability of tangible and intangible—photograph and sketch, image and art, coherence and plurality. Like Impressionist painters who emphasized “the single vivid gesture of the hand by which a single visual sensation is registered,”¹⁴⁸ *Vogue* and *Harper’s* display remnants of modernism’s self-conscious attention to the (diminishing) power of materiality as the primary medium through which we distinguish art and artifice, fiction and reality. That those anxieties are rendered visible largely through Kennedy’s body highlights the ways in which she performs an essential component of the aesthetics from which her image of femininity draws. Those anxieties, I argue in Chapter 4, reemerge powerfully in Andy Warhol’s *Jackies*.

**Conclusion**

In the inaugural moment of early 1961, the Kennedys articulated their vision for his presidency visually, discursively, and oratorically. Thurston Clarke writes that John Kennedy “realized that everything that happened at the ceremony, particularly everything that was visible to a television audience of millions, would contribute to how his address
was received and judged.” For Jacqueline Kennedy, whose “response to life was aesthetic,” the formal spreads of her and the First Family in *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* formed the cornerstone to her public image as first lady. Subversively capitalizing on her aesthetic sensibilities and admiration for “synesthesia,” she enhanced JFK’s inaugural vision for his presidency with her own cultural visibility, choosing “high” fashion women’s magazines to showcase the significance of the first lady position within a modern administration. By marking the internationalist moment through a projection of cosmopolitan public femininity, Kennedy simultaneously reflected and subverted her gendered expectations.

Kennedy’s magazine spreads staged her reception in France several months later and provide an early glimpse into the role she would play in the administration. By using a conventionally feminine media genre—the fashion magazine—and drawing from representative conventions of liminal femininity—the Parisienne, the Gibson Girl, and the Vassar Girl—Kennedy enacted her institutional role on complementary terms with the overall image of the administration but afforded the first lady a more visible position therein. Reiterating themes in JFK’s inaugural address of balance, restraint, and cosmopolitanism, she ensured that her abundant visibility appeared apolitical and non-threatening. That rhetorical move—the appearance of amplifying the administration’s image even when forwarding her own choices—would well serve her next public project: restoration of the White House.
Figures


Fig. 2.4. Rene Bouché, artist. In *Vogue*. New York: Condé Nast Publishing, February 1, 1961, 133.
Fig. 2.5. Charles Dana Gibson, artist. Accessed March 10, 2015. Artstor.org.


4 Ibid.


7 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.

8 Campbell and Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency, 46.

9 Campbell and Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency, 30.


11 Campbell and Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency, 30.


14 Dwight, Diana Vreeland, 113.

15 Dwight, Diana Vreeland, 114.

16 Ibid.


18 For examples, please see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s summary of the “demonic” and “True Womanhood” conventions in “Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf,” Women’s Studies in Communication 21, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 111-26. For additional in-depth discussion of conventions of femininity at the turn of the century, please see Martha H. Patterson, Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).
30 Leff, “Hermeneutical Rhetoric,” 204.
31 Campbell, “Inventing Women,” 112.
32 Campbell, “Inventing Women,” 118.
34 Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, 74.
35 Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, 79.
36 Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, 86.
37 Campbell, “Inventing Women,” 118.
41 Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl*, 73.
42 Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl*, 34.
45 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 22; and footnote 1 under “From Rule Breakers to Taste Makers, 140.
46 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 35.
47 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 12.
48 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 52.
49 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 34.
50 Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 140 (endnote 10).
51 Clarke, Ask Not, 24.
56 Marling, As Seen on TV, 154.
57 Marling, As Seen on TV, 159.
61 Hill, As Seen in Vogue, 11-12.
63 Oliva and Angeletti, In Vogue, 153.
64 Ibid.
65 Oliva and Angeletti, In Vogue, 134.
66 Ibid.
70 For a complete list of Avedon’s museum exhibitions, both solo and group, please see Gagosian Gallery, “Richard Avedon,” http://www.gagosian.com/artists/richard-avedon.


Richard Avedon: Darkness and Light, 2002. To view the image, please see The Richard Avedon Foundation:
http://www.theavedonfoundation.net/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=4&p=5&a=0&at=0


Oliva and Angeletti, In Vogue, 72.

Oliva and Angeletti, In Vogue, 75.


Dwight, Diana Vreeland, 119-20.


Perich mentions the Kennedys’ ubiquity in popular magazines but for an in-depth analysis of 1950s visual culture and the Kennedys, please see David Lubin, Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).


Campbell and Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency, 47.


Tuite, Seven Sisters Style, 36.

Perich, The Kennedys: Portrait of a Family, 34.

Dwight, Diana Vreeland, 90.


Ibid.

Campbell, “Inventing Women,” 112.

Patterson, Grand Expectations, 438.


105 Hill, *As Seen in Vogue*, 23.
106 *Vogue*, “Special Feature,” 134.
107 Ibid.
113 See, for example, “Fashion Naturals” (138) or “The Untyped Suit,” (146), both in *Vogue*, February 1, 1961.
116 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
120 Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 56.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
126 Dwight, *Diana Vreeland*, 82.
128 Ibid.


Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 32.


Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 269.

Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 27.

Ibid.

Jennifer Greenhill makes this argument about Gibson’s girl by discussing Gibson’s use of contours that trail off in his illustrations. Greenhill, “Troubled Abstractions,” 733.

Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 31.

Please see the dissertation introduction for a review of some of those concerns, including those of Dwight McDonald and others.


Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 297.

Colomina, *Domesticity at War*, 31.

Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 358.

Colomina, *Domesticity at War*.


CHAPTER 3:
PRESIDENTIAL TASTE AND CULTURAL GRAVITAS: JACQUELINE KENNEDY’S TELEVISIONED TOUR OF THE WHITE HOUSE

On February 14, 1962, two major news networks—CBS and NBC—featured Jacqueline Kennedy at 10 p.m. in an hour-long, televised tour of the White House (ABC would air the broadcast later that week). The special sought to promote Kennedy’s restoration project, for which she had appointed a Fine Arts Committee, solicited numerous furniture and art donations (noted during the tour), and created a souvenir guidebook to fund continued maintenance on the residence. According to recently released transcripts from Arthur Schlesinger’s interviews with her after John Kennedy’s assassination, 56 million viewers watched the original broadcast, an extraordinary number in an era when few households had multiple television sets. In addition to domestic broadcasts, Kennedy taped introductions to the special in French and Spanish for foreign distribution. The broadcast was purchased or requested by a litany of other countries—including Communist China, Italy, and Japan—which brought the total viewing number to more than 40 countries (with one estimate as high as 106 countries on every continent). The first lady’s efforts won her an honorary Emmy award.

In the year between the inauguration of John Kennedy’s presidency and Jacqueline Kennedy’s televised tour of the White House, she had become yet more famous by the president’s proclamation that he was the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris. Mary Ann Watson describes the trip to France as the moment during which “the worldwide fascination with Mrs. Kennedy reached its zenith.” After that trip, CBS aired a 30-minute segment on the “dazzling impact” of the “Jackie phenomenon,” which included an extensive interview with her Parisian hairdresser (Kennedy did not
approve).\textsuperscript{10} She agreed, however, to host a CBS telecast touring the White House, and although Kennedy’s popular tour was not the first on television (President Harry Truman had televised his renovations to the residence in 1952), she was the original first lady to give the tour. Biographer C. David Heymann suggests that “[t]he renovation project with all its obstacles and dilemmas proved convenient for [Kennedy] as a means of avoiding the more mundane duties associated with her position. She was contemptuous of the traditional role of First Lady and opposed to playing the part.”\textsuperscript{11} Still, play the part she did to promote her project on television. Like her feature spreads in \textit{Harper’s Bazaar} and \textit{Vogue}, Kennedy’s televisual persona reinforced the administration’s penchant for the medium—JFK, after all, had participated in the first televised debates as a presidential candidate, and he was the first president to give live press conferences.\textsuperscript{12} Yet, also like her image(s) in \textit{Harper’s} and \textit{Vogue}, Kennedy’s performance highlighted the role of first lady within the institution, increasing its visibility. She did political work through cultural channels, and her “apolitical” arts project established the current legal precedent for cataloguing items displayed in the White House and allows for First Families to acquire new art and furniture.

In his contemporaneous book detailing a “behind-the-scenes” look at the production of Kennedy’s tour and scholarly additions to its content about White House history, Perry Wolff framed the rhetorical “problem” of the telecast in terms of Kennedy’s performance (rather than, for instance, cost, technology, or audience). Reiterating a primary means by which the tour constructed the Kennedys (and particularly Jacqueline Kennedy) as paradigms of “taste,” Wolff distinguished (crass) \textit{money} from (artistic) \textit{quality} and natural “authenticity” from scripted “expertise.” He
noted that the telecast cost $130,000 to make—but the budget was unlimited. Thus, “the basic problem was artistic and could not be solved by a large outlay of cash, nor by an excessive amount of television equipment.” According to Wolff, Kennedy’s press secretary, Pamela Turnure, best expressed the central concern: “A beautiful woman is to discuss line and form. How will it be possible to have the careful photography necessarily dictated by beauty and history—and still preserve the authenticity and enthusiasm of a non-professional?”

Operating within the context of shifting (or, more accurately, solidifying) conventions of early television, Kennedy’s performance had to balance spontaneity and professionalism. She accomplished that imperative by assessing presidential “taste” in American history and modeling proper social decorum for her modern viewers. Her tour, therefore, remains central to understanding how she contributed to John Kennedy’s “televisual” presidency while likewise maintaining her prismatic role stressing the importance of American art and architectural history.

Additionally, the telecast was an important moment for the visibility of a first lady’s “project” as part of the institution. The way Kennedy handled this event partly set precedent for the rhetorical expectations of modern first ladies (e.g., Lady Bird Johnson’s subsequent highway beautification project, or more recently, Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign, which draws much of its potency from her likeability and “apolitical” television appearances).

In this chapter, I argue that Jacqueline Kennedy’s televised tour of the White House exploited the rhetorical topos of taste to help craft American cultural identity during an early Cold War era bent on selling “Americanism” abroad and at home. She activated a discursive “commonplace” (a topos) resonant with (1) the international
community, including both ideological foes (Russia) and political allies (e.g., Great Britain and France); and (2) domestic audiences anxious about paradoxical tensions of modern life. As such, Kennedy’s tour fulfilled public expectations for a “ceremonial” Kennedy presidency that represented America’s cultural “coming-of-age” while likewise arguing—aurally—for the centrality and visibility of the position of first lady within the institution of the presidency. She advanced the administration’s political clout by granting the institution social power and positioning the president and first lady as arbiters of aesthetic norms. Thus, in what follows, I first review the concept of rhetorical topoi before delineating a series of international and American tensions that emphasized audiences’ qualities of discernment as primary responses to challenges of the early Cold War. Finally, I closely analyze features of Kennedy’s televised tour that reiterate taste as essential to American identity—especially in its highest public representatives (the president and first lady).

Spatiality and Visuality in Rhetorical Topoi

Conceived by Aristotle as strategic “topics,” or generally accepted argumentative premises, rhetorical topoi have been theorized more broadly in recent scholarship for their capacity to explain how familiar forms facilitate rhetorical invention. In A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, Richard Lanham defines Aristotelian topoi as “both the stuff of which arguments are made and the form of those arguments” but notes that “more general usage has confused the topics with loci communes or commonplace observations…[the parallel being that] both are part of that planned spontaneity which was an orator’s principal means of dazzling his audience.” By offering two senses of Aristotelian topoi—“stock arguments” for rhetors and a broader capacity for locating “the
generative [and novel] potential of rhetoric. —Carolyn Miller problematizes the concept’s evocation of spatial metaphor to argue:

The Aristotelian *topos* of degree, or of ways and means, suggests a conceptual shape or realm where one might find—or create—a detail, a connection, a pattern that was not anticipated deductively by the *topos* itself. The *topos* is conceptual space without fully specified or specifiable contents; it is a region of productive uncertainty. It is a ‘problem space,’ but rather than circumscribing or delimiting the problem, rather than being a closed space or container within which one searches, it is a located perspective, from which one searches.

This quotation deserves unpacking. First, Miller highlights a familiar Aristotelian preoccupation with contingency—a “conceptual shape or realm” resonant with a given audience—that *facilitates* (but does not determine) rhetorical action and/or invention. More important, however, Miller notes that the power of *topos*—now defined as “conceptual space without fully specified or specifiable contents…a region of productive uncertainty”—lies in its ambiguity (and, therefore, versatility). Impressionistic, rather than illustrative, a *topos* occupies “the border between the known and the unknown.”

The “known” refers to a particular rhetorical context, which can be as broad as a common cultural register of identifications or as narrow as the specific event and audience for which a rhetor performs. The “unknown” denotes the ways in which context and rhetor dynamically produce different “ways and means” in service to that potent idea. Potency, as Kenneth Burke suggests, infuses specific “commonplaces” of a given culture, and “topical shifts [shifts in *topoi*] make certain images more persuasive in one situation than another.”
In early Cold War culture, as I show in the next section, preoccupation with “taste” dominated many of the aesthetic arguments being made about the relative worth of the two major ideologies (capitalism and communism), and as recent scholarship demonstrates persuasively, rhetorical *topoi* can be visual and embodied, not just discursive. Catherine Palczewski, for example, writes that turn-of-the-century American lithographic postcards utilized existing verbal arguments and visualized new ones against women’s suffrage. Drawing from Michael Calvin McGee, Palczewski contends that commercially produced (rather than politically deployed) postcard icons reiterated “ideographs” of heteronormative gender by turning suffragists into humorous “types.”

As Palczewski notes implicitly, rhetorical *topoi* can be “naturalized” visually by drawing from the ideationally ill-defined but pervasive norms of a given cultural context. Christa Olson argues similarly that naturalized “commonplaces” can be embodied, and her case study examines the ways in which late nineteenth-century white and mestizo Ecuadorians used the features, behaviors, and histories associated with indigenous bodies—an embodied *topos* of indigeniety—to legitimize themselves politically.

Olson’s argument recalls Robert Hariman’s discussion of decorum, which relies on the speaker’s careful presentation of self for artistic effect, rhetorical power, and political result. Hariman argues against critical separation of artistic production (formal style) and political practice (persuasive content), showing their fluid linkage in classical rhetorical theory: “[b]y developing the ability to discriminate and imitate signs of status, the orator could exploit the social code governing a situation.” In short, rhetors who could properly analyze the ethical and stylistic dimensions of a given speech situation under the “aristocratic social code available to any classic thinker” were best positioned for
persuasive effect. Style draws on or deviates from cultural *topoi*, and cultural *topoi* provide conditions of possibility for persuasive power (discursive, visual, embodied, or otherwise). In the next section, I delineate one prominent rhetorical *topos* of the early Cold War era—taste—that was used to sell American ideology abroad and assuage domestic anxieties about mass culture in modern life. In turn, as I show, the Kennedys were well positioned to exploit the mantel of taste, especially through television.

**An Aesthetic of Politics: Crafting America’s International and Domestic Image**

The rhetorical challenges of the early Cold War were not just ideological and political but aesthetic. During and after WWII, the United States became the parvenu on the world stage, which required establishing not just its systemic differences from Russia but its equivalent cultural status with Western allies (e.g., Great Britain and France). Especially by the late 1950s, the president increasingly served as synecdoche for American culture writ large, with facets of American culture serving as metonyms for the rhetorical “justice” of capitalism—the key political “stake” in a symbolic war against communism. Broader executive power, combined with postwar presidents’ (and especially Kennedy’s) increased enactment of ceremonial roles, was legitimated and heightened by coverage of the presidency in popular media. Likewise, television put international audiences at reach, and the Kennedys’ image of cosmopolitan restraint made them fitting exemplars of America’s coming-of-age. In this section, therefore, I contextualize postwar tensions about American global identity that allowed the Kennedys to become representative arbiters of taste, shaping the aesthetic appeal of capitalism and American self-image in response to challenges of the early Cold War.
The International Scene

Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye, Jr. characterizes political “soft power” as “getting others to want the outcomes you want,” an attribute that “rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.” Unlike “hard power” politics involving displays of military and economic might, “soft power” approaches require “the ability to attract” since “attraction often leads to acquiescence.” While Nye’s term did not gain scholarly traction until the late 1980s, he defined a primary political strategy from the late 1950s, when governmental agencies shifted key elements of their international propaganda to sell American culture through exhibitions, films, and art. This shift bolstered corresponding anxieties about the attractiveness of the American alternative, and at least two interlocking tensions emerged: capitalism (1) was touted as a general way to improve quality of life and (2) was framed by aesthetic norms that sought to show audiences how to be in their newfound world of appearances.

As part of their cultural approach to selling “Americanism,” the United States Information Agency and the State Department organized two major international exhibitions: the United States’ Pavilion at the International Exposition in Brussels (1958) and the American National Exhibition in Moscow (1959), known thereafter for the infamous “Kitchen Debates” between Vice-President Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. Additionally, in 1958, the Marshall House opened an exhibition about “the typical Midwestern city” of Kalamazoo, which focused on the city’s main industries—paper production and Gibson guitars—and its citizenry. These exhibitions provided American information agencies an opportunity to emphasize economic and cultural freedom as essential effects of a capitalist system. Jack Masey, Director of Design for the
United States Information Agency during the early Cold War, co-wrote a book with Conway Morgan explaining the importance of exhibitions to America’s “soft” strategy, especially in Europe. Masey and Morgan write:

By the mid-1950s and with the increasing deployment of hydrogen and atom bombs, the nature of the nuclear risk had become apparent: the year 1958, for example, saw the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the UK. Europe was also another kind of battleground, on a political and intellectual level. The CIA was covertly funding a number of organizations to promote democratic values and stem Communist influence, such as the Council for Free Europe…Making a good impression in Europe was thus seen as being of crucial importance to the US government, and for the additional reason that the [U.S.] pavilion [in Brussels] would also be seen by a considerable number of American visitors, both tourists and US servicemen.\(^{34}\)

Although the Smith-Mundt Act made domestic propaganda illegal, the federal government was well aware that international audience(s) also shaped Americans’ own sense of national identity. Thus, when conceptualizing the exhibit at the U.S. Pavilion in Brussels, the State Department specified the need to address “unfinished business” that included “soil erosion, urban decay and race relations.”\(^ {35}\) Through a declassified DOS telegram that incorporated suggestions from former U.S. Ambassador to Denmark Eugenie Anderson, Masey and Morgan show that the exhibit was expected to highlight “both technological strengths and cultural achievements, while being honest about America’s weaknesses ‘since self-criticism is one of our greatest strengths.’”\(^ {36}\)

Additionally, true to the visual politics that characterized this “soft” sell approach, the
exhibition featured a fashion show with live models that was organized by *Vogue* magazine and Lee Canfield (Jacqueline Kennedy’s sister). Although the exhibition received positive reviews from international visitors, domestic audiences had mixed responses to the exhibition’s representation of America, especially concerning race relations. Still, the exhibition used consumer objects, architectural design, and fashion to reinforce its message that *American* culture was *capitalist* culture; that capitalist culture achieved *multiplicity*; and that *multiplicity* inherently ensured *equality*—economic, social, and political. Its aesthetics were politically self-reflexive, as Karal Ann Marling notes: “Packaged in this way, the United States [at the World’s Fair] was not a written text, arguing for a particular interpretation of the meaning of America, but a ‘look,’ a style, a lifestyle appealing on precisely the same grounds as those on which fashion captivated the senses…the exhibition celebrated abundance, choice.”38 Nixon would reinforce that message in the Kitchen Debates, showing interest in “style as a manifestation or a symbol of difference and in difference, *multiplicity*—the possibility of *choice*—as the principle connecting idle consumer fetishism to ideology.”39 Under the Kennedy administration, as I address later in this section, that capitalist ideology of “abundance” was constituted by aesthetic norms highlighting refinement.

