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FROM UTILITARIAN HORSES TO FAMILIAL DOGS

The Increasingly Deliberate Use of Companion Animals in
American Post-Presidential Autobiographies

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ABSTRACT

Nicolas Kivilinna: From Utilitarian Horses to Familial Dogs: The Increasingly Deliberate Use of Companion Animals in American Post-Presidential Autobiographies

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In response to the traditional scarcity and recent growing demand of academic attention to both animals in politics and American post-presidential autobiography, my thesis examines the increasingly deliberate use of companion animals in post-presidential autobiographies of former American presidents. As there is little existing scholarly literature on this precise angle, I construct in my thesis a theoretical framework from several academic fields, including political science, literary studies, socio-cultural studies, and demography.

I first define political autobiography as a complex and contradictory type of literature that requires a variety of perspectives to be studied. Next, I discuss the importance of companion animals in the United States and why especially horses and dogs can be expected to be put to politically significant use in my primary texts. My theory chapters are followed by a close analysis and categorization of companion animal portrayals in the primary texts and an explanatory chapter of why these depictions occur the way they do.

As a result, my thesis demonstrates that the use of companion animals in post-presidential autobiographies is increasingly deliberate and that the primary texts can be categorized into distinct eras based on how prominently horses and dogs are represented and whether this is carried out in a utilitarian or familial manner. My thesis also demonstrates that these systematic portrayals occur as a response to several factors, namely the politician-authors appealing to changing majority demographics, beneficial attributes of companion animals being bestowed upon the authors, and literary-technical considerations.

Keywords: American presidents, political autobiography, politics of the United States, companion animals, animal representations, literature, writing

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Eläimet politiikassa sekä amerikkalaiset presidenttien jälkeiset omaelämäkerrat ovat perinteisesti jääneet vähäiselle akateemiselle huomiolle. Viime vuosina kiinnostus aiheita kohtaan on kuitenkin kasvanut, joten tutkielmani täyttää tätä tutkimusaukkoa tarkastelemalla lemmikki- ja kotieläinten käyttöä amerikkalaisten presidenttien presidenttien jälkeisissä omaelämäkertoissa. Koska aiheesta on niukalti tieteellistä kirjallisuutta, rakennan teoreettista viitekehystä yhdistelemällä tutkimusta useilta aloilta, muun muassa politiikan tutkimuksesta, kirjallisuustieteestä, sosiaalitieteestä ja väestötieteestä.

Tutkielmani alussa tarkastelen poliittista omaelämäkertaa kirjallisuuden lajina ja tutkimuksen kohteena. Seuraavaksi käsittelen lemmikki- ja kotieläinten tärkeää roolia Yhdysvalloissa ja osoitan, kuinka erityisesti hevosia ja koiria voidaan odottaa käytettävän poliittisesti merkittävässä tarkoituksessa kohdeteksteissäni. Teorialukuja seuraa teksteissä esiintyvien lemmikki- ja kotieläinten representaatioiden analyysi ja kategorisointi sekä näitä selittävä luku.

Graduni osoittaa, että lemmikki- ja kotieläinten käyttö presidenttien jälkeisissä omaelämäkertoissa on lisääntyneissä määrin tarkoituksellista. Kohdeteokset voidaan jakaa eri aikakausiin sen perusteella, miten keskeisessä roolissa hevoset ja koirat esitetään niissä, sekä sen mukaan esitetäänkö ne käytäntöä vai perhettä korostavasta näkökulmasta. Tutkielmani osoittaa myös, että nämä systemaattiset esitykset syntyvät useiden tekijöiden vaikutuksesta. Näitä ovat poliitiko-kirjailijoiden vetoaminen muuttuviin väestöenemmistöihin, lemmikki- ja kotieläinten hyödyllisten ominaisuuksien liittäminen itse kirjailijoihin sekä kirjoitustekniset seikat.

Avainsanat: Yhdysvaltain presidentit, poliittinen omaelämäkerta, Yhdysvaltain politiikka, lemmikki- ja kotieläimet, eläinten representaatiot, kirjallisuus, kirjoittaminen

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck -ohjelmalla.

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1. Introduction

American post-presidential autobiographies and companion animals in American politics have both been studied surprisingly little, especially when considering how widely read the former are and how significant a role the latter have on several occasions played in the politics of the United States. A reason why scholarly literature on autobiographies by former American presidents is scarce may be that political autobiography is a notoriously complex type of literature that often features contradictions and tensions that make it an unappealing subject of study for many fields. For example, while they often explicitly outline an informative objective, political autobiographies are commonly seen by academics as a disreputable source of historical information, and more a form of “sophisticated entertainment” (Egerton, “The Anatomy of Political Memoir” 346). In turn, a lack of material on companion animals in American politics can be explained by companion animals in society and human-animal relationships being relatively new subjects of scholarly study, and, even then, they have thus far merited more interest in areas other than pure politics. A reason why companion animals in politics have long evaded scholarly attention is that until recently they were seen as a safe and “seemingly non-political locus” (Blankfield 335), despite having featured in several historically significant political events, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous “Fala Speech”. Such a status may have also contributed to persistent misinformation regarding animals in politics, as evidenced by debunked but persistent beliefs, which include the notion of shark attacks supposedly having an effect on American elections.

The combination of these two subjects, companion animals in American post-presidential autobiographies, is a worthy subject of study not only because of a lack of critical attention and unresolved problematic aspects but also because of the outsized role certain companion animals serve in in such works. The latter is especially notable when considering the seeming irrelevance of animals to the actual daily political work the authors are known for and which they commonly write about. To study this long-overlooked subject, I have included as my primary texts the first post-presidential

autobiography by each former president to have written one. This body of works currently ranges from Thomas Jefferson's "Autobiography" to George W. Bush's *Decision Points*.¹

My thesis has two main objectives. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate that the portrayals of companion animals do not occur randomly but rather form trends that can be categorized into distinct eras, with horses and dogs featuring as uniquely prominent animals. Secondly, I will argue that these portrayals, along with the changes in them, are increasingly deliberate and politically responsive, and will demonstrate why and to what effect they happen.

