



38th SEASON

ENGLISH FILM CLUB 2017/18

Locarno, Cinema Kursaal

18.15

Friday, 19 January 2018

Jackie 2016

100 minutes

Directed by **Pablo Larrain**

Starring: Natalie Portman, Peter Sarsgaard and Greta Gerwig

The film begins with Jackie Kennedy receiving a journalist for an interview at her home. After some small talk and introductory questions, the journalist turns to his inquiries about the assassination and its aftermath for Jackie and her family. In a series of flashbacks, Jackie is shown in her emotional reaction to the events of the assassination and her interaction with members of the White House close to the President. Lyndon Johnson and his wife are shown comforting Jackie in the aftermath. Robert Kennedy soon appears to help her, in planning the funeral and looking after the family. Jackie is especially concerned for the well-being of the children in adjusting to the loss of their father. As the film returns several times to the journalist interviewing Jackie, she makes clear that she maintains the right to control which parts of the interview may come to press and which parts are to be withheld. By the end of the film, Jackie's recollections make clear that her reminiscence of her years at the White House were best recalled in her memory as those associated with the Camelot created in Washington during her husband's term as President.

Critics' comments:

- When considering Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, I remember Priam's line from The Iliad: "I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through; / I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children." Jackie, of course, was not the *first* First Lady to be widowed, but surely the first to be so *publicly* widowed, her agony magnified and reflected back to her by the media. Once the Zapruder footage was made accessible, there she was, spattered and panicked, forced to move through the motions of abrupt bereavement over and over for the edification of conspiracy theorists everywhere for all time ("Back and to the left ... back and to the left"). She did not have to put her lips to the hands of Oswald (or whoever pulled the trigger), but she did, I think, endure what no other mortal woman had endured, at least on that scale.

Jackie is the latest attempt to dramatize the 20th century's most famous widow's experiences, anchored by an uncanny vocal impersonation by Natalie Portman, whose Jackie is appropriately brittle and confounded. Towards the finish, the movie administers a couple of spoonfuls of sugar to make the existential medicine go down — John Hurt appears as a priest to explain to Jackie and us why Jackie, and we, go on in a world without meaning, and there's a bit too much dewy-eyed romanticization of Camelot. (I swear I could hear old Gore Vidal snorting in disdain from wherever he is.) But most of the film is a delicate, trickily structured poem of sadness, the kind of sadness that recalls Aeschylus' "He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God." (Rob Gonsalves, *eFilmCritic Com*)

-Here's how you know the new film *Jackie* is working: You move from trying to decide just how credible Natalie Portman's impersonation is to thinking about anything and everything except that. (Eleanor Ringel Cater, *Saporta Report*)