The infamous Kitchen Debates stemmed from Nikita Khrushchev’s inexplicable (and public) invitation in 1957 for the United States to participate in a series of cultural exchanges. By September 1958, the countries had agreed that the Americans would present an exhibit in Moscow, while the Russians would present in New York, with both exhibitions taking place during the summer of 1959. As Masey recalls, the model kitchen within the larger exhibit—nicknamed “Splitnik”—housed “one of the Central
events of the Cold War [the Kitchen Debates]. That it received such wide attention at the
time reminds us that both superpowers claimed the cultural sector as their own domain,
and that the disagreements were not just about ideology and military power, but
concerned material prosperity and consumer technology as well.\footnote{42} The Kitchen Debates
centered largely on which system—capitalism or communism—was best for individual
citizens’ lifestyles. These considerations had important gendered implications, as Elaine
Tyler May notes, for as much as they disagreed about the “proper social roles for
women,” both Nixon and Khrushchev “shared a common view that female sexuality was
a central part of the good life both systems claimed to espouse.”\footnote{43} The two leaders
together ogled American models in bathing suits and concluded their argument with a
conciliatory “drink to the ladies.”\footnote{44}

These kinds of American exhibitions demonstrated the ways in which capitalism
could make life easier for peoples around the world but combined that premise with an
aspirational aesthetic meant to appeal to a broad international community; hence the
CIA’s promotion of Abstract Expressionism abroad (even with McCarthy denouncing the
art movement at home) or the State Department’s selection of \emph{My Fair Lady} (a play about
transcending class and fulfilling one’s feminine potential) to tour Russia. Cultural ease
and consumer choice became a dominant American strategy for selling its capitalist
political ideology. Furthermore, after the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, the United
States’ aspirational aesthetic shifted from stressing dazzling quantities of consumer
objects to a more minimal image of refined luxury.\footnote{45}
The Domestic Scene

Selling Americanism as an easy lifestyle with corresponding aesthetic appeal framed complementary domestic tensions regarding the return to normalcy after the Great Depression and WWII. Much scholarship has documented the postwar era’s population growth and economic prosperity but newfound creators and beneficiaries of the so-called “Good Life” met their status with ambivalence. Popular discourses emphasized Americans’ qualities of discernment, drawing from the aforementioned aspirational aesthetic to resolve a series of issues in modern life: the newfound prevalence of television in homes, the shift in architectural practice and typical residence (to mass suburban housing), and the distinction between mass culture and high art. I next contextualize those issues—television, housing, and high art—to illustrate dominant domestic anxieties of early Cold War culture, before reflecting on how those discourses staged the emergence of John Kennedy’s televisual presidency.

The growth of television as a staple in American homes was a major change to the mass media landscape during the early Cold War, particularly after 1955; before then, the technology primarily was in the Northeast, where more television stations ensured the greatest amount of programming choice to viewers. As historians such as Andrew Falk, David Marc, and Robert Thompson remind us, early television’s most popular format was the anthology drama, a type of programming modeled on radio and theater rather than Hollywood film. That aesthetic choice, Marc and Thompson contend, stemmed largely from an economic motive:

The two major broadcasting companies, NBC and CBS, did not want the Hollywood movie studios owning competitive networks, and so they fought to
identify television as something other than an outlet for film. They chose live theater as the mold out of which TV drama would be fashioned. The theater model offered other advantages as well: plays were cheaper to produce than movies, retained the aura of ‘live entertainment,’ and there was an enormous talent base of stage actors in New York City, the broadcasting industry’s home base.48

Positioning television as distinct from film aligned unintentionally with what Peter Decherney suggests was the film industry’s postwar aim for its cultural identity: “to celebrate Hollywood film as the twentieth-century art form” (latter italics mine).49 Television routinely served as one end of a high-low cultural spectrum, consistently linked to degraded mass culture but paradoxically enabling the distinction of “high” American art—film and the avant-garde art novel (a point on which I later expand). As Lynn Spigel writes, films incorporated spectators into the scene and out of the space of reception; conversely, (early) television was participatory, asking spectators to be “on the scene.”50 Because the standard 10-12 inch television screens found in homes across the country made showing depth of field difficult for viewers, sound booms were positioned at the front of the program’s stage when filming.51 Action thus was directed toward the “audience,” with actors often “mugging for the camera” in close-ups meant to implicate their awareness of viewers.52 In turn, Spigel argues, “television was meant to give the home audience not just a view, but rather, a perfect view,” ensuring the capacity for showing action at the optimum distance for audiences (wide enough to see all aspects of a scene) with ideal angles of sight that provided intimacy.53
The utopian promise of a “perfect view” came with conflicting representations about television’s centrality to modern life. On the one hand, for example, print advertisements for televisions harkened the technology to Victorian notions of homes as domestic havens, using the family circle (around the television) as a dominant pictorial strategy and shooting in soft focus.\(^\text{54}\) As Ernest Dichter advised advertising executives: “Do not assert that the new product breaks with traditional values, but on the contrary, that it fulfills its traditional functions better than any of its predecessors.”\(^\text{55}\) On the other hand, advertisements suggested television was a problem with which to be dealt—ranging from its actual placement in a room to its capacity for creating a “couch potato” husband and delinquent children.\(^\text{56}\) The matter of taste emerged as the primary concern and the primary antidote: experts drew from the language of psychoanalysis to stress the “cultivation of home for proper socialization,”\(^\text{57}\) worrying that “‘television, in the worst aspects of its content, helps to perpetuate moral, cultural and social values which are not in accord with the highest ideals of an enlightened society.’”\(^\text{58}\) Advertisements for television showed a “crisis in vision” for the (actual) marriage relationship and male power within the family, as the family’s gaze “fastened on an alternate, more seductive authority.”\(^\text{59}\) With television acting as the home’s focal point,\(^\text{60}\) however, viewers became “silent, well-mannered audiences” reenacting the “mandate of good taste” established during the Victorian theater era.\(^\text{61}\)

Becoming “silent, well-mannered audiences” coincided with the white family ideal depicted on television programs, which reflected and constituted the “striving” middle-class and its quest for upward mobility. Elaine Tyler May notes that in the early 1950s, “on television, upward mobility into respectable middle-class life emerged in the form of
fatherhood, when men ceased to be workers and became ‘dads.’ In fatherhood, a man could exert true authority and manliness.62 This paradigm of fatherhood simultaneously accompanied “[t]he notion that motherhood was the ultimate fulfillment of female sexuality,” which was mediated most visibly in the “dramatic” shift in constructions of female celebrities who previously “were noted for their erotic appeal” and “suddenly appeared in these [mass circulation] magazines as contented mothers, nestled comfortably in their ranch-style suburban homes with their husbands and children.”63 Representations of the family ideal could be ambivalent, though, as many viewers decried the castigation of male television characters by “nagging” wives.64

In 1959, Good Housekeeping explicitly linked television programming to suburban homes, bespeaking a connection already familiar by the late 1950s. The magazine described the popular sitcom Father Knows Best as “looking through a rose-tinted picture window into your own living room.”65 Like suburban homes, with their popular picture windows, “television was caught in a contradictory movement between public and private worlds, and it often became a rhetorical figure for that contradiction.”66 Although living in suburbia only characterized a small portion of the nation’s experience, representations of suburban housing and its attendant families were abundant; in fact, the formalized conventions of family sitcoms emerged in the late 1950s, when television programming shifted from the anthology dramas and working class ethnic comedies popular in the early years of the decade.67 When marketing to suburbanites, advertisers made the case for television as an essential piece of domestic furniture by tapping into discourses of “better taste”68 and showing ways in which to hide or incorporate the television set within elements of a room.
“Taste” (coupled with the heteronormative white family ideal) featured into the material design and popular representation of suburban homes. Housing designer Robert Woods Kennedy wrote that his purpose was to help his clients “indulge in status-conscious consumption…to display the wife ‘as a sexual being’…and to display the family’s possessions ‘as proper symbols of socio-economic class.” He articulated anew an older ideal present in early Cold War representations of both television and suburban homes, reiterating the Victorian notion that houses had “a close relation to the personality and character of those who lived within: the taste with which a dwelling was designed and furnished would have a corresponding effect on the character of the resident.”

Although intellectuals forcefully disparaged suburban housing as one of many problematic aspects of mass culture, popular magazines and cultural critics articulated their ambivalence for suburban space through valorization of and anxiety about blurring public and private realms.

Tapping into interrelated discourses about television and mass culture, critics of suburbia often argued that mass-produced housing displayed poor taste and that its material conformity led to the erosion of individuality. In Jacob Riesman’s study correlating suburban spatial configuration to the character of its residents, Riesman concluded that suburban housing encouraged a more private “mode of socialization:”

“popular amenities such as patios and recreation rooms were shrinking the scale at which people commonly socialized, from the neighborhood to the household,” and as such, the home became “the chief gathering place for the family—either in the ‘family room’ with its games, its TV, its informality, or outdoors around the barbecue.”

Ethan Fromm more forcefully argued that “suburbanites, in their pursuit of ‘adjustment,’ had traded away
their individuality, their free will, their moral compass, and more” and that “by valorizing conformity and denigrating difference, society had lost the grounds and opportunity for articulating individual selfhood.”

Even home magazines from the 1950s emphasized taste through the public/private trope, constantly referencing the “illusion of spaciousness” and “advising readers on ways to make the home appear as if it included the public domain.” The “picture window” in suburban homes—like television—was a primary signifier for this conflict, both a key “selling point” for homes and a way in which nosy neighbors might invade a family’s private space. Karal Ann Marling nicely summarizes the ways in which television, home design, and mass culture were intricately intertwined. She notes that Disney’s “Monsanto House of the Future,” placed inside a giant television set, “wasn’t that different, except in its videosyncratic shape, from the standard picture-window model in Levittowns everywhere. And the picture in the picture window was like the picture on the TV set or the view into Lucy’s oven [on the popular television show I Love Lucy]. They all provided framed views of what was going on inside” (latter italics mine).

Discourses, homes, and consumer objects continually sought to frame the ideal white family-type of early Cold War culture through locating and displaying their relative “tastes.”

The rhetorical topos of “taste” was a prominent “location” from which to assess modern mass culture, generally. Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu, Evan Brier’s text on “selling” the American art novel in the 1950s demonstrates the ways in which multiple institutions—publishing houses, government agencies, nonprofit organizations—used television as a foil by which to stress the dangers of losing a “reading” society, even as novel buying increased between 1950-1974. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, women’s
magazines also reached a higher percentage of women and accounted for a larger
segment of their reading material than currently.\textsuperscript{78} Yet, Brier writes: “Rather than choose
between snobbery on the one hand and advertising on the other, the book trade inevitably
and wisely chose snobbery (that is, the moral, political, and aesthetic superiority of books
to other forms of culture) \textit{as} advertising.”\textsuperscript{79} Stressing “avant-garde” art novels as such
was effective paradoxically because the advent of paperback books ensured that mass
audiences could grow the larger market for reading. Thus, with similar ambivalence used
to discuss television and suburbia, or film and television, critics emphasized the need for
discernment, which simultaneously elevated their cultural clout as discerners. Bennett
Cerf, the owner of publishing company Random House, was a notable exception. As a
television celebrity, magazine contributor, and accomplished businessman, he steadfastly
refused to demonize mass culture, arguing that television promoted literacy.\textsuperscript{80} Cecil
Hemley, however, provides the typical example. He compared paperbacks to print
sources of “low” culture such as \textit{Life} magazine, whose haphazard display of essays about
high art or science mingled alongside celebrity updates or fashion features. Paperbacks
“degraded what used to be high culture by placing quality books right next to low-quality
fare” and promoted “the production of lowbrow genre fare.”\textsuperscript{81} In short, mass consumer
culture often enabled distinctions for high art, and “taste” provided a standard if
ambiguous measure for rhetorical meaning-making of modern American life.

\textbf{Politics in the Televisual Age, Television in the Political Age: Kennedy’s New
Frontier as President}

As I have shown, the international and domestic scenes seemed to need an arbiter
of taste, as government sought to position political ideology through aesthetic norms and
popular media highlighted qualities of discernment as key to undermining “conformist” mass culture. These conditions were well suited to the Kennedy administration and its deft understanding of television. Political figures increasingly had used television in the decade preceding Kennedy’s election. In 1951, for example, the Kefauver Hearings were broadcast to an estimated 30 million viewers and showed senators interrogating members of organized crime. When the gambler Frank Costello refused to appear on camera, the networks instead showed images of his nervous hands, which made for unanticipated “riveting viewing.” By 1952, President Harry Truman gave a televised tour of the White House, both major parties’ political conventions were televised, and Vice-Presidential candidate Richard Nixon gave his infamous “Checkers” speech to save his candidacy. In 1959, the “Kitchen debates” at the American Exhibition in Moscow were televised. Yet, arguably, the presidential debates between Nixon and Kennedy in 1960 legitimized television as the medium through which politics subsequently would be enacted, and JFK’s performance then and thereafter would bolster his administration’s image of charm, wit, and intelligence.

Although programmed television steadily decreased its live shows, politics became “live” anew with the Nixon-Kennedy debates (and again, in 1962, with the Dodd hearings discussing crime, sex, and violence on television). According to David Marc and Robert Thompson, by 1960, only 36% of network television was broadcast live, a 44% decrease from the amount of live television broadcast in 1953 (which was around 80%). By the mid-1950s, anthology writers were frustrated with a host of domestic issues concerning television, and with commercial television growing overseas (especially in Great Britain), they broadened their market to an international audience. In
turn, the televisual figures that resonated with audiences changed, moving toward sitcom ideals that emphasized the heteronormative nuclear family, or Westerns, which showed masculine white hero-types. Accompanying this shift in television format and actor “types” was the more varied rhetorical image of Americanism that gained currency in the latter half of the decade, as “the government eased its tight supervision over cultural exports when it realized that its representation of America could coexist with alternative visions.”

Perhaps capitalizing on television’s popular Western genre and certainly embodying the good-looking family man, that “new breed of celebrity politician” JFK enjoined Americans to embark with him on a “New Frontier.” In his first debate with Nixon, Kennedy evinced the “cool, restrained, and cerebral” brand of heroism that post-Sputnik Americans sought. Indeed, according to Nielson ratings, Nixon and Kennedy’s first and second debates continue to claim the top two household ratings of all televised debates, respectively drawing 59.5% and 61% of all U.S. households when they aired. Yet, at least during the first debate, Kennedy’s physical appeal and “cool, detached intelligence” won him favor with viewers, a point proven empirically in Percy Tannenbaum, Bradley Greenberg, and Fred Silverman’s study on “Candidate Images” during that debate. Using bi-polar adjectives such as active/passive, colorful/colorless, and strong/weak, the authors showed whether Nixon and Kennedy moved toward or away from public ratings of an ideal presidential candidate’s characteristics. After the first debate, Kennedy maintained a position within the active/passive category closest to the public’s perception of an ideal president (whereas Nixon moved away from the public’s ideal rating).
Once elected to the presidency, Mary Ann Watson argues, television played a fundamental role in crafting Kennedy’s persona and legacy. As early as his debates with Nixon, JFK took seriously the visual component of television. He and his broadcast strategist J. Leonard Reinsch met with CBS director of telecast Don Hewitt to discuss set design and shooting patterns before the first debate—an offer Nixon declined. Upon his election, JFK became the first president regularly to hold live press conferences, and press secretary Pierre Salinger recalled Kennedy watching his early performances and critiquing the camera angles and lighting. By the end of Kennedy’s tenure as president, networks had shown 64 presidential press conferences. Thus, he relied heavily on television to communicate his political objectives and presidential persona to the public, and Jacqueline Kennedy would travel that path in her televised tour of the White House.

Alongside JFK enacting his role as “chief ceremonialist,” Jacqueline Kennedy emerged as “the one [American] icon of fashion taste and style” during an era in which politics, fashion, television, and film (among other institutions) increasingly became international. By tapping into the aspirational aesthetic tensions that constituted American national identity, Jacqueline Kennedy’s campaign “weaknesses”—her Francophilic sensibility, her love of the arts, her aptitude for languages—became institutional strengths as first lady. No doubt, the Kennedys’ fashion spreads in Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue set the stage for their iconicity, but her televised tour utilized the “soft” power of visual arts to promote democracy and capitalism to international and domestic audiences. Hamish Bowles notes: “She was at once a paradigm of old-fashioned dignity, sharing with her husband a love of history and a keen appreciation of ceremony, and a reluctant pop-culture icon, who, like John F. Kennedy, had an intuitive
understanding of the power of image in an age when television was becoming a potent medium.” With her, surmised Harper’s editor Diana Vreeland, “‘suddenly ‘good taste’ became good taste. Before the Kennedys, good taste was never the point of modern America—at all.” Relying heavily on what Pierre Bourdieu calls “the project of defining an indefinable essence,” Kennedy used the tour to position the presidency, her restoration project, and the Kennedy administration through the topos of taste.

Thus, by 1962, JFK had established himself as a televisual president. Jacqueline Kennedy’s tour augmented that component of the administration’s persona while elevating the role of first lady and her own interests in the arts by including them in the narrative history of the White House. The tour provided an opportunity for the administration to advance itself politically by promoting the presidency as a kaleidoscope through which international and domestic audiences could view “high” American architecture, art, and culture. The First Couple’s performance together at the end of the CBS feature stoked an appetite for “extratextual” knowledge about televisual celebrity already whetted generally through local and sitcom programming in the 1950s. In this instance, however, politics, celebrity, and domesticity merged into what now has become a common convention of presidential promotion: the first lady’s televised tour of the White House (usually aired around the Christmas holidays). Furthermore, public fascination with the Kennedys as celebrities—and the ability to see them interact as a couple on television—provides a germinal instance of what Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn Parry-Giles have defined as “presidentiality,” that broad discourse that “demarcates the cultural and ideological meaning of the presidency for the general public” through “vernacular” culture.
The telecast received mostly positive reviews. *New York Times* writer Jack Gould described Jacqueline Kennedy as an “historian,” an “art critic,” an “antiquarian,” and a “poised TV narrator.”¹⁰² Tom Wicker reported that 46.5 million viewers watched the tour, with 3 out of 4 viewers choosing to watch the telecast in its timeslot, noting “[t]he audience was at least as large and probably larger than those for television’s highest rated entertainment shows.”¹⁰³ Although ABC declined showing the telecast, its enormous ratings influenced the network to reverse its position. After initially sniffing that donations for the restoration project from CBS and NBC would be inappropriate,¹⁰⁴ ABC’s vice-president of news announced that the tape-recorded program would replace its Sunday airing of *Maverick* on February 19.¹⁰⁵ Writer Norman Mailer was the only prominent critic of Kennedy’s performance, and his critique built from the same *topos* of taste Kennedy highlighted. Mailer insinuated that she appeared affected, “acting as she thought the first lady should,” and according to Arthur Schlesinger, even Kennedy herself “seemed to agree with his assessment.”¹⁰⁶ Still, in Schlesinger’s interviews from 1964, Kennedy recalled that JFK would “watch it [the tour] all the time” and was “so sweet, the way he was proud of me.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, his appearance during the tour was scheduled for recording immediately after his first press conference of 1962, one discussing serious policy issues such as segregation in federally assisted housing, the Berlin Wall, and nuclear testing (among others).¹⁰⁸ That decision proved unwise. Still in rapid-fire press mode, the president’s answers were terse, so after watching tapes of the first lady’s performance, he asked to re-record his segment in the tour.¹⁰⁹

Gil Troy puts Kennedy’s success this way: “Defying her husband’s expectations that she had too much ‘status’ and not enough ‘quo’ to connect with the American
people…she deftly combined the aristocrat’s interest in philanthropy, the arts, and entertaining, with the suburbanite’s zeal for home improvement, shopping, and PTA meetings.”\textsuperscript{110} Although Troy overstates his case—by this point in JFK’s presidency, he understood she was an asset to the administration—he rightly acknowledges the way in which the telecast of the First Family satisfied “the public’s desire for both the ordinary and the extraordinary in their national leader[s].”\textsuperscript{111} In short, Kennedy exploited the \textit{celebrity} potential of the presidency by appearing on a medium through which sitcom stars similarly gained fame (with episodes centered on the nuclear family in upper-middle class home life). This effect mutually was bolstered by the Kennedy administration’s already “ceremonial” presidential image. After a brief overview of the telecast, I next analyze three key ways in which Kennedy utilized the \textit{topos} of taste for rhetorical effect during her tour of the White House: (1) through situating American taste as a historical and decorous capacity; (2) through anecdotes that elevated the discursive position of first lady within presidential narrative history and highlighted \textit{her} aural performance thereof; and (3) by invoking tension between the public/private components of the institution, stoking a sense of “clandestine”\textsuperscript{112} inaccessibility to enflame the charismatic appeal of the Kennedy administration.