To accomplish this, I will first define more precisely the status of political autobiography as an elaborate, complicated, and politically calculative type of literature so as to understand the kinds of methods needed to study it. As my main theoretical source for this, I will use several essays found in *Political Memoir*, edited by George Egerton, which illustrate the variety of fields commonly used to study political autobiography, supplemented with both older and newer viewpoints. I will also detail the role of animals in American politics and why horses and dogs as companions can be expected to feature in an exceptional role in the primary texts. As there is no existing framework for this, my arguments rely on various approaches ranging from the history of animals in the United States, to studies on the literature of the Romantic Period, to contemporary societal views on companion animals.

Next, I will carry out a categorization of the types of companion animal portrayals in my primary texts, followed by an analysis of the increasingly deliberate use of such portrayals. As a response to the complexity of political autobiography, and to companion animals not having been studied in relation to it, the analysis will be conducted from several different prerequisite perspectives, including political science, history, literary studies, socio-cultural studies, demographical statistics, feminist studies, and a variety of interrelated material regarding companion animal ownership.

¹ Barack Obama's *A Promised Land* (2020) is not included as a primary text because it constitutes only the first volume of his otherwise unpublished post-presidential autobiography.

As such, my thesis contributes new viewpoints and information to the study of both political autobiography and animal representations, the intersection of which forms an important and emerging academic point of interest. Furthermore, this occurs at a time when attitudes towards companion animal ownership are evolving and awareness of animal welfare is increasingly high. If such considerations have led to the latest developments in presidential companion animal ownership (with Donald Trump being the first president in over one hundred years to not own a companion animal and Joe Biden to be the first president to own a companion animal from a rescue shelter), now is an appropriate time to evaluate how companion animals have been utilized in presidential literature thus far.

2. On Political Autobiography

In this section, I will define “political autobiography” and discuss its nature as a complex, contradictory, and calculative type of literature with socio-political motivations. I will do this to demonstrate that the study of political autobiography requires many viewpoints and that even seemingly unpolitical aspects can be analyzed as being deliberately crafted. As a framework for such arguments, I will employ essays by George Egerton, Stephen Ambrose, and Robert H. Ferrell from *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (1994), with supporting perspectives from Philip Abbott’s *States of Perfect Freedom: Autobiography and American Political Thought* (1987) and Lawrence Kappel’s essay from *Autobiography* (2001). As my main approach from purely autobiographical studies, I will use the “autobiographical pact” from Philippe Lejeune’s *On Autobiography* (1989, based on material originally from 1975-1986), one of the most central works in its field. I will also utilize several other sources to support and discuss these arguments, such as Rachel McLennan’s *American Autobiography* (2013), which doubles as a supportive source for both general and political autobiography. In choosing my secondary sources, I have sought to strike a balance between tried works from the late twentieth century and more timely sources. Also, for perspective and for the confirmation of broader literary trends, I have included sources from within the United States and elsewhere from the Anglosphere.

2.1. Definitions and contradictions of political autobiography

“Political autobiography” is difficult to define since “autobiography” itself is not a straightforward concept and because the political aspect adds its own complexities. According to Merriam-Webster, a “memoir” can be a narrative about oneself as well as about someone else whereas in “autobiography” the subject and narrator are the one and the same (“Autobiography”; “Memoir”). Furthermore, Merriam-Webster defines memoir to be “an account of something noteworthy”, whereas an autobiography pertains to one’s life (“Autobiography”; “Biography”; “Memoir”).

Notably, the dictionary gives “autobiography” as one of the definitions for “memoir”, but this is not the case the other way around (“Autobiography”; “Memoir”). Through these observations it can be inferred that “autobiography” is an umbrella term for autobiographical texts, regardless of whether they cover a noteworthy portion of a life or the whole life.

McLennan affirms these conclusions in *American Autobiography* by noting that “memoir” “has been understood as a subgenre of autobiography and biography” (7). While acknowledging different approaches to the use of these terms and noting the emergence of the comprehensive term “life writing”, McLennan settles on the term “autobiography” in her work due to its usefulness in applying “to a wide range of texts” (7).

In practice, the overlap in definitions of the terms leads to a large degree of interchangeability, and likely to some confusion, which can be seen in the titles of both my primary and secondary texts. For example, Herbert Hoover dedicates hundreds of pages to his pre-public life in *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, whereas Calvin Coolidge covers the same in less than two chapters in *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* and otherwise focuses solely on his public work. (The two presidents lived very different lives, naturally resulting in different narratives. However, based on these observations of their works, their use of “autobiography” and “memoirs” in the titles could easily have been reversed.) Similarly, what is referred to as “memoir” in the essays of *Political Memoir* is just as much political “autobiography”, based on my and McLennan’s assessments of the two terms.

Because the umbrella term “autobiography” covers works regarding one’s life, whether the focus is mainly on a part of the life or all of it, and disregarding choice of words in the title, and because McLennan deems the term usable based on similar grounds (7-8), I will use the term in my own discussion of the subject and to refer to my primary texts. When discussing secondary sources that use the term “memoir”, I will use “autobiography/memoir” when direct quotation of the original term is not required.

Political autobiography is a type of literature that is hard to define, because writing about one's life can incorporate so many elements depending on what one's life events are, when and where they took place, and how one wishes to portray them. Indeed, as Abbott points out, the fundamental dilemma of politically oriented autobiography is precisely that each new work is apt to change the genre (14). As elements of such autobiography, he includes the diary, journal, notebook, confession, and memoir (14-15), while Egerton notes that political "memoir" may include elements of "autobiography, biography, diary, history, political science, journalism and pamphleteering, to name only its nearest literary neighbours" ("Introduction" xi). Besides incorporating several literary styles, political autobiographies tend to also cover a variety of subjects. Egerton identifies political autobiography/memoir as typically including (but not being limited to, and not necessarily featuring)

contemporary descriptive recording of political events and impressions...; retrospective narration of political engagements together with explanatory and interpretive reflections; autobiographical portrayal of one's life on politics, with childhood, education and personal development given full treatment; biographical depiction of political contemporaries from personal knowledge; revelation of the inner working of a political system based on personal acquaintance with 'the hidden springs of power'; and, in its most ambitious mode, portrayal not only of one's political life but also of the times in which this career occurred – in other words, contemporary history. ("Introduction" xii-xiii)

One of the conclusions of *Political Memoir* is that political autobiography/memoir might well be described as a "polygenre", since this takes into account "both the genre's polymorphous internal constitution and its propensity to take on the forms of related external genres, as well as its diverse socio-political functions" (Egerton, "The Anatomy of Political Memoir" 342).

To continue on the subject of socio-political functions, another central finding in *Political Memoir* is that political autobiography/memoir is not "political" only in the sense of being about politics and by politicians, but that the works aim to be, and often succeed in being, politically influential themselves (Egerton, "The Anatomy of Political Memoir"). Thus, besides their purpose in recounting events that have taken place, political autobiographies/memoirs are also used to advance the subjective notions, ideas, and attitudes of their authors (Egerton, "The Anatomy of Political

Memoir”; Kappel 31), and the political parties, broader ideologies, and other societal movements that the authors may be adherents of.

In their autobiographies, politicians often explicitly lay out their intentions for writing such a work—or at least their purported intentions. For example, Hoover explains that his “effort is to support the American people in their own true philosophy of life—and to present the consequences of turning away from it” (2: vi) and Truman states that “[t]he events, as I saw them and as I put them down here, I hope may prove helpful in informing some people and in setting others straight on the facts” (1: ix). Through relating his experiences, Coolidge hopes his work “may prove to be an encouragement to others in their struggles to improve their place in the world” (106), a sentiment echoed by George W. Bush, who notes that readers may put to use his experiences on complex decision-making in their own lives (xii). The latter also hopes that his book will “serve as a resource for anyone studying this period of American history” (xii).

These often noble and perhaps even lofty statements on providing information and encouragement deviate very much from the personal, pragmatic and calculative motives Egerton and Ambrose identify as reasons for writing political autobiography/memoir and, indeed, at least in part from what can actually be found from the primary texts. Egerton’s list includes “therapy, public rehabilitation, vindication, vengeance, statecraft”, and maintaining a cover-up (“Introduction” xvii). Ambrose notes reasons such as “for catharsis, to influence later historians”, and to justify actions (286). Notably, politicians can also have monetary reasons for publication, too. For example, presidents Grant, Truman, and Nixon were all famously in financial straits by the time they left office and turned to writing their autobiographies as a means to quickly rectify the situation. Grant notes that he “consented for the money it gave me; for at that moment I was living upon borrowed money” (1: 7). Likewise, in his article on Nixon’s autobiography, Ambrose identifies one motivation as “to make money”, something shared by “nearly all other” politician-authors (286).

A further challenge to the stated intention of providing information is related to events that are covered. For a politician to write an autobiography, he must condense his story considerably to fit it into a practical amount of space. Abbott refers to this autobiographical process the “exclusion and emphasis” of events (14), which is, naturally, related to the intentions identified by Egerton and Ambrose, but proves problematic for the informative value of a political autobiography/memoir. As a result, when the stated intention for writing an autobiography is to provide information for the public, the intention is subverted the moment the authors make statements such as “Naturally, there are chapters of my autobiography which cannot now be written” (Roosevelt v), “I have had to leave a lot unsaid” (Carter xiv), and “There must be many errors of omission in this work” (Grant 1: 8). While this process diminishes the informative intention of the works, it gives more weight to what does end up being included. (I will expand on this notion in regard to animals in chapter 5.3.2.)

Taken together, providing information, political purposes, and monetary profit make for a curious trifecta of given and hidden reasons for publishing political autobiography. A centrally interesting notion that arises from these intentions is that political autobiography needs to strike a balance between writing about politics and making the works appealing for casual readers because objectives such as political influencing and making money, especially, require mass readership to be successful.

Thus, to conclude, “political autobiography” is a hard-to-define, oft-mislabeled, extremely contradictory, and genre-encompassing “polygenre” that strives for political influence. I have defined and characterized this type of literature to demonstrate that my primary texts operate in many ways, with some purposes more veiled than others, and to show why, accordingly, my primary texts must be approached from so many different angles in chapter 5.

2.2. Why study political autobiography

Political autobiography is a worthy subject of study for a number of reasons. Most obviously, they are a source of historical documentation and for observing how governing takes place, as I have already briefly outlined. Related to these approaches, there is much to consider in political autobiographies, with contents ranging from childhood memories to day-to-day political work to world-changing events. While the analysis of these matters may at times require multifaceted approaches, the questions that they most fundamentally revolve around are relatively straightforward to pose, such as “What happened, how, and why, according to the author?”.

However, in addition to attempting to answer factual questions, I argue that political autobiography is also worthy of scholarly attention precisely because of all its complexities and contradictions. This is especially true regarding the crafting of a narrative outside the realm of facts and objectivity, which is where the political autobiographer might have more leeway for carrying out a variety of intentions, and where identifying underlying mechanisms to influence readers becomes considerably murkier. Amongst others, I identify the role of companion animals as one of the interesting elements to study. It is a subject that, due to its seeming apoliticality and mundaneness, may be easily overlooked. Compared to other perspectives, the basic question set here is much less clearly defined and requires considerable deliberation before it can be verbalized. I will discuss the justification for this animal-related angle more in chapter 3.