**Taste and the Discerning Presidency: An Analysis of Kennedy’s Televised Tour**

Production crews moved into the White House on Saturday, January 13, 1962, to tape the tour and stayed three days. When conceptualizing the telecast, NBC and CBS had three technological options: film (which was discarded immediately); live broadcasting (which placed a heavy burden on the first lady); or videotape recording,\textsuperscript{113} which best allowed for the “start and stop” technique deemed crucial for the look of
Each five- to six-minute segment was rehearsed before and photographed after recording took place, with each room of the tour considered a “scene.” Kennedy’s portion was recorded in one full day, and her talking points were a combination of research from the network production teams and the White House Curatorial staff, with her own emendations to the loose “script.” Thus, Kennedy could improvise with objects or subjects as she proceeded, and the production crew could light and photograph chosen objects to be inserted into the master tape at another time. The goal was to record without many takes, “since rehearsal and repetition diminish believability,” and videotape recording, a loose script, and photography ensured “[b]oth spontaneity and precision were possible.”

The telecast runs 57 minutes, beginning with a brief summary of the content (a tour of the White House with the first lady), a description of Kennedy’s project (preservation and restoration of the White House), and an introduction of Charles Collingwood (the reporter accompanying Kennedy). An image of the White House then emerges in extended focus, and a singular man, looking comparatively slight, strides across the expansive lawn to the majestic stairs. A male narrator (presumably Collingwood) quotes former President Theodore Roosevelt as saying:

The White House is the property of the nation, and so far as it is compatible with living therein should be kept as it originally was, for the same reasons that we keep Mount Vernon as it originally was…It is a good thing to preserve such buildings as historic monuments, which keep alive our sense of continuity with the nation’s past.
After referencing Roosevelt’s quotation, Collingwood introduces Kennedy, who gives an overview of the history of the White House. Her soft, clipped voice intones everything from its structural evolution to its interior changes to the women responsible for those changes. After this initial voiceover, during which a myriad of historical images play across the screen (design stills, unidentified everyday figures, and construction workers, to name a few), Kennedy walks toward the camera. She wears a deep red dress, her hair perfectly coiffed in its signature bouffant. Her shoulders are pulled back in poised, upright posture, and her arms swing slightly at her sides. She makes no direct eye contact with the camera, but a small smile plays across her mouth. Then, the scene shifts into the actual tour, with Collingwood and Kennedy walking through the East Room, Red Room, Blue Room, Green Room, and Monroe Room, respectively. The broadcast ultimately oscillates between (1) shots of Collingwood and Kennedy walking room to room and (2) close-ups of various pieces of furniture, artifacts, and art. Kennedy’s voice provides the audio descriptions of their history and significance.

Validating Taste Through Time, Demonstrating Taste Through Decorum: Kennedy as Art Critic, Gracious Hostess, and Televisual Star

Kennedy’s performance begins by fulfilling dimensions of taste diachronically and synchronically, grounding taste through history and teaching decorum to contemporaneous viewers. As Hariman writes, decorum has universal components, operating as general rules of conduct guiding “the alignment of signs and situations, or texts and acts, or behavior and place.” Thus, Kennedy continually aligns the presidency with American taste-making, showing the ways in which the political founders of the country considered aesthetic matters like architecture and art to be
integrally related to crafting the institution. As the narrator of that history, Kennedy likewise can embody “practices of communication and display”\textsuperscript{121} that highlight social propriety, or the “specific but impersonal rules for correct behavior in familiar situations.”\textsuperscript{122} Exploiting the fluid dimensions of taste both posits the presidency as a bastion of “high” culture and enhances Kennedy’s capacity to serve as modern exemplar of that ideal.

Kennedy consistently identifies “high” and “low” sensibilities in American history, applying those distinctions to artworks, historical figures, and presidents especially. This strategy allows Kennedy to define specific historical precedents for White House renovation based on their fulfillment of universal (academic) taste, while her position as narrator enhances her own qualifications for restoration. She creates a role from history and then contours its dimensions in the present. As \textit{New York Times} writer Jack Gould would remind his readers, for example, “[w]ith delightful understatement, she recalled that [Ulysses] Grant’s renovation of the East Room had been called a unique mixture of two styles: ancient Greek and ‘Mississippi River Boat.’”\textsuperscript{123} With this statement, Kennedy makes clear that for all his potential political attributes, Grant did not operate within the appropriate dimensions of presidential taste, and she subtly compares Grant to his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, whose renovation was “simple and classic.”\textsuperscript{124} George Washington’s attention to the arts elicits similar admiration from the first lady, as Kennedy recalls in her discussion of Gilbert Stuart’s “famous” portrait of the first president: “A rather interesting precedent was set when that picture was painted. A commission was given to the finest living artist of the day to paint the President and later the government bought it for the White House. I often wish they’d followed that because
so many pictures of later Presidents are by really inferior artists.” Indeed, several newspaper reviews of the tour repeated Kennedy’s comment about Stuart, noting with delight that the first lady’s comprehensive knowledge of history and art during the tour surely ameliorated any political apprehensions about the restoration project. *The Washington Post* juxtaposed Kennedy’s “authority” with Collingwood’s “sometimes breathless” questions, in an interesting reversal of gender imagery:

…the execution was near perfect. Mrs. Kennedy displayed impressive tact and authority in answering the sometimes breathless questions of her CBS interviewer. Those who may have had misgivings about the restoration program undertaken by Mrs. Kennedy surely had their fears allayed by the First Lady’s thoughtful and obviously knowledgeable explanation of what is being done. Maxine Cheshire wrote similarly that “even television viewers who are not connoisseurs of antiques could appreciate the thoroughness of Mrs. Kennedy’s research to authenticate every room down to the most minute detail.” By researching White House history and authenticating furniture and art, Kennedy concretizes the cultural history of the presidential residence as an important emblem of American status. For instance, when Collingwood asks Kennedy to characterize the relationship between government and the arts, she responds opaquely: “That’s so complicated. I don’t know. I just think that everything in the White House should be the best—the entertainment that’s given here and, if it’s an American company that you can help, I like to do that. If it’s not, just as long as it’s the best.” She later will add that the Kennedy White House chose glasses made in West Virginia for their simple design and their distinction for being the “prettiest” ones considered. With these kinds of statements, Kennedy articulates an
idea Bourdieu deemed vital to the “field of cultural production” (and, I argue, vital to producing an international and domestic image of American cultural clout). Bourdieu argued that cultural elites empower their interests through deference to “taste”—by “defining an indefinable essence.”¹³⁰ Thus, when Collingwood asks Kennedy if she can make changes to the White House according to her “personal tastes and desires,” she emphatically dismisses the question. Instead, she defers to history by invoking the language of expertise prominent in the postwar cultural vocabulary: “No. I have a committee which has museum experts and government officials and private citizens on it. And then everything we do is subject to approval by the Fine Arts Commission.”¹³¹ (In fact, in her typically apolitical way, Kennedy later indicates that “we”—those involved with the restoration and Congress—passed a new law to ensure the Fine Arts Committee had authority over items being removed or added to the White House). Cheshire further reiterates Kennedy’s efforts to ground taste through its long history within the presidency:

There can be no doubt that many Americans across the land never really saw the White House in the proper historic focus until they viewed the building through Mrs. Kennedy’s knowing eyes. She has studied the 160 years of its existence so thoroughly that she probably knows more about it today than anyone living. Her poised professional narrative was threaded with fascinating facts about what the building has meant in the lives of its occupants (italics mine).¹³²

By first situating taste as an attribute of the presidency and historicizing American self-image through the linkages between politics and art, Kennedy can model modern American propriety through her physical performance and personae. Discernment
becomes the primary mode by which Kennedy establishes her capacity for portraying the ideal “‘way of walking’ through [the early Cold War] social terrain.” She shows audiences how to be the gracious hostess at home, a point I next discuss.

As early as the opening sequence of the telecast, CBS draws from common social conventions about entering someone’s residence and visually positions Kennedy and Collingwood as “hostess” and “guest,” relaying those images primarily through the private/female and public/male paradigm (although, as I later discuss, those private/public associations are tempered by Kennedy’s appearance as televisual “star.”) The opening image shows an out-of-focus Kennedy walking toward viewers down a narrow hallway, her body encased by an arched doorway, and a (male) linear bust to the left that echoes her upright carriage. Immediately afterward, a long shot of the White House nicely conjoins the initial (inside) image of Kennedy with a mirror image of Collingwood (outside) striding across the south lawn, his back facing viewers. That private/public mirror of images reiterates the gendered postwar vision of male/female roles, especially given the centrality of women to notions of domesticity. Thus, Kennedy’s enactment of hostess (and news media’s reiteration of that role) during a televised tour of the residence in which she and President live seems unsurprising—Jack Gould described her, for instance, as “historian,” “art critic,” “antiquarian,” and “poised TV narrator,” aptly identifying the rhetorical roles Kennedy inhabited throughout the broadcast. The Washington Post concurred that “[i]n her duties as hostess, Mrs. Kennedy paid her listeners the compliment of respecting their intelligence while adding to their store of information.” Kennedy’s polite give-and-take with Collingwood, his deference to her lead from room to room, and her silence at the end of the broadcast during
Collingwood and President Kennedy’s conversation stages “proper” feminine comportment for domestic viewers.

The *topos* of taste provides the located perspective through which Kennedy showcases the cultural history of the presidency and portrays the proper ways in which women can behave tastefully (in public and private). Kennedy draws distinctions between “high” and “low” by conjoining those sensibilities to historical presidential performance (e.g., Grant). As gracious hostess, Kennedy models “appropriate” (read: tasteful) behavior for the social conventions engendered by the tour. Together, these diachronic and synchronic dimensions of taste validate a cultural presidential history and serve to model propriety for international and domestic viewers anxious about newfound challenges in modern life. In the next section, I show how Kennedy builds from an argument about presidential taste-making to incorporating first ladies into presidential history, again enhancing her role’s status in the administration.

**Narrating White House History: Crafting the First Lady Position**

Kennedy consistently weaves the first lady role into the homogenous quilt of (white, male) presidential history, beginning with her focus on the materiality of the presidency. As architectural historian John Archer contends, “what people do with objects, and the meanings people invest in objects, are fundamental to the articulation of selfhood.”\(^{136}\) By investing material objects with symbolic meaning, Kennedy suggests that preserving the presidency largely has rested on the shoulders of first ladies. As such, Kennedy’s discussion of furniture pieces—which function as foundations upon which historical items are set—materially puts women into proximity with historical documents and presidential bodies. For instance, she credits Mary Todd Lincoln for buying period
pieces since revered by modern presidents. In particular, Lincoln’s 9-foot rosewood bed, in which Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge slept, has been a favorite for “every” president. When guiding Collingwood into the Green Room, Kennedy emphasizes the table on which the Gettysburg Address prominently sits, noting the text’s distinction as one of only five copies handwritten by Lincoln. Without missing a beat, Kennedy then discloses that Edith Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt’s wife) loved the table and instructed workers to stain all other furniture in the room the same color. Like Mary Todd Lincoln’s bed serves the great men who have followed President Lincoln in office, Edith Roosevelt’s table supports Lincoln’s famed address, its wood “stain” visually enhancing the historic yellowed text. Even Kennedy’s display of James Holbein’s portrait of Angelica Van Buren in the Green Room—“it’s one of the best pictures in the White House,” she tells viewers—becomes a visual story validating the position of first lady. A bust of President Van Buren appears in the painting, and the visual anecdote shows the first lady (Van Buren’s daughter-in-law) featuring centrally, with Van Buren’s stone statue legitimizing her duties as “official hostess.” Finally, Kennedy reminds viewers that Gilbert Stuart’s painting of George Washington (along with furniture and important documents) exists only because Dolly Madison knew its importance to American history, and she acted as “savior” of that material history.

Connecting with a television audience accustomed to idealized representations of heteronormative, white, nuclear families (and spouses’ respective consumer roles), Kennedy also uses anecdotes to emphasize the relational dynamic of president and first lady. In a rare moment of direct eye contact with the camera, Kennedy reads beneath a piece of artwork in the East Room an inscription written by John Adams for Abigail
Adams, drawing attention to their *relationship* rather than the art. Often in the broadcast she casts former presidents in contemporary “domestic” roles, elevating the domestic and domesticating the political. To introduce a cabinet in the Monroe Room, for example, she recounts Andrew Johnson’s superstitious personality, noting that although Abraham Lincoln originally placed the cabinet in his office (the Monroe Room), President Johnson had the cabinet removed—he felt the cabinet was bad luck. With this story, Kennedy activates the spousal dynamic already familiar on sitcoms, painting the former President’s fears as endearingly silly. Moreover, modern presidents might be grateful for Mary Todd Lincoln’s choice of rosewood bed, but she laughingly concludes that President Lincoln was none too fond of his wife’s spending (a feeling JFK likely knew all too well).

Although we might see these anecdotes as mere reinforcement of traditional notions of femininity, masculinity, and family—which, in a sense, they are—they also depict a *two-person* presidency, with first ladies actively constructing and reflecting cultural meaning of the institution.

For all of the general significance we might attribute to Kennedy’s inclusion of first ladies into anecdotes about White House history, the *New York Times* aptly would characterize the associational way in which Kennedy used anecdotes to highlight her own performance, calling her “an unusual feminine personality imparting her own kind of excitement to national history and national taste.”¹³⁹ She displayed first ladies through artworks and anecdotes (incidentally, the Holbein portrait of Angelica Van Buren was replaced by one of Benjamin Franklin after the telecast).¹⁴⁰ I would argue, however, that identification of her “unusual feminine personality” and “own kind of excitement” stems largely from the distinctiveness of Kennedy’s voice, a memorable personal characteristic
because of its sound and because she was photographed as first lady far more often than she spoke. Significantly, Diana Vreeland’s one visual instruction to Richard Avedon when he photographed her for Harper’s Bazaar had been to “get that voice.”141 

Kennedy’s voice, like her general “mystique,”142 was predicated on an element of inaccessibility. Quiet in cadence, with an airy drawl, her voice amplified the topos of taste vital to her multifaceted rhetorical persona through its inimitability. Paradoxically, and like the role of first lady she crafted through narrative, her voice was the bridge between viewers and American presidential history. The aural import of Kennedy’s performance, both verbal and visual, was echoed in news reviews of the tour. Jack Gould wrote:

[T]he First Lady’s vivacious scholarship was fully as vital as the visual pageantry. With her soft and measured voice, she ranged in comment from warm appreciation of past First Ladies and Presidents to delicate but telling dismissal of the second-rate in the arts. Her effortless familiarity with dates and names attested to homework done for the occasion” (italics mine).143

The Washington Post used bodily metaphors to discuss Kennedy, noting that the tour was “sure to quicken interest and pride in the nation’s past. It will also increase the admiration for a First Lady who, in her gracious feminine way, knows that a soft word is often longest remembered” (italics mine).144 The imagery of personification (Gould/NYT) and a quickening pulse (TWP) seems important, as Kennedy’s narrative construction of first ladies past in presidential history stages her bodily realization of a two-person presidency in the present. In the next section, I further probe the dynamic of accessibility and
inaccessibility to interpret Kennedy’s enactment of celebrity and the resonance of the Kennedys’ brief performance together.

Public and Private: Celebrity, the Presidency, and Domesticity

Kennedy situated decorum as an historic and decorous capacity, which staged her role as gracious hostess—exemplifying “proper” feminine behavior in the home—and her role as elegant first lady, the latest in a series of women to preserve cultural markers of American political identity and bridge the gap between the public and the president. The tour’s televisual form likewise framed her performance of modern public femininity on the level of celebrity. As televisual star, Kennedy utilized a dual sense of ordinary and extraordinary to simultaneously invoke and transcend viewers’ identification with her. Robert Hariman and John Lucaites aptly have defined celebrities as “within but not fully of the social group,” “in intermediate positions between the viewer and larger sources of power,” “related to the viewer abstractly rather than through more organic ties,” and “at once both far and near.”

Kennedy might be familiar as a glossy image in magazines, but most reader/viewers would never appear in one; while her young nuclear family might be demographically similar to those in suburbia and sitcoms, her husband was the President; while her restoration might appeal to “the suburbanite’s zeal for home improvement,” she lived in the White House. (The significance of being in the White House was not lost on the technicians involved in production—Wolff notes that on the first morning they arrived to record the broadcast, “one by one [they] disappeared—and reappeared wearing neckties.”) Yet, Collingwood and Kennedy stay focused on the educational history of the White House, with relatively little discussion of the current administration’s use of the rooms, no cameras permitted in the Kennedys’ personal space,
and only one short scene in which the president and first lady interact. Thus, while audiences may have “tuned in” to see the glamorous Kennedys in their element, the discursive content of the broadcast surely did little to satisfy that desire for domesticity. Rather, I would argue, the visual conventions CBS utilized from entertainment programs influenced the “star” facet of Kennedy’s persona and presented the First Couple’s time together as a provocation without resolution.

I want to return briefly to the long shot of the exterior face of the White House in the opening sequence. CBS rests for several seconds on the image, set against instrumental music, and as such, constructs a visual analogy to sitcoms that stages Kennedy-as-television-star. That shot of a home’s exterior still exists as a fixture for family-focused sitcoms and contemporary reality shows (e.g., Full House, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, The Real Housewives franchise, and Keeping Up With the Kardashians, to name a few). Even by 1962, the “home shot” convention was firmly established through shows such as Father Knows Best, which played its theme song against a view of the residence at the beginning of the show. In a subtle but significant difference, CBS rolls the introductory “credits” identifying “Mrs. John F. Kennedy” (notice the domestic title) before the image of the White House appears, signaling that she alone “stars” in this program (poor Collingwood’s name does not appear in type—only orally). In a well-placed Freudian slip, White House correspondent Sander Vanocur introduces the tour by discussing President “Kennedy’s” May 1952 renovation—it seems the “Truman” show long has been forgotten.

Although Kennedy recounts the history of items, rooms, presidents, and first ladies throughout the tour, she rarely makes direct eye contact with the camera. Cameras
following the movement of interviewer and interviewee thus implicitly invite viewers along and dually ignore them, bridging conventions of cinema and television and intensifying her “star” status. On the one hand, Kennedy certainly does not “mug” for the camera (an early television convention), preferring instead to focus on the scene between her and Collingwood. Repeated close-ups of her face, however, centralize Kennedy as star of the show. As she floats from room to room, Collingwood either trails behind her or remains unseen. On the other hand, some moments in the tour visually resonate with the theater paradigm central to early television formats. To transition from the Blue Room to the Green Room, for example, Kennedy stands in front of a curtain-laced “picture” window, out of which viewers can see the Washington Monument. This static image—especially when juxtaposed with her movement from room to room—recalls the way in which programs like *The Burns and Allen Show* differentiated “theater” space from “domestic” space by showing stage curtains that opened onto the domestic scene. Against the window, Kennedy visually invokes a (domestic) theater actress, complete with curtains to be drawn when her televisual performance ends. Unlike its import in *The Burns and Allen Show*, however, the “curtain” shot further abstracts Kennedy’s performance from home audiences. Rather than acknowledging viewers by giving them a sense of “being there,” Kennedy’s “picture window” view of the Washington Monument provides us with the “extraordinary” context of her domesticity—she stars on the real stage of history.