A fundamental question worth looking into arises from the contradictions of political autobiography: How can the works continue to enjoy sustained readership despite these glaring holes, or is it precisely a partial disbelief that makes them stirring reading? The essays in *Political Memoir* seem to make a case for this. As Egerton writes: “Political memoir represents a complex and predatory polygenre; ... it is perhaps the very unconventionality and polymorphous composition of political memoir that contributes most to its enduring appeal” (“Introduction” xii-xiv). My thesis addresses

this issue specifically by demonstrating how companion animals serve as an emotionally appealing subject and increase the readability of post-presidential autobiographies.

What makes studying political autobiography particularly important is its role in societal influence, towards which it is inherently aimed, and for which it can be expected to make use of the many tools of persuasion that originally made the politician a person worth an autobiography that someone might want to read. Like political literature in general, it influences its readers through conveying notions which they may adopt as part of their own worldview, and the more notable a politician is, the more widely read his or her work can be expected to be. The potential for influence becomes an interesting aspect to consider in the case of politicians who write their autobiography before their career has actually ended. Especially in cases like this, the influence of the works is not measured in ambiguously definable terms such as legacy, but, in its most direct form, directly at the ballot box. Also, even if a politician does not aim for public office after publishing their autobiography, they can play an important role in activities such as party politics, fundraising, and shaping national opinion, all of which are affected by the success of the literature that they publish.

This leads me to the question of why I have chosen to study American post-presidential autobiographies in particular. I have three main reasons for this. Firstly, American post-presidential autobiographies have been little studied as their own subcategory of political literature. I believe this angle merits more attention especially because the works form a body in which earlier works influence the later works in a unique way: The real-life decisions made by earlier politicians shape the future in which their successors operate and write about and, also, presidents consult their predecessors' writings both during a presidency as well as when writing about the presidency.² Furthermore, how successfully a former president portrays himself in his autobiography affects the rest of his post-presidential work. This very tangible chain of influence from real life to literature and

² Truman laments "how much is lost to us because so few of our Presidents have told their own stories. It would have been helpful for us to know more of what was in their minds and what impelled them to do what they did." (ix). Bush Jr. writes: "Nearly all the historians suggested that I read Memoirs by President Ulysses S. Grant, which I did." (xi).

back to real life makes the American post-presidential autobiography a unique literary subject of study.

Secondly, former American presidents wield immense power and commonly come to achieve many notable feats on the world stage. Writing a post-presidential autobiography has become a normative way of wielding that post-presidential power, and because this happens not through direct hard power but through using literature as a form of indirect soft power, it should be studied more.

To add to this, current observers might have been led to disregard the immediate political potential of post-presidential autobiographies, even in a time when the works have become as widely read as they are. My reasoning for this claim is that many may consider former presidents “electively retired” because the presidency has been limited to two terms since 1951 and because no former president has been an elective candidate since then. Further contributing to this image may be that there is no other equal or higher post for them to achieve. However, historically speaking, 10 out of the 34 presidents to have lived for at least two years after their presidency, which is usually the shortest time to the next major elections in the United States, sought public office to the point of being voted for. Many more can be expected to have pursued it. Posts of those who did end up successfully serving include House Representative, Senator, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Even the presidency has been sought again in elections by five former presidents, out of whom one attained it. In regard to my primary texts, only four of the former presidents to have written a post-presidential autobiography were no longer able to run for another term at the time. Therefore, in addition to being generally formidable political works, due to being written by the President of the United States, my primary texts can be read as material written for a potentially very immediate purpose, in some cases even as campaign literature. This is not conjecture, as proven by Gerald Ford’s attempt to be on the ticket in the 1980 presidential elections (Reagan 215-216), only a year after his post-presidential autobiography was published, and Theodore Roosevelt being a candidate for presidential nominee for both the Progressive Party and the Republican Party in 1916, three years after he published his

post-presidential autobiography. On average, former presidents publish their autobiographies less than four years after the end of their presidency and live for over 14 more years after that, which suggests that post-presidential autobiographies are not as much a rumination at the end of their public lives as works that they wish to publish while they are still household names and at an appropriate age.³

Lastly, American post-presidential autobiographies are a massive and still growing business. Clinton's, Bush, Jr's, and Obama's book deals are amongst the largest ones ever made, and, today, each new addition to the canon is sure to become a best-seller. This in turn makes both of my earlier points all the more relevant, but in itself merits critical attention like any other multimillion-dollar endeavor.

2.3. How to study political autobiography

When discussing how to study political autobiography, a central aspect related to authorship must be noted, since it appears to go fully against the notion of "autobiography", derived from Ancient Greek words meaning "self", "life", and "writing" (McLennan 6): Despite the subject of a work being credited as its author, political autobiographies are commonly written with "outside help", or "ghost writers", which is especially prominent in works by prominent political figures who have an abundance of resources available to produce them, as is the case in many of my primary texts (Fehrman). This directly challenges some definitions of "autobiography", such as that of the Cambridge Dictionary, which defines "autobiography" as "the story of a person's life as *written* by that person" [emphasis added] (Cambridge Dictionary "Autobiography"). However, ghost-writing is not disallowed in Merriam-Webster's definition of "autobiography", which merely states that it is "the biography of a person *narrated* by himself or herself" [emphasis added] (Merriam-Webster "Autobiography").

³ These figures do not consider the two posthumous primary texts by Jefferson and Van Buren.

As such, the phenomenon of ghost-writing allows for a striking contradiction: the narrator's voice in an autobiography might be considerably different from the "real voice" of the subject. If so, how can an autobiography be expected to reveal information from the perspective of the person it is purportedly written by? It is unknown how many casual readers consider this, but it provides a peculiar "dual readership", which leads to a further question: How can the works be discussed if one audience reads them as literally the words of the credited author and the other is aware of possible outside influence?

Indeed, miscredited "true authorship" is not hypothetical, but a proven fact in the case of several American post-presidential autobiographies. The contributions of uncredited help include George W. Bush's pre-written scenes being stitched together by his speechwriter Christopher Michel (Curtis) and Grant employing "a small army of aides" for research and Mark Twain to edit the text (Fehrman).⁴ The most extreme case study is Truman's autobiography, of which he himself directly wrote only a small portion on his life before politics, and even that was reworked by his "several editors and writers of the memoirs" (Ferrell "Truman" 274).⁵

Because the authorship of my primary texts is so laxly credited, and because evaluating "true authorship" is nigh impossible, I argue that, instead of attempting to evaluate what a president has precisely contributed, an appropriate way to proceed with the analysis of my primary texts is to simply read the texts as statements by the presidents themselves. This argument can be rationalized from three different perspectives.

Firstly, in a broad sense, many comparable statements and publications by presidents, such as speeches and social media posts, are commonly understood to be partially or fully produced by others

⁴ No provider of direct input receives official authorship credit in any of the works. Some presidents express gratefulness for help they received in the introduction or acknowledgements, but Bush Sr. is the only one to directly state within his work that a part of his work was written by someone else.

⁵ Revealingly, Ferrell states that Truman's ghost-written memoirs fall flat in comparison to Truman's own writing, which can be found, for example, in Truman's correspondence with his wife Elizabeth, which Ferrell characterizes as "the most remarkable presidential letters that have become available during the two centuries of the American presidency" ("Truman" 276).

yet are taken as a president's own words. The former claim is demonstrated by a president's administration which very openly contains posts such as speechwriter and, today, a social media team. The latter is demonstrated by presidential statements and publications being routinely referred to as the president's own words, as opposed to, for example, headlines such as: "The President, in a speech written by his speechwriter, claims...". This approach is supported by the legal status of presidential statements; for example, the Department of Justice has ruled that tweets sent from the Twitter account "POTUS" are official statements by the President of the United States (Laird).

Secondly, readers routinely take the authorship of post-presidential autobiographies at face value, even in cases which I have highlighted as being all but independently written. As one of many examples of this, less than 10 out of the 443 reviews of Grant's autobiography on the book-cataloging website Goodreads.com consider Mark Twain's influential role as editor, even though very many commend the quality of the writing ("Personal Memoirs"); in Truman's case, not a single reviewer indicates at his lack of direct contribution to his work ("1945"; "1946-1952"). Even the authors of my primary texts themselves do not consider this matter when referring to each other's works.

Lastly, besides these practical reasonings, the approach of reading autobiographies as if written by their credited authors is a used approach from the point of view of autobiography studies. In *On Autobiography*, one of the most central works of its field, Lejeune presents what he calls the "autobiographical pact". According to him, a starting point for reading autobiography is for the reader to accept the narrator and the signature (the latter meaning the credited author) to be the same. In her article "The Textual Contract: Distinguishing Autobiography from the Novel", Blowers evaluates the autobiographical pact as a useful approach in the analysis of autobiography because, firstly, it is a way to distinguish autobiography from fiction, and, secondly, it allows endless considerations regarding truth to be bypassed (105-106). Although McLennan outlines many counterarguments against Lejeune's theory, she also demonstrates the difficulty in replacing it with any other single

approach, and also highlights the importance on settling on some initial approach for studying to commence (3-6).

Thus, since taking credited authorship at face value in autobiography is a common approach shared by autobiography studies and casual readers alike, as well as by legal authorities in the case of comparable presidential texts, I too will approach my primary texts in this way and will not consider authorship any further.

Since political autobiography appropriates elements from so many different kinds of literature, the study of it requires a number of perspectives, too; the essays in *Political Memoir* are written by both academics and non-academics who analyze the subject from viewpoints ranging from strict history to political science to professional writing. Furthermore, when studying a phenomenon not in the context of a lifetime but several centuries, and taking into account ensuing changes in society, politics, technology, philosophies, and writing style, the need for a wide-ranged approach is apparent.

Thus, in this thesis, I will include approaches from fields such as literary studies, animality studies, political science and history overlaid with demographic data analysis and the psychology of perceptions related to companion animal ownership. The relevant works will be presented in chapter 5. This constitutes my framework on the study of American post-presidential autobiography.

2.4. On the primary texts

As primary texts for my thesis I have chosen the first autobiography published by each American president after he left office.⁶ I have limited the works to the first published after a presidency so as to capture a president's sentiments as close as possible to his time in office and the events he depicts in his work. In all, my primary texts include 16 works, some of which were published in separate volumes. A considerable number of these are by the latter half of American presidents. Between

⁶ Whereas this distinction includes both "autobiographies" and "memoirs", it rules out, for example, journals, letter collections, and compiled speeches. Autobiography can include elements of them, as has been shown, but is primarily a medium written after the events described instead in the midst of them, and, thus, not comparable (Egerton, "The Anatomy of Political Memoir" 343-344).