According to Lynn Spigel, during the early 1950s, New York (the main city for television owners) often showed “locally-produced ‘Mr. and Mrs.’ Shows [which] invited viewers into the homes of local celebrities, while network prime-time programs such as
Edward R. Murrow’s *Person to Person* were, as *Newsweek* claimed, based on ‘a very simple proposition: that viewers would like to visit people in their homes ‘live.’”\(^{151}\)

Although Kennedy’s tour was not broadcast live, the anticipation of viewing the Kennedys as a televisual couple similarly tapped into this desire, which was perfected in the mid- to late-1950s by Lucy and Desi Arnaz in *I Love Lucy*. Like the Arnazes, the Kennedys appealed to viewers’ “‘extratextual’ knowledge,”\(^{152}\) or their familiarity with celebrities through popular magazines like *Look* and *Life* (which ran a feature on the first lady’s restoration project before the telecast). *I Love Lucy* and similar programs “collapsed distinctions between real life and television,”\(^{153}\) and their allure activated a dual sense of familiarity and distance. The Kennedys’ (and Jacqueline Kennedy’s) appeal in the tour was slightly different, I contend, premised more on accessibility and inaccessibility, “staging the act of exposure”\(^{154}\) without permitting intimacy.

Historian Melissa Crawley suggests that “opening the White House to television cameras creates a more accessible presidency by dissolving the boundary between public and private spaces.”\(^{155}\) Crawley may be right, but Kennedy’s tour did not dissolve that boundary, as Wolff’s supplemental text on the broadcast reminds us. Wolff writes that Kennedy’s personal furniture (on the upstairs floor) favors “authentic Louis XVI pieces, around which she has gathered a harmonious group of objects,”\(^{156}\) and he notes that the difference in selection provides “another example of the distinction between the private and public areas of the President’s house. The public rooms are part of America’s heritage; the President’s personal furniture is his own affair.”\(^{157}\) In fact, Kennedy only showed two rooms in the second-floor family quarters: the Lincoln Room and the Treaty Room (where President Kennedy appeared). Thus, unlike the Mr. and Mrs. shows,
viewers were given little access to the spaces in which the Kennedys lived daily—if the televised tour promised a “sense of ‘being there,’” there was space already accessible to the public in White House tours, promotional images, and the book Kennedy would sell to help fund its maintenance.

That did not preclude Kennedy from referencing contemporary events to which public access was limited, and the moments about which she chooses to speak are strategic, rare but rich in imagery. In conversation about the ongoing renovation and purpose of the treaty room, for example, she mentions that JFK “has so many meetings up here in this part of the house. All the men who wait to see him now sit in the hall with the baby carriages going by them. [Once renovated, they] can sit in here and talk while waiting for him.” Notice Kennedy’s implied desire to separate business from babies.

When walking through the corridor between the East Room and the State Dining Room, Kennedy also provides a glimpse into glamorous state dinners. Her script requires quotation at length:

I rather love this hall. It has all the colors one thinks of when one thinks of the White House: red and white and blue and gold. It also has four of the best American pictures which have been loaned to us for the White House, including the only other by Gilbert Stuart—of John Barry who founded the Navy.

All the heads of state come through this door. This is where the President meets them. Here is where the Marine band plays, and they have ruffles and flourishes and ‘Hail to the Chief.’ Then there’s a receiving line and everyone goes into dinner in the State Dining Room.
By punctuating the historical canvas of the White House with starry contemporary details about their lived experience therein, Kennedy maintains a more nuanced degree of tension than Lucy and Desi’s sense of familiarity and distance: hers teeters provocatively toward inaccessibility over accessibility, “status” over “quo.” If sitcoms depicted the home “as if it were a public spectacle, a monument commemorating the values of an ideal [provincial] American town,” Kennedy instead showed the nation “a presidential residence that befit a superpower.” JFK’s appearance would bolster that image but through different means.

The president arrived for the last few minutes of the broadcast, and his approach amplified the cerebral grasp of American history Kennedy displayed throughout the tour, without the consistently judicious content. Kennedy sits quietly to the president’s right, and during Collingwood and JFK’s give-and-take, the camera shifts to Kennedy several times. First, the camera shows her pretty, unlined face frozen in an adoring smile as JFK explains the significance of her project, and then, viewers see her nod assuredly and bat her eyelashes as her husband describes the White House as a “historical guide to the Presidency…[and Americans’] source of strength.” In the final shot taken in the White House, the camera pans out, and President Kennedy looks at her proudly, while she smiles at Collingwood, hands placed demurely in her lap. Unlike the first lady, who recounted the two-person history of the White House, JFK offers a monochromatic view. He notes:

Well, I think the great effort she’s made has been to bring us much more intimately in contact with all the men who lived here. After all, history is people—and particularly in great moments of our history, Presidents. So when we
have, as we do today, Grant’s table, and Lincoln’s bed, Monroe’s gold set, all
these make men more alive. I think it makes the White House a stronger
panorama of our great story…[and] [a]nything which dramatizes the great story of
the United States—as I think the White House does—is worthy of the closest
attention and respect by Americans who live here and who visit here and who are
part of our citizenry.163

While Kennedy builds first ladies into the nation’s history, JFK emphasizes presidents,
specifically. Still, like the first lady, JFK’s comments are philosophical and educational.
More important, as Crawley insinuates, “[JFK’s] minor role in the broadcast was
effective because it created a scene of domestic harmony while casting a spotlight on the
popular first lady.”164 Reflecting “the successful mediation between upper-class and
democratic style,”165 during the broadcast, Jacqueline Kennedy was viewers’
embodiment of the “living history” JFK referenced in his final “bit part.” That she both
starred as such with resoundingly little criticism or charges of overt politicization remains
a testament to the way in which she played her rhetorical role in the tour: under the radar.

Conclusion

Jacqueline Kennedy’s restoration and arts project for the White House was her
major political project during her tenure as first lady. Capitalizing on her international
status after the Kennedys’ trip to France, she adeptly sidestepped potential controversy by
establishing a fine arts commission and soliciting donations for historical American art
and furniture. Kennedy identified those donors throughout the broadcast, and as Gil Troy
recalls, even reshoot one take when she forgot to mention a particularly generous
patron.166
While government increasingly used “soft power” strategies to promote an appealing image of American identity abroad, domestic audiences likewise needed mediators of their self-image. Yes, capitalism could make lives easier, but what were its corresponding aesthetic features? Yes, America was a newly prosperous and influential world leader, but how did she compete with the rich social histories of our established allies? Yes, the American president served as a visual signifier of national self-image, but what did we want that image to be in the 1960s? The Kennedys, with their cosmopolitan minimalism, nicely encompassed the moment. Additionally, Jacqueline Kennedy recognized the rhetorical power of “taste,” and she exploited a prominent “social code”\textsuperscript{167} governing early Cold War culture during her televised tour of the White House. She first linked politics and art historically, building a foundation upon which to model (feminine) decorum for modern audiences, in the home (throughout the tour) and in public (on television). Kennedy therefore enhanced the administration’s political esteem through a practice of cultural display, although she amplified her own performance by rhetorically constructing a tradition of the role of first lady and making the role more visible in the presidency’s institutional history.

Reviews of the tour interpreted Kennedy as “star” of the show (even against the president’s brief appearance). Maxine Cheshire wrote that “[w]hile the First Lady was the star for nearly an hour on the Nation’s television screens, the President had a closing scene bit part that concluded a camera closeup of the rooms where great men have swelled with their families since this Republic’s earliest days.”\textsuperscript{168} Wolff, with abundant hyperbole, noted that “[T]he whole history of the White House reduced itself to the almost irreducible dramatic minimum: one person on stage,”\textsuperscript{169} adding that “as the
accretion of detail went on, the magic moment of theater took place.”\textsuperscript{170} The Kennedys’
appearance together boosted their status as televisual celebrities and boosted the
“magnetism”\textsuperscript{171} of the First Couple. Indeed, much work on Jacqueline Kennedy invokes
theater metaphors meant to signal her stardom: Oleg Cassini deemed her a “movie
star;”\textsuperscript{172} Kathleen Craughwell-Varda claimed she enacted a “role”\textsuperscript{173} when she stepped
onto “the public scene;”\textsuperscript{174} Maurine Beasley wrote that she “outshone” her husband;\textsuperscript{175}
and Patrick Boller noted “[t]hey were both actors and I think they appreciated each
other’s performances.”\textsuperscript{176} Kennedy’s televised tour of the White House and her resultant
Emmy played no small part in this image of the administration and her particular
rhetorical skill as first lady.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} Watson, “Mystique and Tradition,” 92-93.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Watson, “Mystique and Tradition,” 96.
\item \textsuperscript{6} C. David Heymann, \textit{A Woman Named Jackie} (New York: Carol Communications, 1989), 335.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Watson, “Mystique and Tradition,” 92.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Heymann, \textit{A Woman Named Jackie}, 333.
\end{itemize}


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.


18 Lanham, *Handlist*, 100.


20 Miller, “Aristotelian Topos,” 141.

21 Ibid.


26 Hariman, “Decorum, Power, and the Courtly Style,” 151.


30 For an excellent article establishing similar linkages between the televised tour and national taste, please see Anna Kryczka, “Images, Technology, and History: Television and Taste on the New Frontier: ‘A Tour of the White House With Mrs. John F. Kennedy,’” *History and Technology* 30, no. 1-2 (2014): 123-32. While several of Kryczka’s arguments complement the major arguments I make in this chapter, we differ in focus: I situate taste as a rhetorical topos from which Kennedy drew to enhance the American presidency and incorporate the position of first lady into presidential history,
whereas Kryczka examines the tour in the context of televisual history. Put simply, Kryczka is more interested in what Kennedy did for the medium, while I am more interested in what the medium did for Kennedy.


32 Nye, Jr., *Soft Power*, 6. Nye concludes that Kennedy is exemplar of presidential “soft power.”


34 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 111-12.

35 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 115.

36 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 114.

37 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 132.


39 Marling, *As Seen on TV*, 278-79.

40 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 154.

41 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 155.

42 Masey and Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations*, 199.


44 Ibid.

45 Karal Ann Marling’s book documents this change in visual culture, including everything from changes in automobile shape to more reserved popular colors for women’s fashion. For that discussion, please see this dissertation’s second chapter (70).

46 For more detail, please see my discussion in the first chapter of suburban American culture (pp. 17-21).


51 Spigel, “Installing the Television Set,” 19.

52 Spigel, “Installing the Television Set,” 22.

53 Spigel, “Installing the Television Set,” 23.


Spigel, Make Room for TV, 44.
57 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 58.
58 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 56.
60 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 108.
61 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 117. Spigel draws from Lawrence Levine’s study on the construction of high and low culture in the late nineteenth century. For that resource, please see Lawrence Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
62 May, Homeward Bound, 139.
63 May, Homeward Bound, 133.
64 Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory,” 86.
66 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 109.
67 For more on anthology dramas, please see Marc and Thompson, Television in the Antenna Age. For more on working-class ethnic comedies (and their disappearance), please see Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory.”
69 As quoted in Haralovich, “Sitcoms and Suburbs,” 119.
71 Archer, “The Place We Love to Hate,” 15.
72 Archer, “The Place We Love to Hate,” 11.
73 Archer, “The Place We Love to Hate,” 17.
74 Spigel, “Installing the Television Set,” 7.
75 Spigel, Make Room for TV, 117.
76 Marling, As Seen on TV, 6.
79 Brier, A Novel Marketplace, 51.
80 Brier, A Novel Marketplace, 135.
81 Brier, A Novel Marketplace, 56.

Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.


Marc and Thompson, *Television in the Antenna Age*, 68.


Falk, “Reading Between the Lines,” 224.

113 Wolff, *A Televised Tour*, 239.
115 Ibid.
120 Hariman, “Decorum, Power, and the Courtly Style,” 156.
121 Ibid.
123 Gould, “Mrs. Kennedy.”
125 Wolff, *A Televised Tour*, 79.
132 Ibid.
133 Hariman, partially quoting Michel de Certeau, in “Decorum, Power, and the Courtly Style,” 150.
137 This was sometimes the title given to earlier first ladies, as noted in Wolff, *A Televised Tour*, 164.
143 Gould, “TV Hostess to the Nation.”


149 Spigel, “Installing the Television Set,” 17.


151 Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 158.

152 Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 156.


154 Crawley, “Television,” 183.


156 Wolff, *A Televised Tour*, 205-06.

157 Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 133.


159 Wolff, *A Televised Tour*, 86.


163 Crawley, “Television,” 185.


165 Troy, “Renovations,” 399.

166 Hariman, “Decorum, Power, and the Courtly Style,” 152.


169 Ibid.


CHAPTER 4:
JACKIE, OH! JOHN KENNEDY’S ASSASSINATION, JACQUELINE KENNEDY’S ICONIC CAMELOT, AND ANDY WARHOL’S JACKIES

After almost three years in office—roughly 1,000 days, as the allusion to John Kennedy’s memorable phrase goes—the president was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. Jacqueline Kennedy was riding next to him, resplendent in a pink suit and matching hat that soon would become infamous for the visible bloodstains.

“No,” she had responded to the suggestion that she change on the flight back to Washington D.C. and to the suggestion that she avoid the media on her returning. “Let them see what they have done [to Jack].”¹ By all accounts, her attention to constructing Kennedy’s funeral in the subsequent three days was remarkable. Elizabeth J. Natalle writes that Kennedy “had the presence of mind to think rhetorically even as she returned to Washington D.C. [after the assassination],”² immediately instructing aides to research Abraham Lincoln’s funeral. Many aspects of Kennedy’s funeral, therefore, invoked presidential tradition—e.g., black bunting in the East Room, where the president lay in state (like Lincoln), and his coffin’s position on the same catafalque that had held Presidents Lincoln, McKinley, and Garfield.³ Additionally, the first lady incorporated military imagery into the funeral, draping an American flag over the coffin, and flying Air Force One over Arlington when JFK was buried. In perhaps the most poignant and reproduced photograph from the funeral, three-year-old John Jr. saluted his father on the steps of St. Matthew’s Cathedral.⁴

Those closest to JFK had feared for his safety in Dallas, especially after Adlai Stevenson (Ambassador to the United Nations) encountered physical violence while there.⁵ Similarly, during a Dallas campaign rally in 1960, angry Nixon supporters had
surrounded Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson, taunting them for half an hour as they inched their way through the lobby of the Baker Hotel. The president, however, had viewed the trip as key to his reelection campaign, especially after *Time* magazine speculated that Texas might decide the election. He was happy to have the first lady accompany him, as she typically disliked campaigning. Texas Governor John Connally had argued that her presence was critical to the trip’s success, and he had been right: during the Chamber of Commerce breakfast at Hotel Texas in Fort Worth, Kennedy joked that “two years ago, I introduced myself in Paris by saying that I was the man who had accompanied Mrs. Kennedy to Paris. I am getting somewhat that sensation as I travel around Texas.”

In the time after her tour of the White House was broadcast internationally, Jacqueline Kennedy continued to project a cosmopolitan image as first lady, doing diplomatic cultural work on an international scale. In March 1962, she took a solo trip to India and Pakistan, where Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith thought she “captured” Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in a visit that was “the high spot of Indian-American relations.” Likewise, Pakistan’s President Ayub Khan gifted her a gelding horse named Sardar, and “worshipping crowds” called her “Ameriki Rani”—Queen of America. When JFK visited Mexico that June to promote democracy and reinforce the Alliance for Progress, Jacqueline Kennedy answered television reporters’ questions and gave a 10-minute speech without notes, both in Spanish. In December 1962, she gave another speech in Spanish, this one addressing members of the Cuban Invasion Brigade in Miami, Florida. At the end of 1962, Kennedy became pregnant with the First Family’s third child, whose premature birth and death from respiratory failure in August 1963 sparked global sympathy.
Not without criticism, however, in the month before JFK’s assassination, popular magazines and newspapers had critically reported Kennedy’s “jet-set” cruise to the Eastern Mediterranean with sister Lee Radziwell and Lee’s husband Prince Stanislaus (on Aristotle Onassis’s yacht). The cruise was supposed to last 10 days but Kennedy extended the trip to accept an invitation from Morocco’s King Hassan to visit Marrakech (complete with the king’s private jet and her stay in a guest palace). JFK was understandably concerned about the image problems associated with this decision, especially after the cruise. Still, when the president and first lady campaigned in Texas a month later, their celebrity status was apparent. After JFK’s assassination, the dignity and restraint with which Kennedy handled the funeral would endear her to the American public. True to her role of enhancing the image of the administration, Kennedy’s funeral proceedings cemented JFK’s place in American history and showcased the American government’s status as a world superpower. Yet, like her feature spreads in Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue and her televised tour, Kennedy’s construction of the funeral and her characterization of the administration as “Camelot” stressed the presidency as a two-person institution, highlighting her significance in crafting the dominant myth of John Kennedy’s presidential legacy.

A cursory examination of “Camelot” as shorthand for the Kennedy presidency shows its rhetorical power as a primary image of his administration, and that term often pairs with an allusion to JFK’s “thousand days” speech phrase. Jacqueline Kennedy’s orchestration of the funeral and her persuasiveness when relaying the Camelot myth to journalist Theodore White in Life magazine remains central to understanding public memory of the administration and the cultural elements of JFK’s presidency that she
championed while first lady. Additionally, her image in the funeral moment became an important catalyst for social commentary on the early Cold War’s complex merger between gender, celebrity culture, popular media, and national politics, engaged most notably by Pop artist Andy Warhol.

In this chapter, I argue that Jacqueline Kennedy’s orchestration of John Kennedy’s funeral, coupled with her December “Camelot” interview in Life magazine, served as a “symbolic condensation”\(^{16}\) that mythologized a cultural image of the administration already built by 1963. In the following sections, I argue that Kennedy (1) sought to cement the administration’s legacy, which (2) crafted and condensed her representativeness as Woman, an ideal that (3) Pop artist Andy Warhol destabilized and subverted through his funeral and icon Jackies. Exploring the parallel conceptual connections between mythology and iconicity, I show that “Camelot” and its accompanying media images bolstered Jacqueline Kennedy’s visibility and the role of first lady in the wake of JFK’s death but likewise constrained possibilities for Kennedy’s public persona thereafter. Warhol’s Jackies are a critical intervention on Camelot, starkly displacing Jacqueline Kennedy’s iconic role therein. Against the mass-mediated backdrop of the funeral weekend, Warhol’s paintings and prints featuring Kennedy trouble her institutional associations and speak to her broader iconicity as one placeholder in a bipolar notion of white public femininity. Kennedy’s projection of restraint during the funeral and evocation of nostalgia during White’s Life interview enhance rhetorical strategies already discussed in this dissertation’s preceding case studies. In a larger sense, though, Warhol’s Jackies use dissociation to foreshadow the destabilization of such myths in public culture, and as such, offer a prescient glimpse into Kennedy’s historical
and rhetorical agency. To make these arguments, I first overview conceptions of mythology and iconicity, with attention to their shared emphasis on amplification. Then, I recount Kennedy’s meticulous orchestration of the Camelot myth from the funeral to the White interview. Finally, I closely analyze Warhol’s Jackies, arguing that they both animate and undermine the broader patriarchal myths in which the Kennedys participated.