Roosevelt and George W. Bush (“Bush Jr.” from hereon), who entered office in 1901 and 2001, respectively, all but two presidents have written an autobiography, apart from those who died in office. Of the twenty-four individuals preceding Roosevelt, only four wrote an autobiography, two of which were published posthumously.⁷

That my primary texts were published during a long time frame does not prove problematic for my analysis of them. Egerton notes generally that “the genre of political memoir... had been fully developed” before the end of the 1800’s (“Introduction” xiv), and, regarding the United States in particular, both Abbott and Kappel identify Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*, published in 1791, as the first modern American political autobiography (Abbott 18; Kappel 19). Thus, my primary texts fit largely or entirely into the category of modern political autobiography, meaning that in this sense they are comparable despite having been published over the course of nearly two hundred years.

Although the body of works as a whole includes all of the elements that Abbott and Egerton identify for political autobiography, no two works are the same. Hoover, Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, and Clinton published works amounting to more than one thousand pages, whereas Buchanan and Coolidge express themselves in less than 300 pages. Many of the works contain a short summary of childhood and education and quickly move on to recounting public life, the majority of which is dedicated to the presidency. However, Buchanan and Carter write nearly exclusively about their time in office, while Roosevelt and Hoover balance life before and during the presidency, and Grant offers only a few words on his presidency, focusing mainly on his role as General in the Civil War.

⁷ My chosen approach of taking credited authorship at face value, as laid out in chapter 2.3., allows for the inclusion of Van Buren’s and Jefferson’s posthumous autobiographies. Furthermore, I argue for their inclusion due to them being part of the self-influencing and self-referencing chain of works that form the body of post-presidential autobiographies, as presented in chapter 2.2. In fact, this tradition already starts with these very works, with Van Buren explicitly discussing Jefferson’s autobiography (177).

I have not included John Adams’ post-presidential autobiographical writings in my primary texts for two reasons. Firstly, they exist in fragments which have been compiled in different ways in different editions, meaning that there is no consensus on what exactly the autobiography of John Adams is. Secondly, the complete writings were released only in 1961, as *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, which means that they cannot be read as part of the self-influencing post-presidential autobiography canon the way Jefferson and Van Buren’s texts can, as the latter were much more readily available to their literary successors for reflection, for example through the manuscripts being available at the Library of Congress.

Buchanan writes of himself in third person and George H.W. Bush's ("Bush Sr." from hereon) text is supplemented with commentary from his National Security Advisor.⁸ The one thing the works do have in common is that none of their narratives extend beyond the end of the presidency in any meaningful way.

Although the number of primary texts is considerable, especially for a master's thesis, the portion in an individual work that is relevant for my subject is quite limited in most. With some notable exceptions, there are typically only a handful of short remarks and a few longer anecdotes about companion animals in each work. By analyzing these instances, I am able to demonstrate how the role of companion animals unfolds in American post-presidential autobiographies and identify trends spanning over centuries. Concurrently, I hope to reveal something about the mechanisms of political influence in these inherently calculative works.

⁸ Parts written by Bush and by Scowcroft are clearly distinguished from each other in the work. In my thesis, I exclude Scowcroft's parts from consideration so as to focus solely on what I understand to form Bush's *autobiography*, as defined by Merriam-Webster ("Autobiography"). However, even without this distinction the end result would be the same because Scowcroft's parts do not feature companion animals at all, unlike Bush's.

3. On Animals in American Politics and Society

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of animals in American politics, trace their political use to a Romantic tradition which contrasts with negative aspects of politics, demonstrate how horses and dogs in particular are unique as companion animals and can thus be expected to feature in my primary texts, and explain why animals should be studied in relation to post-presidential autobiography.

As the study of animals in politics is still in its infancy, I have produced my own framework for the purposes of this thesis. Central works that contribute to this include Katherine C. Grier's *Pets in America: A History* (2006) for a historical perspective of American companion animal ownership, Bryan Blankfield's article "Political Animals: *Prosopopoeia* in the 1944 Presidential Election" (2017) as a rare venture into animals in politics, Beck and Katcher's book *Between Pets and People: The Importance of Animal Companionship* (1996) which approaches human-animal relationships from a natural science viewpoint, and Kenyon-Jones' "British Romanticism and animals" (2009) and McMichael et al.'s *Anthology of American Literature: Volume I – Colonial Through Romantic* (1997) to demonstrate the especial literary significance certain animals have as derived from the Romantic Period.⁹

I must briefly note that the focus in my thesis on horses and dogs does not arise from a decision made at the onset of my study, but rather through a noted special prominence and role these two animals receive in the reading of my primary texts. How this occurs will be demonstrated in detail in chapter 4. In this chapter, I will explain why it is not surprising that these two species feature in such an outstanding role.

Also, before proceeding, I must explain my use of the term "companion animal", as opposed to comparable terms which include "pet", "animal companion", and "companionable animal", amongst others. What all of these terms have in common are the many challenges that attempts to define them

⁹ Although Kenyon-Jones uses examples from British literature in her article "British Romanticism and animals", she indicates in her work *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing*, which includes a modified version of the article, that the fundamentals are shared in the American Romantic tradition (1-2).

unambiguously face (Grier 6-8, 14; Hunter et al. 7-9). For example, according to one definition pets must be allowed into the house, but this excludes pets that might not even live on the same premises as their owner, such as horses (Grier 7-8). Likewise, is a companion animal really a companion if they do not even understand that the human who cares for them is a distinct individual (Grier 7)? Lastly, strict definitions rarely take into consideration animals that are owned primarily for utilitarian purposes while still being seen as a companion animal by the owner (Grier 14).

Considering that from a timely perspective the word “pet” has connotations of “pleasure rather than utility” (“Pet”), and that the horses featured in the earliest of my primary texts, while distinct from purely work animals, are portrayed as primarily serving a utilitarian function, I have found it best to use the term “companion animal” in my thesis. This term covers the different kinds of companionship that horses and dogs are part of in my primary texts. Also, while allowing for some variation, it clearly sets these prominent portrayals apart from all the other, intermittent roles animals serve in, such as being purely work animals, game, and food.