**Myth, Iconicity, and Amplification**

Jacqueline Kennedy’s orchestration of John Kennedy’s funeral and her construction of his administration’s legacy as Camelot remains prominent in biographical literature on her and in scholarly assessments of her performance. Maurine Beasley, for instance, describes Kennedy as “director” and “stage manager” of “her own Camelot.”17 While Camelot might romanticize the Kennedy administration—even Thurston Clarke’s recent work on JFK describes his mantra as “poetry and power”18—the myth cemented her iconicity as exemplar of “appropriate” public femininity. Kennedy’s performance as first lady often complemented JFK’s enactment of president, providing a compelling image to his eloquent word and often serving as the visual icon to his textual speech. Their rhetorical images, however, continually were intertwined. JFK’s attention to television and concern with his legacy shows he likewise cared about presidential image; similarly, his assassination forced Jacqueline Kennedy to invent the language of Camelot. Thus, as C. David Heymann recounts, the funeral had much to do with elevating JFK’s place in history and demonstrating the loss of the First Family:

The funeral provided a means of demonstrating JFK’s importance as a global leader, his historic links with Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson and Franklin
Roosevelt. A procession of international dignitaries would march to St. Matthew’s behind Jackie and other members of the immediate family....[where] Jackie and her children would be received by Cardinal Cushing. She would kiss the Cardinal’s ring before entering the cathedral. She and the children would emerge after the service to the strains of ‘Hail to the Chief.’ And at her gentle prodding, John-John would salute the American flag atop his father’s coffin.19

Like the inaugural address, which I argued in Chapter 2 was central to JFK’s investiture as president, the funeral sought to secure his presidential legacy in American history as a cosmopolitan leader, complete with international dignitaries whose presence there demonstrated JFK’s importance. And like Kennedy’s spreads in Vogue and Harper’s had amplified not only JFK’s inaugural image but her place therein, her Life magazine interview (and Warhol’s subsequent Jackies) achieved a similar effect, performing political work through cultural means that likewise enlarged the significance of her role. In fact, Kennedy explicitly emphasized the cultural legacy of the administration above the institution of the presidency: “There will be great presidents again, but there will never be another Camelot.”20 While there may never be another Camelot, I argue in this chapter that Warhol’s Jackies went one step further, visually assessing her impact on the notion of public womanhood in the 1960s.

In this section, I delineate the conceptual similarities between mythos and iconicity more clearly to explain the potent way in which Kennedy crafted the administration’s presidential legacy. I argue that both concepts rely heavily on (1) amplification for effect, emphasizing the interplay between form and content; and (2) require audience participation in meaning-making. The Kennedys’ amplification of high
style formally was rendered “Camelot” through the funeral and *Life* article, but their unique prominence as First Couple was mythic in its gendered implications for the early Cold War era, a “second-order”\textsuperscript{21} signification, to use Roland Barthes’ term. Barthes notes that myth employs a “tri-dimensional pattern” of signifier (image), signified (concept), and sign (the meaning produced therefrom), but its formal “peculiarity” results from its broader accretion of associations (amplification). He writes: “That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second.”\textsuperscript{22} At stake here, as I have suggested throughout this dissertation, is more than the presidency and Kennedy’s role therein, even if that institution propelled her status in public culture. Instead, I contend, her image serves as a primary placeholder for enacting public femininity in the early 1960s, one that lost much of its resonance in the latter half of the decade even as her image was central to constituting later gender ideals. Interpreting that complex legacy requires reviewing the parallel conceptual histories of mythos and iconicity and their common emphasis on amplification for effect.

Myths and icons are two sides of the same coin: both are broad terms that do specific ideological work while appearing ahistorical. Notice the importance of generality, for instance, to both concepts. Mythos stems from classical Greek as a general term to describe speech, narrative, fiction, and/or plot,\textsuperscript{23} while the ancient Greek *eikon* denotes general likeness, image, portrait, semblance, similitude, or simile. Thus, myth “distorts” our understanding of the concept, which becomes not “an abstract, purified essence” but a “formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function.”\textsuperscript{24} That sense of generality only enhances its effect, as
Barthes argues, for myth is “speech justified in excess”\textsuperscript{25} (italics in original) with “an unlimited mass of signifiers” “at its disposal.”\textsuperscript{26} For example, a patriotic photograph of a black French soldier on the cover of a popular magazine becomes one among many images of French political equality, distorting the historical imperial means by which that soldier (as signifier) came to be.\textsuperscript{27} In this way, the original intention becomes “frozen, purified, eternalized, made absent by” (italics in original)\textsuperscript{28} its constitutive signifiers. Amplification begets exaltation and reduction. So too with icons, as Jeffrey Alexander reminds us, for icons are “symbolic condensations” rooting “generic, social meanings in a specific material form.”\textsuperscript{29} That is, they dually are real and ideal, and that effect stems largely from amplification. For all their capacity to “root” social meanings in material form, icons formally eschew contingency, offering a vision “in excess” (to return to Barthes). Martin Kemp contends that the “clichéd sense that icons are ‘timeless’” works as a formal feature of most iconic images. Sacred icons “purvey spiritual images of eternal verity, outside the time and space of the temporal viewer in the here and now.”\textsuperscript{30} Rhetorical scholar Michael Leff (focusing on iconicity in speech) describes this formal timelessness as a distinction between perspectives grounded in “secular” or “sacred” time. The presence of sacred temporality interrupts audiences’ “normal sense of temporality, and thus sacred time is cyclical and discontinuous: it is something always there that we occasionally recover.”\textsuperscript{31} Both terms underscore formal choices—timelessness, spacelessness, the medium of the image per se—to obscure and transcend their contingency. Both are condensations in the full sense of the word, simultaneously suggesting concentration (potency) and abbreviation (incompletion).
Moreover, myths and icons are enthymematic, achieving their persuasiveness by tacitly inducing audiences into participatory meaning-making. Barthes describes myth variously as “interpellant,” an “inflexion,” with an “open character” that both “instructs and imposes.” He implicitly contends that myth produces subjects, operating as “a kind of arrest” that “thickens, becomes vitrified, freezes into an eternal reference meant to establish” its signified (italics in original). Icon art, as Eric Jenkins has argued compellingly, also constructs subjectivity, producing “a mode of seeing known as symbolic realism, somewhere between the concrete naturalism of a portrait and the abstract representation of a symbol” that inspires a “cult following.” The icon “portrays a hypostasis—a concrete representation of a spiritual quality,” inviting viewers to supply their own meanings to “complete” their interpretations of the icon. That “visual logic” of hypostasis, for Jenkins, remains the overarching conceptual feature of icon images. What distinguishes icon images at different periods, then, are the technological and economic modes that manifest historically specific forms of that logic.

Mutual amplification of form and content, along with viewers’ participation in mythic and iconic interpretation, characterizes the parallel conceptual impulses of mythos and iconicity. Both amplify to reduce; yet, that reduction somehow transcends contingency, appearing as Truth rather than interpretation, History rather than story. Both concepts, in effect, use amplification paradoxically to “impoverish” their signification to one dominant meaning. In this chapter, I contend that the Kennedy mythos and Jacqueline Kennedy’s iconic identity therein are achieved through a buildup of rhetorical associations shorthanded to “Camelot.” More broadly, mythos and iconicity constitute and comprise systems of amplification. Understanding Kennedy’s role in the moment,
however, requires reviewing her orchestration of the Camelot myth (and the rhetorical associations she enhanced). Then, I turn to ways in which Warhol’s *Jackies* depict her placement in a bipolar understanding of early Cold War gender ideals for white women and foreshadow the destabilization of that construction.

**Constructing Camelot: The Image of John Kennedy’s Funeral and *Life* Magazine’s Textual Myth**

When John Kennedy was shot, no modern sitting president had been assassinated in office. Even President Roosevelt’s death in office two decades earlier was starkly different. Thus, Jacqueline Kennedy had an overwhelming task in front of her: deal with her husband’s murder; help validate Lyndon Johnson’s ascension to the presidency; plan a funeral that befitted an American president in the American century; and cement the specific rhetorical legacy of the Kennedy administration. Perhaps the last two tasks were the easiest. Kennedy well understood the importance of ceremony, and she was an integral facet of the Kennedy administration’s presidential persona.

The day of JFK’s assassination—November 22, 1963—stands in American public memory as what Ned O’Gorman calls a “where-were-you-when” event. Subject to an endless stream of conspiracy theories based primarily on perceived inconsistencies in Abraham Zapruder’s film (the film stills later were published in *Life* magazine), the president’s assassination and funeral was “fundamentally a television event.” As television historian Aniko Bodroghkozy documents, Nielson ratings show that 96 percent of households continuously displayed news coverage of “the Black Weekend,” watching at least eight hours of uninterrupted coverage a day from the assassination Friday through the funeral Monday. For planned ceremonial events such as the funeral, televisual news
coverage worked well. With cumbersome film equipment, networks’ lack of contact with their own reporters, and no pre-broadcast still images filmed, the coverage of JFK’s actual assassination was less adept.44

JFK’s assassination produced memorable snapshots repetitively organized to portray the tragedy of the day. The first lady, elegant in a bright pink suit, receives a bouquet of flowers at the ironically named Love Field airport in Dallas. The Kennedys beam, waving like pageant contestants from their open-air convertible, traveling slowly down Main Street. The president is shot. Jacqueline Kennedy tries to exit the back of the convertible, her hand outstretched to Secret Service member Clint Hill. And, after the president is announced dead, Kennedy stares blankly downward as Lyndon Johnson takes the oath of office. These images have been engrained in our collective memory but they unfolded less neatly to contemporaneous viewers, as Bodroghkozy shows, whose interpretation of the events was shaped by the medium of television. Viewers highlighted five themes in experiencing coverage of that weekend televisually: the uncanniness of being present in the event; the feeling of participating in “History;” a sense of intimacy with news anchors who narrated the weekend; an insistence on their own voluminous hours of participation, with the television functioning as a sacred, participatory space for collective mourning; and backhanded approval of the overall dignity of coverage (as opposed to the typical “appalling theatricality” of television newscasts).45

While viewers felt they were participating in big-H “History” through televisual news coverage, Jacqueline Kennedy was constructing the Kennedy administration’s final image along similar lines, knowing “how consumed [JFK] had been with the verdict of history.”46 Beginning with her decision to have his autopsy performed at Bethesda Naval
Hospital upon arriving in D.C., Kennedy worked to enhance JFK’s legacy according to what John Murphy calls “the heroic tradition.” The contours of that tradition in presidential rhetoric include amplification of the nation and its institutions; characterization of a people balanced between ease and duty; and embodiment of the challenge to command in the person of the rhetor. Jacqueline Kennedy visualized that tradition. She told Robert Kennedy to reference the White House guidebook, which showed an illustration of Lincoln’s body lying in state. Using that image and additional historical research, William Walton, Sargent Shriver, and assistants worked through the night to drape the East Room’s chandelier with black crepe and cut branches from magnolias for greenery. JFK’s lying-in-state took place in the East Room on Saturday (closed casket), the coffin was transferred to the Rotunda of the Capitol on Sunday (news images showed Kennedy and Caroline kneeling to kiss the flag-draped coffin), and on Monday, funeral attendees walked from the funeral Mass at St. Matthew’s Cathedral (where John-John gave a touching salute to his father’s coffin) to the final burial in Arlington National Cemetery. Against tradition, which stipulated that women ride in cars behind the gun carriage carrying the coffin, Kennedy walked to Arlington, veiled in black, flanked on either side by Robert and Edward Kennedy and with President Johnson and a host of dignitaries behind her. A black horse bearing the sheathed sword and boots of a dead commander-in-chief trotted in the procession. She also had at the funeral Irish military cadets (JFK had been impressed by them on his visit to Ireland that summer) and the Black Watch pipers (who recently had performed at the White House). When the president was buried, Kennedy lit the Eternal Flame, which still burns in Arlington.
The funeral was Monday, November 25, 1963. Four days later, writer Theodore H. White came to Hyannisport to interview Kennedy for an article published in Life magazine the following week.\(^5\) White had written *The Making of a President: 1960* about JFK’s campaign, and Kennedy was determined “that his [JFK’s] death be put in some kind of social context.”\(^5\) For whatever misgivings JFK might have had about Camelot to characterize his presidency—“when Jack quoted something, it was usually classical,” she said [to White], “but I’m so ashamed of myself—all I keep thinking about is this line from a musical comedy”\(^5\) —Kennedy repeated the quotation in *Life* in true John Kennedy speech style, by the rule of three. First, she recalled that “the lines he loved to hear were: Don’t let it be forgot, that for once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.”\(^5\) After describing JFK’s love of history and contextualizing that love as an effect of his sickly childhood—“[f]or Jack, history was full of heroes”—she “came back to the idea that transfixed her,” and White repeated the quotation in text. The final line of the article? “But she does not want them [the American people] to forget John F. Kennedy or read of him only in dusty or bitter histories: [new paragraph] For one brief shining moment there was Camelot.”\(^5\) Equally reminiscent of both Kennedys’ love for amplification, the Camelot quotation reinforced the image of the Eternal Flame burning in Arlington, a constant visual reminder of that one “shining” mythic moment.

*Camelot*, a musical written by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick (Fritz) Loewe, opened the month JFK was elected at the Majestic Theater in New York. With staggering advance ticket sales—more than $3 million—the show surpassed such sales for *The Sound of Music*, which had received around $2 million.\(^5\) The writer-composers became
famous in the United States in the 1950s for several collaborative musicals, including theater productions and films, and their *My Fair Lady* would tour Russia for the State Department as part of the cultural exchange program between the nations. Lerner and Loewe were distinctive for their incorporation of song into the play. As Lerner surmised about their earliest collaboration, *Brigadoon*, “those songs were written to fit the story and the action. If we had to decide between a song which might have a life of its own [on the record market] or one which would suit the play, we leaned toward the latter.” That sense of incorporation nicely characterizes the Camelot song per se. Richard Burton “speech-sings” at the beginning of the song, with Julie Andrews and choral singers swelling to provide background. Thus, the song sounds compellingly like the rhetorical roles of the Kennedys—masculine voice punctuates women’s lilting tones (which end the song), the distinction between masculine and feminine clear but complementary through the juxtaposition of deep speech and high singing. Like the visual effect of the Eternal Flame, *Camelot*’s words and sound enhanced a romantic image already in the making.

As a show, *Camelot* primarily was focused on transforming tragedy to comedy in the classic, sense—stressing human agency over inevitable fate. Based on T.H. White’s *The Once and Future King*, the story focuses on a love triangle between King Arthur, his queen Guenevere, and his highest knight, Sir Lancelot. Camelot (King Arthur’s estate) serves as backdrop for hope and tragedy, civilization and savagery, love and hate. Arthur (encouraged by Guenevere) imagines a place where knights gather for peace and equality rather than war and class division. A Round Table symbolizes those hopes, as each knight can sit without competing for “head” of the table. Enter Lancelot, a French jouster disliked by the queen and most knights, who wins favor with the other knights after
proving his jousting prowess. His display of sportsmanship spurs Guenevere to fall in love with him, and they begin having an affair. The affair becomes a constant source of strain for Camelot’s noble ideals and ends its reign, as knights continually accuse the adulterers of treason against the king.

As a symbol of peace and equity, therefore, Camelot begins and ends with Guenevere’s presence in the story—she both inspires Arthur’s idea and ruins its actualization. The end of the play, however, attempts to recoup hope from tragedy, when Arthur meets a young boy in the forest of Camelot as the knights are preparing for another war. While hope in the present may be lost, Arthur realizes that as an idea, Camelot can live with the boy. The story, therefore, would resonate with John, Jr.’s salute of the flag during the funeral—whereas JFK might be dead, his son would serve as a living reminder of the president. And, like Guenevere, Jacqueline Kennedy both constituted Camelot as an idea and prevented its fulfillment as an ideal when she married again.

Even the older Arthurian legends are mythologized in Kennedy’s image of Camelot, marked primarily by the repetition of those four lines in Lerner and Loewe’s song.64 Those lines serve as part of the funeral moment, the textual counterpart to an image and a sound that impart a dual sense of tragedy and hope. As Kennedy’s final institutional means of helping craft JFK’s persona, she relied on that mythos and her iconicity therein to concretize an accretion of associations that built from the inaugural moment of the Kennedy presidency, including her brand of tasteful (if highly visible) femininity. In the next section, I historicize Andy Warhol’s Jackies, and I argue that Warhol, a premier Pop artist by 1963, used formal components of myth and icon art to
destabilize not only Kennedy’s institutional associations as first lady but also to foreshadow the demise of her Cold War cultural ideal of restrained femininity.

**Andy Warhol’s Jackie(s)**

Andy Warhol, born Andrew Warhola in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, essentially had three careers. He first appeared during the 1950s as a successful commercial illustrator for fashion magazines and illustrated ads, distinctive for his “blotted line” technique, which bestowed a mechanized look to his drawings. The second career—the one that made him a famous American artist—was as a prominent figure for the early 1960s American Pop movement. The third was in the 1970s as a commercial/corporate artist making money by selling commissioned portraits to celebrities who wanted to be painted by Warhol (with some work for television in the few years before his death in 1987). Warhol’s memorable “look” comes from his celebrity portraits (and his Campbell’s soup cans), partly because of their continued pervasiveness in public culture. Influenced heavily by the icon art he saw in his childhood Catholic Church, Warhol’s portraits somehow pinpointed the sacred space that celebrity culture was coming to occupy in the American collective conscious.

When Kennedy was assassinated, Warhol spent the day watching television coverage of the event (even though he kept working from home on *The Kiss* (*Bela Lugosi*). Soon after, he started work on his *Jackies*, one of his earliest series of paintings (others include 13 Most Wanted Men, Brillo box sculptures, 1964 Flowers, Little Race Riots, and Little Electric Chairs). Photographs from the Factory, his studio space between 1964-1969, show canvases from the Jackie series alongside his work on *13 Most*
Wanted Men, his scandalous paintings of criminal mug shots for the 1964 New York World’s Fair. His original Jackies used eight news images primarily drawn from the Camelot edition of Life magazine, which memorialized JFK, and he probably made his selection of images before the January 1964 move to the Factory (Fig. 4.1). The images had limited showings in 1964 but were included with Warhol’s first exhibition, Flowers, at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. The Flowers exhibition opened almost exactly a year after the assassination, and in that show, Warhol displayed 42 black-and-blue images of a close shot of Kennedy during Johnson’s presidential oath. The series since has been titled Multiplied Jackies (Fig. 4.2).

To be clear (because Warhol was not), when I reference Warhol’s funeral Jackies, I am referring generally to the eight base images from John Kennedy’s assassination weekend (Fig. 4.1). He configured the funeral Jackies (Fig. 4.1) variously for exhibitions, sometimes showing single images repetitively (e.g., his 4 Round Jackies or 42 Multiplied Jackies (Fig. 4.2) or his Jackie I print (Fig. 3)); doubled images singularly (e.g., his Jackie II print (Fig. 4.4)); and larger configurations (e.g., his Jackie III print (Fig. 4.5)). To further confuse attempts at documenting his work, Warhol subtly would connect images into series—e.g., his Jackie I, Jackie II, and Jackie III prints all belong to volumes of the same portfolio (and thus connect both by medium and exhibition style). Throughout my analysis, therefore, I slip between analyzing his funeral Jackies generally (and here I am thinking about Fig. 4.1) and analyzing their different forms and configurations (which I signal through reference to specific labeled figures). Alternately, he made a series of Jackies that I am calling icon Jackies because they rely on a base photograph unrelated to the assassination weekend. Warhol’s icon Jackies likewise were
painted in different colors (e.g., *Red Jackie* (Fig. 4.6)) and appeared variously throughout the 1960s. Again, I slip between discussing his icon *Jackies* as a general set and referencing specific versions of that image as visual examples to supplement my argument. My goal is to productively maintain the tension between his general approach to the *Jackies* and his specific enactment of those ideas. In the next paragraph, I turn to historicizing some of the exhibition history of Warhol’s funeral and icon *Jackies*. Then, I examine each broad set of images and some of their specific iterations in the analysis sections.

Despite the funeral *Jackies*’ limited initial showing, Warhol would showcase much work on the Kennedys throughout the 1960s. He displayed the paintings (and later prints) using different varieties of the eight funeral images in various formations at several galleries after the Flowers exhibition. In 1965, making use of almost all of the images except for the close shot of Kennedy’s arrival in Dallas, Warhol displayed 24 *Jackies* in phthalo and cerulean blue at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. In 1966, he showed four round gold-colored *Jackies* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. In 1967, he showed 16 *Jackies* at the Leo Castelli Gallery. In 1966, he also published a series of three prints of differently configured *Jackies* in *11 Pop Artists I, II, and III*, portfolios that included Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and others.74 (Figs. 4.3, 4.4, 4.5).

In 1968, Warhol produced a portfolio of mixed Kennedy images, including Jacqueline Kennedy, John Kennedy, and Teletype “news flash” reports taken from assassination day. He called the portfolio *Flash—November 22, 1963.*75 As the Andy Warhol Museum recounts, “‘I’d been thrilled having Kennedy as president,’ mused the
artist [Warhol]: ‘he was handsome, young, smart—but it didn’t bother me much that he was dead. What bothered me was the way the television and radio were programming everybody to feel so sad. It seemed like no matter how hard you tried, you couldn’t get away from the thing.”

*Flash* was rare for its combination of word and image, as Warhol largely abandoned word in the 1960s to focus solely on image. That same year, he bought Norman Rockwell’s 1963 painting of Jacqueline Kennedy, a portrait done for the *Saturday Evening Post* and printed alongside the article “How Jackie Restyled the White House.” Analyzing *Flash* might prove interesting; however, Warhol’s initial selection of funeral images and his single icon *Jackies*—with their likeness to his *Marilyns* and *Lizs*—will prove most relevant for this chapter. He painted the funeral and icon images immediately after the president’s death, and by 1965, *Life* magazine published a photograph of art collector Leon Kraushar holding his triptych of Shot Orange Marilyn (Fig. 4.7), Liz, and Red Jackie— the trifecta of early Cold War women’s cultural icons.

Warhol drew from Kennedy’s carefully constructed myth of Camelot, in which she crafted her iconic representativeness of restrained femininity, to destabilize her role in the Kennedy administration and subvert her cultural status as representative ideal for white women of a certain class. Both sets of Warhol’s *Jackies* disrupt Kennedy’s institutional and mythic associations, thereby anticipating her transition in the 1960s from one dominant public icon of femininity in American culture (Madonna) to another (whore)—from regal First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to eroticized “Jackie O.” In what follows, I contend that Warhol uses formal aspects of mythos and icon art to increasingly dissociate Kennedy from the role of first lady, instead foregrounding her representation
as a cultural ideal of femininity. Collapsing the distinction between Kennedy’s institutional and celebrity persona, however, also visualizes the novelty of Kennedy’s enactment of first lady, merging national politics, celebrity culture, and fine art and offering a complex commentary on mediation. I now turn to Warhol’s funeral “Jackies.”

Subversive Myth in Warhol’s Funeral Jackies

The Kennedys—and particularly Jacqueline Kennedy—remained an important subject for Warhol throughout the 1960s, as they/she did for much of the American public before, during, and after President Kennedy’s assassination. The selection of assassination and funeral images Warhol chose to represent “The Week That Was”—an early title of the eight news images from which he configured his Jackie exhibition paintings and portfolio prints—both referenced and reimagined Life magazine and Kennedy’s myth of Camelot in the immediate aftermath of the president’s death. Although he literally screened Life photographs from the “Camelot” myth issue as foundations for his funeral silkscreens, his approach to and configuration of the funeral Jackies belies a complicated vision of that legacy, giving presence to what the Camelot myth makes absent: its rhetorical contingency and intention. Moreover, Warhol positions Kennedy as the central image—rather than peripheral or prismatic—in the collective consciousness of the Kennedy administration.

Eight closeup images serve as the basis for Warhol’s funeral “Jackies:” two show Kennedy in her black funeral suit, standing on the steps of the Capitol (although that has been cropped out of the image); two show Kennedy, veiled in black, on the walk between the funeral mass and Arlington; two show Kennedy during Lyndon Johnson’s swearing in as president (one more closely cropped than the other); and two show her smiling upon
arrival in Dallas, wearing a characteristic pillbox hat and coat reminiscent of her outfit on the day of the inauguration (see Fig. 4.1). Context litters the original photographs, but Warhol stripped the images for his own use. In one “Capitol” image, a man in military uniform stands tall behind her, and in a “veiled” image, a partial view of a man’s face appears behind her (the man may be Robert or Edward Kennedy). The original “Dallas” images show JFK in the background and a partial backdrop of the airport, respectively. The second “veiled” image and two “oath” images show just Kennedy (see Fig. 4.1).

The Jackie series was produced on an image-by-image basis on linen canvases trimmed to size in advance. Warhol applied a uniform background color of Liquetex acrylic paint, either saturating or lightening the color with white paint to produce subtle changes in hue. He never mixed hues, and many of the canvases remained unstretched or were stretched at a later date, which allowed him to work “without a prior idea of composition in mind, since canvases could be combined or rearranged in different configurations.” Yet, Warhol’s several Factory series of paintings from 1964-1965 (including his Jackies) share a common preoccupation with filling space or covering surfaces, a goal achieved by specific (if arbitrary) numbers of images contingently altered to fit the given exhibition space with precision. Georg Frei and Neil Printz, editors of The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné, contend that by 1965, Warhol seemed less concerned with what he later would call “the thing itself” in an interview with art historian Benjamin Buchloh and more interested in a work’s ability “to be an open series, to possess hypothetically a capacity for infinite accumulation, an elasticity that permits extension without end. Whatever bounds the work is provisional and subject to change as the three-dimensional envelope of space shifts or wall surfaces vary depending
This spatial logic manifested in changing numbers of displayed canvases, and the Castelli gallery inventory documents three groups of 14 canvases and one group of seven *Jackies* (49 total), with at least 42 on display during the *Flowers* exhibition (Fig. 4.2). Between 1965 and 1966, those numbers fluctuated between 49 and 28, with the present number of 35 canvases set in 1966.85

In that sense and others, Warhol’s series between 1964 and 1965 rely heavily on mythic logic. As “speech justified *in excess*”86 and constituted by “an unlimited mass of signifiers,”87 myth reduces meaning to “a pure signifying function”88 by distorting ideological and historical intentions. Warhol’s silkscreens performed similarly, using repetition of difference to produce “a pure signifying function”—banal recognition of the visual subject. He critically questions the idea of original (artistic) intention,89 for silkscreening “obscures personal touch, the visible marks of an artist’s hand, without entirely erasing the identity behind it. Such mechanical means also facilitate repetition and mass production, undermining the uniqueness of the process and its visual object.”90 While the process might be mechanized, the works of art were unique—each was different based on color, line, and position in the frame during the screening process but those differences essentially lack meaningful signification. Barthes’ work on myth comes to mind. While myth relies on ideology and history for its power, its intentions are “frozen, purified, eternalized, *made absent* by” (italics in original)91 its constituent signifiers.

Mythic “distortion”92 often manifests formally as non-contingent vision (the capacity to transcend time and space), and timeless and spacelessness are apparent in much of Warhol’s work from this period and in his *Jackies*. As Arthur Danto writes about
Warhol’s “Howdy Doody” prints from the 1980s, “Warhol had a tremendous gift of understanding which were the defining myths of a generation, whether or not he belonged to it, the gift of identifying the images which unite a group of disparate individuals in a common mind and placing those images before them as the substance of their being.”

Warhol’s funeral Jackies use mythic construction concretely in his choice of photographs from Life’s Camelot issue (see Fig. 4.1). Figuratively, they lack markers of space and time—bereft of identifiable figures and material places, they concentrate solely on Kennedy, “making her the dramatic focus and emotional barometer of the Kennedy assassination, [and] shifting the historical narrative into a series of affective moments” (see, for example, Figs. 4.3, 4.3, 4.5). Thus, these images operate less from what Michael Leff might deem “secular time,” which “proceeds in a singular direction,” and more from a sense of “sacred” time, which “calls us to a moment of origins…[and] is the ‘primordial mythical time made present.’” For the same reason, Warhol’s Jackies prove subversive, visualizing her centrality to the Camelot myth, whereas Life’s and Kennedy’s earnest repetition of the Camelot lines “distorted” its intentions for romanticizing JFK’s presidential legacy in the moment. As White would remember, Kennedy “put it [Camelot] so passionately that, seen in a certain light, it almost made sense’…”I realized it was a misreading of history, but I was taken with Jackie’s ability to frame the tragedy in such human and romantic terms.” More broadly, Warhol’s funeral Jackies changed constantly with different base images, configurations between those images, numbers of images, and even medium of image (painting or print). They relied on an “expansive ambiguity” of signifiers that likewise cohered into one vision emphasizing Kennedy’s—rather than JFK’s—significance.
Warhol’s *Jackies* primarily construct a spatial logic of association, as Frei and Prince write, seeking to show “affective moments” of the assassination weekend rather than narrate by telos. Emphasizing an uncanny sense of place works well with Kennedy’s invocation of the Camelot myth, as “Camelot, located nowhere in particular, can be anywhere…it is less a specific place than a state of mind, a source of inspiration, an idea.” Along those lines, Warhol seems continually to confuse the chronology of the assassination weekend in his configurations. A triptych of *Jackies* consigned to the Castelli gallery in 1964, for instance, shows her viewing Lyndon Johnson’s presidential oath, shifts to her in a veil, and ends with her smiling upon arrival in Dallas. His *Jackie* prints, featured in 1966 in three volumes of *11 Pop Artists*, portray *Jackie I in Dallas* (Fig. 4.3), *Jackie II* as a doubled image of her in a veil (Fig. 4.4), and *Jackie III* as an eerie composite of four images—(1) veiled, (2) standing with the unidentified military man (the only background figure left uncropped from all of his base images), (3) watching Johnson take the oath, and (4) smiling upon arrival in Dallas (Fig. 4.5). The image of Kennedy watching the presidential oath has been flipped so that in the composition, she stares down at her smiling self in Dallas. *Sixteen Jackies*, when the exhibit appeared in the Castelli gallery in 1967, began in the left corner with a Dallas image and ended in the right corner with a veiled image, but the rest of the images jumped back and forth between Dallas and D.C.

And yet not all of the images were configured with apparent randomness. The aforementioned set of portfolio prints corresponds to a precise mathematical formula of 1, 2, 4 (doubling each number to arrive at the next number of images) (Figs. 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Additionally, in his first exhibition at the Castelli gallery in 1964, against the general
vivacity of his *Flowers* paintings, Warhol’s choice to display his *Multiplied Jackies* in the back of that exhibition almost a year to the day after JFK’s assassination gives them a somber, funereal connection (Fig. 4.2). For anyone who has been to a cemetery, flowers are common to the landscape, often placed in front of sodden graves of a person’s loved one(s). Warhol seemed to replicate Kennedy’s association with the Camelot myth in his choice of series (*Flowers* and *Jackies*), strategic placement of those images (*Flowers* at the front of the gallery; *Jackies* in the back), and exhibition timing (almost a year after JFK’s funeral). By establishing those associations spatially, and with the added effect of the square-shaped *Flowers* paintings arranged in neat linear rows on the exhibition wall like gravestones in a cemetery, Warhol invited audiences to experience *Multiplied Jackies* (Fig. 4.2) in an affective way, reimagining Arlington in the exhibition space. Visitors had to walk through flowers before reaching the *Jackies*, a visual reminder of the funeral moment made resonant by its spatial positioning. Moreover, Warhol’s choice of *Jackie* images—42 replays of the exact moment in which she no longer was America’s first lady (as Johnson took the oath of office)—hints that death that day was twofold: the death of JFK and the imminent death of Kennedy’s iconicity in Camelot (a point on which I later expand). In the next section, I turn to the dialogue between Warhol’s funeral *Jackies* and his icon *Jackies* to assess her emergence from the institutional constraints of first lady to the patriarchal constraints of American female celebrity.

**Kennedy as Burgeoning Icon Art: The Dialogue Between Funeral and Icon Jackie**

Whereas Warhol produced many compositional *Jackies* that either associated his funeral images with each other or with other series in a given exhibition, I here want primarily to address the association between Warhol’s funeral *Jackies* and the one new
image of Kennedy he would use as the basis for his icon *Jackies* (which I discuss in more
detail next). In the aforementioned section, I argued that Warhol subversively presented
Kennedy as central to the Camelot myth. In this section, I want to push that argument
further. I contend that Warhol’s use of traumatic and singular images (often repeated or
doubled) set the stage for his icon *Jackies*, which visualize Kennedy’s transition from
“classy” first lady to “trashy” popular icon.

Art historian Hal Foster writes about Warhol’s images of trauma—some of which
Warhol produced concurrent with his *Jackies*—and he argues that Warhol’s repetitive
depictions of trauma provide no clear restorative cohesion to a traumatic event, but
instead “the Warhol repetitions not only reproduce traumatic effects; they also produce
them. Somehow, in these repetitions, then, several contradictory things occur at the same
time: a warding away of traumatic significance and an opening out to it, a defending
against traumatic affect and a producing of it.”100 As I have discussed throughout this
dissertation, patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity provided particular
conditions of possibility for enacting public femininity and sexuality in the 1950s and
early 1960s, operating as a national fantasy through which Americans “meant,”101
especially in mass media. Put another way, (to echo Diane Rubenstein’s explanation of
Hillary hatred),102 exaltation of Kennedy—and, specifically, her composure and restraint
during the funeral—I argue served as a cultural symptom for the imminent rupture in
Americans’ collective understanding of public female sexuality.

Although his funeral *Jackies* do not eroticize Kennedy explicitly (which I argue
happens in his icon *Jackies*), they complicate her sexually restrained role in the
patriarchal fantasy of the time. In Warhol’s *Jackie* prints for *11 Pop Artists*, for example,
the (uncanny) relationship between the bottom two images in *Jackie III* depicts a shocked Kennedy on the left staring down at the smiling Kennedy in the bottom right of the composition (Fig. 4.5). Functioning as trauma discourse both “to inhabit a place of total affect and to be drained of affect altogether,”\textsuperscript{103} the smiling photograph, taken out of context and situated against its horizontal counterpart to the left, appears maniacal. Does happy Kennedy laugh cruelly at shocked Kennedy’s misfortune? Perhaps shocked Kennedy, lacking her signature pillbox hat or black mourning veil, looms ominously (unrestrained) over her happier self, complete with pillbox hat and contained sexuality.

As Wayne Kostenbaum notes about JFK’s assassination:

> We know *factually* that Jackie is innocent…[yet a] living woman next to a dead man (a Pieta) is a uniquely satisfying, if horrifying icon to contemplate, because the two have been brought to an even level: the man cannot rule now, cannot move mountains, cannot cure lepers. It is the woman’s turn to be heroic, to incite worship, to rule.\textsuperscript{104}

The funeral images depict a complex tension between Kennedy as embodiment of “total affect” and “drained of affect altogether,”\textsuperscript{105} showing affective moments sometimes in eerie connection with one another. Continually reconfiguring Kennedy through the same eight images visualizes Kostenbaum’s idea that “there are countless different Jackies. Jackie may silently say more about difference than she says about sameness, even if her image seems to stay the same, in picture after picture; even if it may seem that everyone feels the same sentiments about Jackie.”\textsuperscript{106} Picturing those affective differences in the way Warhol does pushes viewers to associate multiplicity with Kennedy, a radical departure from her consistent image of restraint in Camelot.
Moreover, in Warhol’s funeral Jackies, Kennedy remains the isolated subject in all but one of the base photographs—the one in which she figures with a male guard. To return to Jackie II, in that image, her body serves as a barrier between him and viewers (as opposed to content in the original news images showing mostly Kennedy men serving as barriers to her) (Fig. 4.4). Second, both the structured pillbox hat reminiscent of the inauguration and her funeral veil feature in the upper left and lower right corners (respectively) of the images. Her headwear figures in juxtaposition, perhaps forcing viewers to grapple with both Jackies—sad and happy, beginning and end, contained and…free? Third, Kennedy’s mouth—sorrowfully pursed, for example, in several of the funeral images—features as opened in two of the four prints. The bottom left image shows Kennedy’s lips parted in disbelief (an image Warhol repeated 42 times in his Flowers exhibition), staring over the bottom right image of Kennedy smiling broadly at President Kennedy’s Inauguration. I am reminded here of Diana Vreeland’s instructions to Richard Avedon for the Kennedys’ Harper’s Bazaar photographs: “Just get me that voice.” Jack Gould likewise wrote of her televised tour: “With her soft and measured voice, she ranged in comment from warm appreciation of past First Ladies and Presidents to delicate but telling dismissal of the second-rate in the arts.”108 The positioning of Kennedy’s mouth seems central to the associations between photographs—its very openness in the bottom two prints seems simultaneously to implicate and ignore its connection to her restrained institutional image (the breathiness of her voice often was compared to Marilyn Monroe, even if the two women were depicted as polar opposites). These formal features, coupled with the (non)narrative, atemporal positioning of the images produce a sense of destabilization or, at the very least, present her and the funeral
atypically. Rather than being given a horizontal or vertical temporal means of associating the images (a visual timeline of sorts), Warhol instead chose to bombard viewers with the images all at once, either repeating traumatic images of Kennedy or confusing viewers’ ability to “follow” the narrative properly. As Thomas Farrell writes, “[t]ragedy involves nobler, more expansive characters and actions, bigger issues, greater virtues and vices. At its best the tensions and reversals of tragedy enlarge life’s panorama.”109 Warhol’s Jackies forbid dramatic catharsis.

Indeed, several of Warhol’s exhibited Jackies focused on one base image from the funeral images, even if that image was repeated or doubled; those images also begin to interrogate Kennedy’s gendered iconicity in Camelot. For instance, Jackie I (Fig. 4.3) follows the circular look and use of light typical of icon art, with Kennedy’s pillbox hat forming a halo-like frame around her rounded face and bobbed hair. His doubled Jackie II (Fig. 4.4) show her wearing a deteriorating veil and recall Madonna and Child images (or even, as I argued in Chapter 2, Kennedy’s mother-and-son photographs by Richard Avedon). Using single and doubled images of single images, Warhol’s visual reference to Kennedy’s sacred position in the collective consciousness highlights her centrality in the funeral moment, featuring JFK, Caroline, and John, Jr. as an absent presence in the meaning of those images.

Warhol continued experimenting with Kennedy’s associations with Camelot, and his four gold Jackies, exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in 1966, would prove the most explicit formal reference to the conceptual shift he pictured for her cultural iconicity (outside of his icon Jackies) We know that Warhol used form to confuse traditional conceptual boundaries;110 Round Jackies’ circular shape is atypical, as
every other Jackie painting or print used a square frame. In this way, Warhol seems to be questioning Kennedy-as-Camelot-icon, or as Barthes notes, the notion that when a concept “becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains.” Additionally, Warhol’s Round Jackies use saturation of color to gradate top to bottom images, with Kennedy’s clear and well-defined face in the top painting becoming more muddied as the eye travels downward. By the last painting, Kennedy appears almost as if under water, her smiling face less and less visually related to the original news photograph of her arrival in Dallas. As I discuss in the next section, these funeral Jackies and others (such as Jackie I and Jackie II) offer a transitional glimpse into Warhol’s final Jackie series: his icon versions of the former first lady.

Dissociation, Bipolarity, and the Image of Woman: Visualizing Kennedy as Monroe

I have argued that Warhol’s funeral Jackies, drawing from eight photographs primarily in Life’s Camelot issue for their resonance, both captured and critiqued the mythic construction of the Kennedy administration in the funeral moment. They also transitioned into a more fully realized idea when Warhol produced another set of Jackie paintings in 1964 based on a Jacques Lowe photograph of Kennedy taken early into (or before) JFK’s presidency. The photograph appeared in a souvenir book called The Emergence of John F. Kennedy (in the Andy Warhol Archives) and as a cover image to the souvenir book Jacqueline Kennedy, First Lady: Her Fashions, Her Home, Her Words, which was published in 1961. These Jackies—what I am calling his icon Jackies—make a definitive visual move to dissociate her from her institutional role and instead align her with popular images of femininity from the 1950s and 1960s (Marilyn
Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor). By doing so, I suggest, Warhol foreshadows Kennedy’s demise in the popular imagination not just as an icon of Camelot but as an ideal of public femininity (especially in the late 1960s). Ultimately, I contend that JFK’s assassination produced anxiety not only because of the “mythic and historical associations that attach to the office,” but because his death unbound Kennedy from the institutions that legitimated her highly visible public rhetorical performance—the presidency and her marriage. Warhol depicts that trajectory.