3.1. Animals in American politics

Animals have played an important role in the economy, society, and culture of the United States since its early history to this day (Grier 8-13). Their role in building the nation in both a material and immaterial sense can be observed through their use in practices such as agriculture, transportation, warfare, and hunting, and by them featuring prominently in American imagery and other arts. Regarding politics in particular, animals are a mainstay like few other sociocultural items, and in many ways are unique in their use and influence when compared to other countries. For example, the use of animals as symbols by major political parties of the world is nearly endemic to the United States; currently, amongst political parties that have over 500,000 members, the donkey of the Democratic Party, the elephant of the Republican Party, and the porcupine of the Libertarian Party find a counterpart only in the bear of the Russia United party. Likewise, the annual presidential

pardoning of a Thanksgiving turkey is a unique example of politics and animals featuring at the same event.

Besides symbolic and ceremonial use, animals have often also played a more direct role in American politics. Due to the superpower status of the United States since WWII, animals can even be seen to have had a singular effect on global affairs, for example through affecting the electoral viability of candidates for the presidency. An example of successful use is Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Fala Speech" during a controversy in the 1944 presidential election campaign. Accused of having used taxpayers' money to send a Navy warship to fetch his dog from an island where it had supposedly been forgotten, Roosevelt claimed in the speech that Fala, the dog, was upset about such a false story being in circulation. With this anthropomorphizing tactic, Roosevelt managed to win over popular opinion (Maltzman et al. 396) and was shortly after re-elected. In contrast, Mitt Romney's admission of having driven 12 hours with his dog strapped in a pet carrier to the roof of his car led to criticism during the 2012 presidential election; despite the incident having taken place nearly 30 years earlier, a survey found that 35 percent of Americans were less likely to vote for Romney after hearing of it (Ingalls).

A reason for public reactions like these stems from a "highly sentimentalized" view that Tuan notes having developed in an industrial and urbanized nation where a "distance between people and nature" has grown (112). The reasoning behind this is that when experiences of wild and even farm animals become less common for a great number of people, it is easier "to entertain warm feelings toward animals that seemed to have no other function than as playthings." (Tuan, 112). This can be seen in, for example, an increased awareness in "kindness to animals" in education and in portrayals of animals in art where they are depicted as having "human feelings and morality" (Tuan, 112). This sentimentalized view is especially strong in regard to animals that can be owned as companion animals. Tuan describes companion animals as being "part of one's personal entourage. They are physically and emotionally close to their owner.... Relationship to pets is intimate." (162-163).

Another noteworthy reason for strong public reactions to animals in politics, and one underlying reason behind the use of it, is that talking and writing about animals is actually a way for us to discuss ourselves (Beck and Katcher 64-65; Perkins 3; Simons 6, 86, 96-104). This happens either through making use of symbolic language, which has an enriching effect on communication, or through direct comparison (Simons 6, 86). Furthermore, and perhaps in part explaining their popularity and many uses in American politics, animals have the capability of serving as a “strategic, seemingly non-political locus” in political rhetoric (Blankfield 335).

I have made these observations to demonstrate that animals are commonly used in both politics, and related literature, in a way that makes some kind of specific use of them, as opposed to being merely incidental. Accordingly, it can be expected that the outstanding roles that certain companion animals in my primary texts serve in have a deliberate purpose. My thesis focuses precisely on these intentions and aims to reveal the mechanisms through which they work.

3.2. “Pure” animals contrasting with “dirty” politics

To study how animals are used in a deliberate and politically purposeful manner in my primary texts, it is also relevant to explain why it is companion animals in particular that are used in this way, as opposed to other subjects that are likewise important to American culture and seemingly non-political, such as sports, music, or food. My argument is that politics, the primarily field presidents are known from and the main subject they write about in their post-presidential works, is so “dirty” and “loaded” a subject that companion animals are used by political autobiographers as a pure and clean respite to temporarily distance themselves from politics as well as a safe and non-political subject for building their personal brand.

American politics is commonly seen as dirty and untrustworthy. In her work *Dirty Politics*, Jamieson identifies many of the unruly elements of politics that contribute to this image, such as politicians attacking opponents with contorted facts and misinformation (3, 239), emphasizing

cynicism (186), and diverting attention from real issues by strategic and calculated distraction (205). McMichael et al. demonstrate how political corruption has been present since early days of the nation (611). As a result, there is a long history of public distrust in the American political system (Cooper 1-3), which, especially since the latter half of the twentieth century, has been further abetted by well-publicized misconduct and scandals, including “petty graft, nepotism, payola, drunkenness” (Thompson 1-2). Not only is the image of American politics marked by inflammatory and misleading tactics and dubious motivations, but also by violence. Examples include several infamous fistfights in Congress, the assassination of four presidents, and the Civil War. As a result of all of this, people are often cynical about politics, leading them, through association, to regard the practitioners themselves of politics with suspicion and disregard (Bradley xii-xix).

Naturally, public mistrust hinders the work of a politician in an electoral democracy. Accordingly, it is logical for a politician to distance themselves from the negative image of politics, if they can. This, in part, explains the popularity of the “outsider” narrative some political candidates employ, as can be observed in the rhetoric of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential election campaign, where he portrayed himself as a businessman outside the realm of politics, especially in opposition to his opponent, Hillary Clinton, who was closely associated with dynastic political power (Gallagher 183, 185). However, since this option is obviously not available for former presidents, who consequently have been the central figure of American politics, they must find other ways of cultivating non-political aspects of their image if they wish to lessen the negative connotations of practicing politics.