On the cover of Jacqueline Kennedy, First Lady: Her Fashions, Her Home, Her Words, Lowe’s photograph renders Kennedy the picture of summer (the photograph was taken in Hyannisport). She sits tanned and fit in an orange-and-white gingham top and skirt, perched casually on a flowered patio chair. Warhol strips all identifying markers from the original image, even more than those used for his funeral Jackies. Instead, viewers are left with an explicitly pure portrait type, “seemingly devoid of temporal reference or spatial coordinates” (see Fig. 4.6). Using his “icon-like formula” from his 1964 Marilyns and Jackie, Warhol embellished the paintings “by gestural or painterly incident,” his new technique to trace the image from the silkscreen maker onto canvas as an underdrawing. Then, Warhol would mask the tracing with tape, which allowed local color to be applied quickly and easily with broader strokes of the brush. His icon Jackies, like his Lizzs and his 1962 Marilyn, registered “ghosting,” or double impression of color, which we can see in Kennedy’s blue-black hair or black-red lips. His 1964 Marilyns had no “ghosting,” since Warhol was careful to register the impression of the painting screen closely with the color layer underneath (see Fig. 4.7).
As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca reminds us, dissociation involves disuniting elements regarded as whole, and doing so requires “modifying certain concepts which make up its [the associative system’s] parts.”118 Warhol’s icon Jackies (Fig. 4.6) dissociate Kennedy not only from the context of the original image (the Kennedy compound in Hyannisport near the start of his presidency) but more important, they associate her with his Marilyns, begun shortly after the star’s death. In this way, Warhol immediately redefines Kennedy’s subjectivity, putting her in visual dialogue not with Camelot men but with Hollywood women, a point reinforced by his renewed interest in Monroe and newfound interest in Liz Taylor in 1964. In all three series, Warhol foregrounded isolated headshots of the women and their similarities are undeniable. Each woman’s eyes are shadowed blue, each woman’s lips prominently are red, and each woman has a bob haircut. Even their faces sit slightly to the right. In Warhol’s Marilyns from 1962 and 1964, the sex icon’s thick, dark lashes veil cat-shaped, blue-shadowed eyes. Her thin, arched brows lift playfully, and her plump, red lips bleed slightly into her white teeth. A single tendril of wavy, blond hair brushes against her smooth forehead. In Warhol’s icon Jackie, her dark bouffant hairdo features against a bold backdrop. Kennedy’s thick, dark brows sit seductively over almond-shaped dark eyes, accentuated by bright blue eyeshadow. A small smile plays on the corners of Kennedy’s full, red lips, and bright blue earrings dangle in flamboyant complement to her eyeshadow (see Fig. 4.6). In this image, Kennedy is Monroe—hypersexual, unrestrained, sexual icon.

Hal Foster, referencing Barthes, argues that the punctum of Warhol’s images resides in their repetitive “popping” (of color, of difference, of sameness). In his funeral Jackies, Warhol primarily uses doubled images or repetition in provocative
configurations. He further visually dissociates his icon *Jackies* from the funeral paintings and prints through color, which “pricks”\textsuperscript{119} viewers anew. Funeral *Jackies* typically are done in muted colors, but icon *Jackies* utilize heavily saturated primaries. Framed, for instance, against a bright red background with spots of turquoise blue highlighting Kennedy’s eyes and cheekbones, Warhol’s *Red Jackie* (one of the triptych of Cold War female icons bought by Leon Kraushar) appears sensual and playful, even smug (Fig. 4.6). Warhol’s “ghosting” along the edges of Kennedy’s hair echoes the halo of light usually present from her bright pillbox hat but its blue glow highlights the artificiality of “light” source, drawing attention to her construction as an image of woman. Even more interesting, Kennedy’s headwear disappears in the icon paintings, and her full, red lips (like Monroe’s) arguably serve as the focal point of the picture (what Barthes and perhaps Foster would deem the “punctum”). Her lack of structured part-object in the pillbox hat seems to signify the unrestrained (and inappropriate) sexual freedom she now possesses. Her sensual red lips silently (or perhaps loudly?) scream for attention, further intensifying her overt eroticism. Without normative viewing constraints—whether spatial, temporal, or culturally learned (“knowing” who Kennedy and Monroe are)—Warhol’s icon *Jackies* rupture, in Parveen Adams’ words, “the structure of representation”\textsuperscript{120} in 1964 by “emptying out the place of the object.”\textsuperscript{121} These images, even momentarily, function as trauma (*tuché*), positioning viewers simultaneously to envision the patriarchal fantasy around which early Cold War culture means even as Warhol deconstructs that fantasy.

To come full circle, the death of an image seemed to be on Warhol’s mind when he staged his first showing of *Multiplied Jackies* (Fig. 4.2) at Castelli Gallery in his *Flowers* exhibition. If we return to the spatial logic of the exhibition, Warhol’s
associations between the series of images remain complicated. If, as I argued in the first section, Warhol intentionally seems to stage a funeral scene, JFK would have been the better spatio-temporal image to associate with his “Flowers” paintings. Instead, he visualizes Kennedy in what temporally and/or spatially should be JFK’s place of death. The canvas numbers were chosen to fit the exhibition space, and as such, Warhol’s funeral Jackies offer a performative contingency characteristic of celebrity culture. As Robert Hariman and John Lucaites remind us, celebrities are widely recognized strangers whose images are in wide circulation.\textsuperscript{122} Warhol had his own interests in celebrity culture, and he reproduces that logic through space, visualizing her as “within but not fully of the social group” and “at once both far and near.”\textsuperscript{123} Moreover, Warhol’s choice to repetitively display Multiplied Jackies (Fig. 4.2) at the very moment in which she no longer is constrained by the two institutions that rendered her public visibility “appropriate”—her marriage and the presidency—visualizes not just her uncertain future in that moment but the role her image plays as an ideal gender type in public culture. Warhol’s funeral and icon Jackies, I conclude, converge in their disruption of Kennedy’s institutional constraints, which made her rhetorical visibility acceptable in early cold War culture.

\textbf{Conclusion: Cold War Culture and Kennedy’s Public Image in the Late 1960s}

In this chapter, I have argued that John Kennedy’s assassination propelled Jacqueline Kennedy’s mythologization of his administration as Camelot, a rhetorical image that served as a condensation of associations already built during his presidency and amplified in the funeral moment. That “first-order” myth produced a “second-order” system of signification, in which Kennedy’s composure exemplified “appropriate” public
femininity in the early Cold War era, one constrained broadly by the patriarchal
institution of the nuclear family and more specifically by her prismatic role in the
administration. Warhol pictures that conceptual shift in the cultural imagination of
Woman. Thus, while Kennedy serves as restrained feminine icon in her construction of
Camelot, Warhol anticipates her transition from (classy, restrained) First Lady Jacqueline
Kennedy to (commodified, eroticized) “Jackie O.” Using his funeral Jackies to
complicate the Camelot myth and his icon Jackies to dissociate her from that iconicity
and reconstruct her along the lines of Hollywood starlets, Warhol foreshadowed
Kennedy’s devolution in the late 1960s to “trashy” tabloid celebrity. She became the
Guenevere of the second half of the Camelot musical (adulterer) rather then Arthur’s
inspiration, a product stemming from her own mythic construction and from the broader
roles of femininity available to public women during the early Cold War. As Arthur
Danto writes, “Warhol’s political gift was his ability to make objective as art the defining
images of the American consciousness—the images that expressed our desires, our fears,
and what we as a commonality trusted and mistrusted.”

Despite the public admiration Kennedy built during her tenure as first lady and
commanded during the funeral, however, her image thereafter seemed to become
property of the nation, a screen on which to project changing notions of public
femininity. In 1964, she would continue her construction of the administration’s legacy,
creating the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and participating in oral interviews
with Arthur Schlesinger to be property of the JFK Library. With her penchant for
amplification, she chose a then-obscure architect named I.M. Pei, who had worked at
Harvard and had “the imagination and the temperament to create a structure that would
reinforce her goals for the library."  
That choice seems to parallel JFK’s own ascent to
the presidency, as he was a young senator from Harvard with an idealistic imagination
but ample self-possession to lead Americans into “the New Frontier.” Pei was related to
the high-tech movement featuring sophisticated glass buildings; he would reuse the
pyramid design he conceptualized for the JFK Library for the expansion of the Louvre
Museum, making the former choice seem especially resonant to the aristocratic
aesthetic of the Kennedys that Jacqueline Kennedy helped solidify. Kennedy additionally
remained relevant in political culture, and Lyndon Johnson wanted to offer her an
ambassador position to Mexico or France (she refused both).

Because the Kennedys’ institutional images were intertwined inextricably, and
because Jacqueline Kennedy solidified that connection through the Camelot myth, her
public image by the late 1960s suffered, especially after her marriage to Aristotle
Onassis. America’s Widow now was the wife of a wealthy Greek shipping tycoon more
than 20 years her senior, the cosmopolitan persona she built to represent the Kennedy
administration as first lady (the ideal) tainted by her new role (the real). Thus, Kennedy’s
own rhetorical prowess—the Camelot myth—partially constrained her capacity for public
life outside of the role, and she would face no shortage of rumor and criticism for her new
marriage. Kennedy’s restrained femininity and dignified strength during the funeral
and before signified a mixture of her rhetorical skills and the broader social milieu of the
early Cold War era. Yet, her institutional role, and her presence in magazines, television,
and fine art rendered partial her ability to construct her own image, a point on which I
next expand in the conclusion.
Figures


Fig. 4.3. Andy Warhol, artist. *Jackie I*. Print. Accessed March 10, 2015. Artstor.org.


5 Thurston Clarke, JFK’s Last Hundred Days: The Transformation of a Man and the Emergence of a Great President (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013). Clarke writes about several front-page headlines detailing how “an angry crowd surrounded him [Stevenson] as he was leaving [the Dallas Municipal Auditorium, after giving a speech celebrating United Nations Day]. Two men spat in his face and the wife of an insurance executive smacked him over the head with a sign proclaiming ‘If You Seek Peace, Ask Jesus,’” (253).
7 Clarke, JFK’s Last Hundred Days, 210.
8 Clarke, JFK’s Last Hundred Days, 339.
9 Bradford, America’s Queen, 218.
10 Ibid.
11 Bradford, America’s Queen, 227.
13 Condolences were sent to the Kennedys from the Pope, political leaders across Europe and Asia, and senators on both sides of the aisle. Please see “World Voices Grief on Death of Kennedy Baby,” New York Times Aug. 10, 1963, 44. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
14 Clarke, JFK’s Last Hundred Days, 232.

Clarke quotes Robert Frost, who was meant to recite a poem with that line at the Inauguration, but the phrase nicely ties to the Camelot image. Clarke, *JFK’s Last Hundred Days*, 10.


Ibid.


Barthes, “Myth Today,” 120.

Barthes uses the example of the French soldier photograph throughout the chapter.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Jenkins, “My iPod, my iCon,” 480.

The term “the American Century” stems from Henry Luce, “Editorial,” *Life*, February 17, 1941.


Ibid.


Bodroghkozy, “Black Weekend.”

Clarke, *JFK’s Last Hundred Days*, 362.


52 Bradford, *America’s Queen*, 273-274.


57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.


60 Martin, “I Call on Lerner and Loewe,” 38.

61 Martin, “I Call on Lerner and Loewe,” 52.

62 Ibid. Lerner used this term to describe Rex Harrison’s Professor Henry Higgins’ character in *My Fair Lady*.

63 I am reminded here of Kennedy’s discussion of “synesthesia” in her reprinted essay for *Vogue* magazine during the inaugural moment. She defined the term as “a tendency to associate the impression given by one of the senses with those of another.” In “Special Feature: Mrs. John Kennedy,” *Vogue*, February 1, 1961, 134.

64 For an article that does discuss the narrative associations between Camelot and the Kennedys, but agrees that their association “might be too indefinite, too much a question of resonance and not specific enough in regard to characters” to propel the film’s success in 1967 (68), please see Roberta Davidson, “The ‘Reel’ Arthur: Politics and Truth Claims in ‘Camelot, Excalibur, and King Arthur,’” *Arthuriana* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 62-82.


66 Ibid.


69 Ibid.

70 The photographs were taken from an NYPD booklet with the most wanted criminals of 1962. World’s Fair officials requested Warhol paint over the images, so when they opened to the public, the paintings had been spray-painted silver to form one giant square. For more information on that series, please see the Queens Museum’s recent


Warhol rarely titled his works (19); the title *Multiplied Jackies* (105) was decided by the editors based on Rainer Crone’s 1970 catalogue raisonné for an exhibition organized for the Pasadena Art Museum between May 12-June 21, 1970. For that information, please see Frei and Printz, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, Appendix 1, 383.


Donna De Salvo, “God is in the Details,” 25.


Frei and Printz, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, 271. For the *Life* magazine information, see Appendix 1, 381.

“The Week That Was” was the label under which Warhol’s images were classified for the Stable Gallery, where he presented his first solo exhibition with works such as Campbell’s Soup, Marilyn, and Dollar Bills in 1962 and then his Brillo box sculptures in 1964. The title refers to a British political satire that aired in the United States during 1963 and weekly during 1964-1965. His *Jackies* were part of his first exhibition at Castelli (*Flowers*), and the origins of that title are unknown. See Frei and Printz, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, 104-05.


Buchloh asks Warhol if he sees himself changing in the early 1960s to “a mode of serial repetition;” Warhol responds that he was not focused on form but rather the object itself (121). Benjamin D. Buchloh, “An Interview with Andy Warhol (1985),” in *Andy Warhol (October Files)*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001).
87 Barthes, “Myth Today,” 120.
89 Please see Buchloh, “Interview with Andy Warhol (1985),” 127.
Donna De Salvo, for instance, writes that “[h]is experiments with the medium of silkscreening enabled him to reveal both the aesthetic and mass cultural associations of the term ‘media’ and confuse the traditional boundaries separating painting, drawing, and prints.” De Salvo, “God is in the Details,” 18.


Frei and Printz, The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné, Appendix 1, 381.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Barthes’ also uses this term.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Kostenbaum, for instance, notes that she was declared a public sinner and barred from sacraments from the Catholic Church in 1968, whereas in 1963 she was voted the Catholic Welfare Council’s “Woman of the Year.” Kostenbaum, Jackie Under My Skin, 149-150. A gossipy New York Times article published the day after her marriage ceremony to Onassis notes that “[t]he engagement ended speculation in the world press about whom Mrs. Kennedy would turn to. She had told friends occasionally that she wanted to remarry but could not find a man of the equal of John Kennedy,” before mentioning several other men with whom she was “often seen” in New York. Alvin Shuster, “‘Very Happy’ Mrs. Kennedy and Onassis Married,” New York Times, Oct. 21, 1968. In her obituary from 1994, the New York Times describes her marriage to Onassis as “made-for-tabloids.” Robert D. McFadden, “Death of a First Lady; Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Dies of Cancer at 64,” New York Times, May 20, 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0728.html
Early Cold War American culture—and its dominant representations of public women—morphed in the late 1960s. By then, increased disfavor with the war in Vietnam, continued activism for equal rights and international peace, and the youth movement changed many of the public ideals resonant in the early 1960s. The assassinations of John Kennedy (1963), Malcolm X (1965), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968), and Robert Kennedy (1968) altered the progressive political landscape, and conspiracy theories abounded, especially concerning the Kennedys and King.1 The women’s movement gained momentum and saw increased political organization, such as the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. Popular representations of ideal womanhood became more complex with models such as Twiggy, whose pageboy haircut and boyish figure undermined previous visual notions of femininity and masculinity. The so-called sexual revolution “assumed an unprecedentedly open and defiant tone, especially among women, increasing numbers of whom rebelled against the ‘feminine mystique’ of deference and domesticity…[t]he mid 1960s, one survey on sexual behavior concludes, represented ‘perhaps the greatest transformation in sexuality [the United States] had ever witnessed.’”2

Those transformations, of course, had their origins in the early postwar period. Popular media from the 1950s and early 1960s, however, typically produced a bipolar construction of femininity. Magazines such as Better Homes and Garden and Women’s Home Companion relegated “appropriate” sexuality to motherhood via domesticity, and public images of female sexuality divorced from motherhood were rendered taboo, spurring inventions like Playboy (1953) in which that taboo could be consumed. Elaine

1 Some historians argue that the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and U.S. Representative Leo J. Ryan were, in fact, part of the same conspiracy.

Tyler May’s comprehensive work on representations of domesticity in the postwar era addresses this discursive shift. She writes that female celebrities once “noted for their erotic appeal” (e.g., Lana Turner, Joan Crawford, and Carole Landis Wallace) were championed in popular magazines as “contented mothers, nestled comfortably in their ranch-style suburban homes with their husbands and children.” Although Jacqueline Kennedy differed from the grandmotherly Mamie Eisenhower and the popular notion of provincial housewife, the limits of her role in the Kennedy administration placed a unique burden on her public image after leaving the White House. As Jay Mulvaney explains, Kennedy’s use of visual impact, especially during the funeral, was “so powerful, conveying so much emotion, that [she] inadvertently forfeited any chance she had of retiring from the public eye.” Her rhetorical construction of Camelot and her general aptitude for aesthetic argument ultimately fixed her into a static notion of restrained femininity (at least during the 1960s). That image, as Warhol showed, became perceived as American public property. In this conclusion, therefore, I situate my project within the larger debate about the conventional and inventive capacities of the role of first lady, discussing the early Cold War parameters within which Kennedy could thrive as part of a “modern” presidency, before examining Kennedy’s potential for rhetorical agency. I conclude that Kennedy’s primarily visual rhetorical prowess bolstered her performance and enhanced the role but also posed challenges to her power as a rhetorical agent.

The First Lady, Gendered Expectations, and Jacqueline Kennedy

Unlike the president, whose authority rests on his election by the public, the role of first lady remains complicated because she neither represents a political position nor can she expect life as a private citizen. Thus, as Shawn Parry-Giles and Diane Blair
suggest, early first ladies often saw “social politicking and volunteerism” as the primary duties of the role, a traditional pulpit from which more modern first ladies articulated their responsibilities. Parry-Giles and Blair, therefore, measure first ladies against the “gender ideology” of their era, primarily assessing public speech to measure relative rhetorical success. Kathleen Hall Jamieson argues that public women frequently describe “double binds” as the dominant speech issues they face, an observation that proves equally accurate for first ladies. Double binds, according to Jamieson, are rhetorical constructs that posit “two and only two alternatives, one or both penalizing the person being offered them.” As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell demonstrates, the role of rhetor historically has been gendered male; thus, women always and already must overcome their gender, inventing “appropriate” positions from which to be seen and heard.

Karrin Vasby Anderson argues that many first ladies deploy paradox to deconstruct female identity and initiate possibilities for political agency. Anderson deems the first lady pulpit a tradition of “social style,” with the following typology: (1) power resides in ceremonial presence, which (2) draws from courtly and republican styles highlighting decorum, minimizing speech, and marked by attention to the body. As such, these women (3) enact political power while disguising its nature as political (practicing “professed artlessness”) and thus (4) are defined by their ability to conform to norms of femininity that bolster political agency. As Anderson underscores, this tradition helps first ladies resist the problematic “double bind” in which they often find themselves. That is, constitutionally, their institutional roles have been undefined and historically, they have been constructed through the metaphor of containment, propelling first ladies to serve as “icons of American femininity.” Thus, Jacqueline Kennedy resolutely fulfilled
the “social style” typology by establishing her ceremonial presence (and thus power) in
the inaugural and funeral moments; drawing from the courtly and republican styles
throughout her appearances in popular media, but especially during her televised tour of
the White House; and employing femininity for political agency.

These perspectives validate a unique space for rhetorical study of Jacqueline
Kennedy, a first lady who paradoxically amplified the Kennedy administration’s
presidential persona and subversively promoted her integral status therein. In another use
of paradox, as this dissertation shows, Kennedy marked the progressive potential of the
position primarily through visual means, a recognized but undertheorized strategy
through which first ladies (still) can achieve rhetorical effect. A visual rhetorical
perspective enables critical assessment about how the cultural interpretations of
femininity affected the institutional opportunities for an early Cold War first lady. This
approach shifts the typical standards of measurement for Kennedy’s political activity
from her public oratory to a more nuanced investigation of her political work through
popular media and visual image. By visually highlighting presence and absence, and
dually enacting accessibility and inaccessibility, Kennedy likewise exploited the celebrity
potential of the role. A view of rhetoric as multimodal enables critics to grapple with the
many ways in which Kennedy helped shape the administration’s presidential image and
with the kind of feminine ideal she represented. We find those answers by examining her
subtly political appearances within popular media.

Kennedy’s feature spreads in Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue, her televised tour, and
her orchestration of the funeral and “Camelot” interview for Life magazine mattered
because they were germinal moments of invention in her performance of the role and
reached broad swaths of the American public. When Richard Avedon photographed the Kennedys for *Harper’s Bazaar* and when Jacqueline Kennedy’s Prix de Paris essay and René Bouché’s portrait of her were published in *Vogue,* she was establishing her prismatic place in the inaugural rhetorical vision of the administration. Kennedy’s decision to appear in both magazines demonstrates she took seriously the means by which the position would be showcased—*Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* invoked traditions of “high” fashion and American art befitting the cultural status she envisioned for American first lady. Both magazines depicted Kennedy in the visual style of modern archetypal femininity, a 1960s Gibson Girl reinvented through the collegiate Vassar Girl image turned cosmopolitan First Lady. Those archetypes, however, signified critical linkages between public femininity and mass modernity, holding in tension the ideals of restraint and cosmopolitanism while foregrounding Kennedy (above JFK) as the embodiment of that connection.

Kennedy’s appearances in *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vogue* differed significantly from her predecessors. Diana Vreeland, fashion editor of *Harper’s Bazaar,* recalled that the Kennedys’ feature (as president and first lady) was a first for the magazine. Mamie Eisenhower, whose picture was published in *Vogue* after Dwight Eisenhower’s second-term election to the presidency under the magazine’s “People Are Talking About…” section (which also included films, novels, and current events), never warranted a multi-page spread. Eleanor Roosevelt was published in *Vogue* in 1941, wearing her inaugural dress and positioned next to an article entitled “What Makes an Orator?” but she likewise failed to merit a “special feature.” (She also was not considered an orator—the magazine focused on Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, and Benito
Mussolini—but Roosevelt did receive a short caption describing how “widely beloved” she was by the public, with people preferring her radio voice only second to her husband’s and with her “backers” outpacing his. Bess Truman received no attention from the altars of American high fashion and art. For Kennedy, who helped select the Avedon photographs disseminated to *Life* magazine and the *Associated Press*, her inaugural visual style could amplify Kennedy’s political vision while additionally setting the stage for her “apolitical” role as international diplomat, especially with the Kennedys’ European tour only a few months away. On that tour, the American first lady conversed in fluid French about French literature and culture, prompting President Charles de Gaulle to tell JFK “his wife knew more French history than most French women.”

Kennedy would have a similar effect in Vienna on the notoriously chilly Nikita Khrushchev, who complimented her pink dress and drew his chair closer to her at dinner, even as discussions faltered between he and JFK.

Kennedy used American high fashion magazines in the inaugural moment to establish her cosmopolitan brand of first lady alongside JFK’s eloquent inaugural address. In 1962, she turned to television to promote her White House restoration project, which drew more than 56 million viewers internationally. Kennedy’s tour represented another “first” for the position, as only Harry Truman before her used television to showcase the presidential residence, and she lead CBS correspondent Charles Collingwood and television viewers room-by-room through the White House. Reviewing American presidential history on the modern mass medium proved paradoxical as a rhetorical strategy, serving to deconstruct female identity in a way that opened possibilities for her (and the role’s) political agency. Kennedy could fulfill public
expectations for a “ceremonial” Kennedy presidency that represented America’s cultural “coming-of-age”\textsuperscript{19} while likewise arguing—aurally—for the position of first lady as critical to the institution.

Kennedy’s performance during the tour was meant to appeal to domestic and international audiences. She repeatedly grounded American presidential taste within the history of the institution, challenging the (Russian and European) notion that America lacked cultural gravitas,\textsuperscript{20} while simultaneously modeling proper social decorum for her contemporaneous domestic viewers. During a postwar era bent on “soft selling” Americanism abroad and at home, Kennedy’s tour exploited the rhetorical \textit{topos} of taste to help shape American national identity for international and domestic audiences. She thus increased the administration’s political clout by granting the institution social power and positioning the president and first lady as arbiters of aesthetic norms.

Kennedy’s pièce de résistance for the administration’s presidential legacy and her critical role therein, however, occurred by tragedy. In the few days after watching her husband’s brains explode onto her bright pink suit in Dallas, Kennedy faced the daunting task of dealing emotionally with JFK’s murder, helping confirm Lyndon Johnson’s rise to the presidency, orchestrating a funeral that showcased an American president in the American century\textsuperscript{21} (a moniker in which Kennedy and JFK played no small part), and constructing the Kennedy administration’s specific legacy. Her dedicated resolve on all aforementioned fronts was admirable, and Kennedy’s composure during the funeral endeared her to the American public.\textsuperscript{22} The Kennedys’ cosmopolitan personae throughout his presidency, as historian Whitney Walton notes, “ensured that much of the world ‘shared’ the American president and his family with Americans.”\textsuperscript{23} Jacqueline Kennedy
received a profusion of letters internationally from people who identified with her tragic loss, his political promise, and their young family. Walton demonstrates that the French were particularly moved by her composure, often claiming “a specific national identification with Mrs. Kennedy” that included statements such as “you had the admirable courage of a Frenchwoman during the funeral.”

Kennedy’s construction of JFK’s funeral, alongside her “Camelot” interview with Theodore White in Life magazine, functioned as a “symbolic condensation” that mythologized a cultural image of the administration already built by 1963. While she actively sought to cement the administration’s legacy, she simultaneously crafted and condensed her representativeness as Woman, an ideal that Andy Warhol destabilized and subverted through his Jackie paintings and prints. Warhol’s Jackies starkly displaced Kennedy’s iconic role in Camelot by collapsing her institutional iconicity of restrained feminism into a visual dialogue with the era’s major sex symbols (Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor). As such, he depicted her broader iconicity as one placeholder in a bipolar notion of early Cold War public femininity. Warhol’s appropriation of Kennedy’s image, as I later discuss, proves prescient for assessing her rhetorical agency.

Scholars of the role of first lady describe its institutional elements primarily through the idea of the double bind, which measures a first lady’s ability to subvert her contingent gendered expectations. As Karrin Anderson concludes, however, first ladies traditionally draw from a typology of “social style” that informs a paradoxical invitational capacity Karlyn Kohrs Campbell describes as parasitic, redefinitional, satirical, and subversive (among other adjectives). A visual rhetorical perspective of Jacqueline Kennedy’s public image as first lady suggests that her performance was more
inventive than scholarship credits her. Examining the mediated avenues through which she enacted her vision of first lady shows her adept understanding of rhetoric as Aristotle defined the term: “the faculty [power] of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion.”

A visual rhetorical perspective allows scholars the opportunity to assess Kennedy’s performance against the gender ideology of her era and as part of a Cold War impulse to visualize politics and attain “soft” power. In the next section, I build from my discussion of Kennedy’s place in the tradition of first lady to analyze her dual use of social style and visual invention.

Social Style, Feminine Style, and Visual Rhetorical Iconicity

Teri Finneman and Ryan Thomas argue that the first lady operates in “permanent conjuncture,” a “double movement between the reconstitution of tradition and the struggle toward modernity.” Thus, Finneman and Thomas show that news media reductively painted Grace Coolidge as an ideal of domestic womanhood even as the first major women’s movement could have enlarged the gendered scope for her performance. First ladies, therefore, seamlessly must embody continuity with the past, reflect the ideals of the present, and sometimes provide direction for the future. More often than not, these expectations concern their performance of appropriate gender roles, themselves inscribed within a system promoting whiteness and upper-class femininity. For example, as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Karrin Vasby Anderson have shown, Hillary Clinton’s ready embrace of her first lady role as a co-presidency, in which she was responsible for political policy, “violated expectations” of the position and aroused much contempt; hence Anderson’s suggestion that the role comprises a tradition of “social style,” including the appearance of being apolitical. Kennedy, as this dissertation
shows, fulfilled the typology of “social style” to the fullest. Her novelty, I have argued, was her rich use of the visual for effect, and I want to engage Kennedy’s rhetorical role—her iconicity, as I defined the term in my introduction—alongside Anderson’s discussion of social style.

This project demonstrates how Kennedy used her love of cultural history to generate cosmopolitanism as a white feminine ideal through a set of particular visual images that built her iconic “Camelot” role. As I argued in the introduction to this dissertation and in my chapter on Kennedy’s construction of Camelot, visual icons mutually amplify form and content; however, they primarily emphasize visual form to highlight a participatory mode of seeing (“hypostasis,” to use Eric Jenkins’ term). This mutual amplification follows a tradition of discursive iconicity, which Michael Leff and Andrew Sachs argue produces potent meaning. So, for instance, when Martin Luther King uses periodic sentences to emphasize the long wait African Americans have endured in their fight for equality, he uses the syntax of the sentence persuasively to amplify its content. King writes powerfully:

But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society, when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park that has been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in
her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people…then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.36

In this sentence, King uses a series of dependent clauses, punctuated by semicolons, to link instance after instance illustrating the effects of inequality: a rhetorical move that builds urgency toward his thesis by continually denying readers the ability to complete the sentence. Both the content and the form of King’s sentence are mutually reinforcing, tortuously enticing readers to feel the urgency and impatience African Americans feel. That form and content “match,” therefore, becomes fundamental to this rhetorical approach. Like King’s brilliant text, Kennedy’s visual version of this strategy included a “match” between her political ideals (arts and culture) and strategic representations of herself in public.

In part, as I have shown, Kennedy’s use of iconicity has origins in the general invention capacity of the position of first lady and increased value in a “ceremonial” presidential administration during an era in which political ideologies were visualized through “soft sell” strategies of display and exhibition. Anderson, we recall, conceptualized “social style” out of historical understanding of first ladies as “icons of American femininity,”37 with other scholars implicitly and explicitly referencing that iconicity as part of the “double bind” characterizing women’s rhetoric. Because visual iconicity involves participatory meaning-making between rhetor and audience, and because celebrity stems from dually enacting presence and absence, Kennedy’s performance was particularly resonant in early Cold War culture. She invoked the
tradition of “social style” while first lady but did so inventively through visual form. Her performance, as I have discussed, provides insight into other historical rhetorical resources available to first ladies: the visual impact of cultural iconicity and the power of celebrity. Thus, this dissertation shows that rhetorical conventions for public femininity and the role of first lady can be visual in addition to being oratorical. While women often have been silenced in public, they have a rich storehouse of icon images available to them—starting with portraits of Mary in the early Christian church—and this dissertation argues that one woman in a public, political role used visual image rhetorically and inventively. And, in fact, Kennedy strategically deployed silence for personal power, even as that withdrawal whetted public appetite for “extratextual” knowledge about her. Therefore, rhetorical scholarship might benefit from assessing individual performances of first ladies through attention to visual means of enacting or subverting required gendered expectations. Moreover, examining individual visual performances of the role enhances our understanding of its broader inventional capacity.

Only recently have scholars begun to assess Kennedy’s visual legacy as part of her enactment of first lady. Elizabeth J. Natalle analyzes Kennedy’s clothes, White House entertainment, and JFK’s funeral as central components to her legacy. Whitney Walton concludes that Kennedy’s engagement with President Charles de Gaulle and the French public through dress, language, and appreciation of French culture and history, spurred international consumption of her “look” through magazines such as Paris-Match. And Anna Kryczka argues that Kennedy’s performance during her televised tour of the White House complemented the “radical futurity” of the Kennedy administration by employing a “high-cultural” documentary alternative to the middlebrow family sitcom.
dissertation uses a visual rhetorical perspective to address a broader aesthetics of political culture, situating Kennedy at the interstices of government institutions, American national identity, mass media and art, and consumer and celebrity culture.

I do not want to ignore the ways in which Kennedy’s usage of social style and visual iconicity, however, raises issues about her relative agency in defining her own public persona. Indeed, by using popular media to communicate her vision of feminine icon, itself reliant on participatory and enthymematic meaning-making, Kennedy empowered audiences and producers of her image (fashion editors, broadcast companies, newspapers, artists) to filter that image through their own lenses for interpretation. Because Kennedy’s image came to represent early Cold War femininity in an iconic way—as one placeholder in a white cultural ideal of repressed public femininity—her own invention capacities immediately after her tenure as first lady were diminished. In the next section, I discuss the double-edged sword of Kennedy’s rhetorical power.

Rhetorical Agency and Cultural Appropriation

This project demonstrates three conclusions about Jacqueline Kennedy’s agency as rhetor. First, Kennedy differed from her postwar predecessors in her ability to use “soft sell” visual strategies to define her image, redefine her gendered institutional role, and construct facets of American cultural identity during the early Cold War era. Her skill for developing “fitting” rhetorical strategies to address postwar domestic and international audiences who might question America’s cultural gravitas (and a crux of the Kennedy administration’s presidential persona) helped her avoid potential controversies and elevated America’s status on the world stage. She turned her so-called campaign weaknesses—snobbishness, Frenchness, her love for expensive clothing and European
history—into strengths as first lady by exploiting aspirational elements of the role and modern culture. The three case studies herein show that Kennedy had tremendous command of the importance of ceremony and the demands of the given moment.

Second, Kennedy understood the significance in maintaining tension between institutional tradition and cultural resonance. If, as Finneman and Thomas argue, first ladies embody continuity with the past while reflecting ideals of the present, Kennedy’s promotion of an aspirational American identity balanced those impulses. She grounded American national aesthetics not in capitalistic abundance per se but in the cultivation of cosmopolitanism over provincialism—she sought to recover and reveal American cultural history to help the United States constitute its newfound superpower status, a project with aesthetic dimensions as much as political or ideological. Keith Erickson and Stephanie Thomson suggest that modern first ladies’ participation in international diplomacy often problematically binds their rhetorical performances to the roles of escort, aesthete, surrogate, cultural emissary, and goodwill ambassador (the last role, social advocate, is gendered masculine and apparently indicates a more progressive enactment of the position). They argue that Kennedy, as aesthete, “adroitly adapted to then-current gender expectations by appropriating both cultural and mythic norms regarding feminine conduct” but warn against whether an appropriation of aesthetic stratagems “condescendingly mimes feminine behavior.” While their perspective comprehensively interrogates the position for its institutional ideologies concerning gender, this dissertation demonstrates the error in equating non-oratorical rhetorics with political impotence, and the authors oversimplify Kennedy’s international performance. While Kennedy may fit the role of “aesthete” by bolstering John Kennedy’s political image
through “performing courtship gestures that enchant foreign officials and publics,” through “performing courtship gestures that enchant foreign officials and publics,” her public enactment of language fluency resists easy circumscription, as she literally mediated between the president and Charles de Gaulle, for example. This project additionally shows that rhetorical “speechlessness” does not necessarily operate as a “trope for oppression, passivity, [and] obedience,” and demonstrates the importance of situating first ladies’ international performance, as Kristy Maddux calls critics to do, within “forces larger than the individual rhetor.”

I do not mean, however, to ignore the problematic ways in which women’s and first ladies’ rhetorical agency can be appropriated for cultural meaning making. Unfortunately, after John Kennedy’s assassination, Kennedy’s aptitude for solidifying a set of rhetorical “identifications” she helped build (Camelot) posed challenges to her capacity as rhetorical agent, an effect that stemmed partly from her visual accessibility. Third, therefore, this project suggests that although Kennedy was an expert rhetor of the administration’s aesthetics, usage of popular media and visual image proved limiting for her individual agency. As the fourth chapter demonstrates, Kennedy sought to craft a particular vision of Camelot for the administration’s final legacy but Warhol likewise appropriated her image for his own commentary on the socio-political conditions of the postwar era. She became another object—alongside Campbell’s soup cans and Brillo box sculptures—that captured the tragedy of modern mass culture, and we should be uncomfortable about that objectification, no matter how nuanced. Taken to its limits, Kennedy’s celebrity image (which Warhol helped cement) became public property. Thus, despite two lawsuits against paparazzo Ron Galella in the early 1970s, Kennedy and her children were hounded relentlessly for photographs, a problem still faced by female
celebrities today.\textsuperscript{51} On the one hand, rhetorical images have the capacity to reconfigure ideas about women in public life. On the other hand, relying primarily on visual image to model public femininity rhetorically has potential to exacerbate problematic paradigms that restrict women’s access to other forms of the public, such as political oratory, and constrain their individual abilities for agency.\textsuperscript{52}

This study indicates the necessity for rhetorical and feminist scholars to examine the complex role of the visual in gendered institutions. Kennedy’s images in popular media suggest that her rhetorical enactment as first lady was more nuanced than scholarship describes. Likewise, her multimodal performance demonstrates the significance of analyzing the modern presidency as a “presidentiality,”\textsuperscript{53} with cultural and ideological meaning formed outside of “official media” (such as newspapers and presidential speech). First ladies can have a powerful effect on the vision of a given administration, and those rhetorics—despite their appearance as apolitical—can signify a paradoxical inventiveness for subverting gender norms. Neither 1950s housewife nor 1960s feminist, Kennedy’s performance as first lady was a transitional femininity that thrived in the visual, cultural, and political conditions of the early Cold War era but reveals the broader capacities of the role.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} James Patterson, \textit{Grand Expectations} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 448.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Elaine Tyler May, \textit{Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era} (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 133-34.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Jay Mulvaney, \textit{Diana and Jackie} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 169.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Parry-Giles and Blair, “The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady,” 565.
\end{itemize}


20 Kennedy had experienced French disdain for American culture during her Smith College Junior Year in France program abroad, where she was “galled at the patronizing attitude toward America, [and] annoyed by the compliment ‘but no one would think you were American,’ if one showed a knowledge of literature or history.” Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations,” 38. Thus, beyond the administration’s desire to showcase its leadership on the world stage, Kennedy had deep-rooted desire to present American culture as on par with other Western countries.

21 The term “the American Century” stems from Henry Luce, “Editorial,” *Life*, February 17, 1941.

22 Even now, a current Miranda Lambert song, for instance, croons: “Wish I could be just a little less dramatic/Like a Kennedy when Camelot went down in flames…My mama came from a softer generation/Where you get a grip and bite your lip just to save a little face.”


Campbell, “Inventing Women,” 112.


Finneman and Thomas, “First Ladies in Permanent Conjuncture,” 231.


This excerpt from King’s speech can be found in James M. Washington (ed.), *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 88.

Along these lines more recently, Karrin Vasby Anderson, for instance, discerns Hillary Clinton’s use of the dual power of the “Madonna” image after her failed health care reform and during Bill Clinton’s Monica Lewinsky scandal. Please see Anderson, “Hillary Rodham Clinton as ‘Madonna,’” in the above citation.


I make this claim based on the overwhelming consensus that Kennedy was an intensely “private” public figure bent on being as “normal” as possible, both within and outside of the White House.


Walton, “Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations.”


Erickson and Thomson, “First Lady International Diplomacy,” 245.

Erickson and Thomson, “First Lady International Diplomacy,” 246.

Erickson and Thomson, “First Lady International Diplomacy,” 245.

Erickson and Thompson, quoting Cheryl Glenn, “First Lady International Diplomacy,” 245.


For examples, please see Campbell’s summary of the “demonic” and “True Womanhood” conventions in “Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1998). Also, for scholarship on conventions of femininity at the turn of the century, please see Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

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