Contrasting with “dirty” politics, certain animals are often seen as a symbol of purity and innocence in American and Western literature and culture. This has long historical roots, but the “purifying” role of companion animals I identify in my primary texts originally emerges in a fully developed form in the literature of the Romantic period. In the United States, this took place most prominently from the early nineteenth century until the Civil War, thus overlapping with the earliest

works of my primary texts, but it has had a strong and lasting effect on American literature ever since (McMichael et al. 613-616). With the Romantic movement developing as a reaction to industrialism, many animals started to be commonly viewed as a symbol of “pristine innocence”, “goodness”, and harmlessness (Perkins 3, 48, 141) (and which relates to Tuan’s notion of a “highly sentimentalized” view developing as a result of the same societal changes). In literature of the day, these animals were seen first and foremost as a part of nature, which, in turn, was contrasted with innovations and typical aspects of life during and after the industrial revolution, such as “the factory... the crowd and... the dark satanic mill” (Kenyon-Jones, “British Romanticism” 137). Thus, when “industrial, bourgeois, man-made elements” were seen as bad, then nature, including animals, could be seen as good and even holy (Kenyon-Jones, “British Romanticism” 137). Even though animals have later acquired many alternative symbolic uses, variations of a pro-nature strain have remained strong or even a “convention” in American literature (McMichael et al. 615), thus allowing for their original mode of use in the Romantic period to be traced to works written later, too, including my primary texts.

However, as already indicated, not all animals are equally applicable for this kind of use. Kenyon-Jones notes that although nature in broad terms acquired pristine significance during the Romantic period, some animals acquired such attributes more effortlessly than others. Complicated aspects of the purity paradigm are beings of nature that have “scales and fins, or... six legs and a proboscis and antennae” or that can “kick, peck, squeak, kill and bite back” (Kenyon-Jones, “British Romanticism” 137-138). Especially, Kenyon-Jones contrasts animals that are either “friendly” or unfriendly towards humans (“British Romanticism” 137-138), with the former being easier to view as good than the latter. Through this, it can be inferred that there exists a hierarchy regarding which animals humans are apt to depict as the purest that spans species as well as the temperaments of animal individuals. Paradoxically, domesticated and trained companion animals are easier to bestow attributes of purity, goodness, and holiness upon than their actual nature-bound counterparts. Although this merits several interesting discussions (such as on a darwinistic effect where goodness

and obedience are enforced by breeding as well as whether real-life trainability also allows for malleability into wanted symbolic uses of animals that are already sentimentalized), for the purposes of this thesis it can be concluded that certain animals are easier to associate with purity than others, with companion animals having a proclivity for this.

Accordingly, I argue that one of the ultimate reasons why it is companion animals in particular that receive exceptional and repeated attention in my primary texts, as opposed to other seemingly non-political subjects, is the “pure” and “innocent” contrast they provide against “dirty” politics. This is bolstered by the notion that since Romanticism in American literature was not only a reaction to industrialism and urbanization, but also to general “corruption” in human society (McMichael et al. 613), using animals to counter the negative aspects of politics already has a potent framework which needs very little modification to be put to effective use. In turn, this reaffirms, or perhaps even explains, Blankfield’s observation of animals being a safe locus in political rhetoric (335).

3.3. Horses and dogs as unique companion animals

I argue that horses and dogs are uniquely close to humans as companion animals and, accordingly, have especial potential to be used in a sentimentalized and, thus, politically effective manner. To add to discussion of the previous section, domesticated horses and dogs have qualities that make them especially suitable for “goodness”, and they can, thus, be viewed as being at the top of the purity hierarchy. In addition, I identify them as having several other merits that operate independently from the Romantic mode and that enable them to be the uniquely portrayed companion animals they are in my primary texts.

Tuan describes the dog as “the pet par excellence” which calls on forth “the best that a human person is capable of—self-sacrificing devotion to a weaker and dependent being” (102). This is

demonstrated through affection, love, and kindness (Tuan 102).¹⁰ Furthermore, McLean notes that dogs are “unique in the animal kingdom” through humans having “custom-engineered” them to be domestic companion animals that want to both please humans and work for them (11). These qualities allow politicians who want to portray themselves in a positive light in their autobiographies to use dogs as fine-tuned literary companions, too, to carry out a supporting role that serves this purpose and calls upon positive emotions. Likewise, along with dogs, horses have been called “man’s best friend”, and they are known to enhance self-esteem and self-confidence in humans and foster social and emotional growth (Beck and Katcher 3, 150). Also, McKenna identifies horses as playing “an important role in how human beings understand themselves” both in a personal sense and in terms of the history of humankind (43). This echoes the notion of writing about animals being a form of writing about ourselves, and also means that political autobiographers have a pre-existing framework for using horses to, effectively, write about themselves.

What sets horses and dogs apart from other companion animals in the United States is that they are domesticated to the extent of being trainable, primarily not owned for food, and commonly occupy a physical space much closer to their human owners than other animals, including long times of skin-to-skin contact when riding horses and when petting or sleeping together with dogs. Through this physical closeness, a psychological closeness can also be expected. Indeed, McKenna highlights the need for humans to “get to know the individual differences” of individual horses and dogs and “acquire the flexibility of learning to read and understand the individuals with whom we are working”, “just as we do with people” (142). This reveals a deep psychological aspect of the relationship and further characterizes horses and dogs as special animals. Beck and Katcher support such a view and elaborate by noting that humans often believe certain animals to have a “wordless understanding” of them, or even “psychic powers”, which is reflected in common accounts of “horses

¹⁰ Tuan also explores dominance, abuse, and cruelty in human-dog relationships. However, these are not relevant here, since my focus is on demonstrating how the primary texts employ positive depictions of dogs to counter negative aspects of politics.

that can locate lost children or dogs that know of their masters' deaths thousands of miles away" (90). Notably, McKenna writes that the relationship of humans with both horses and dogs "has transformed human beings as much or more than it has transformed" horses and dogs (134). These effects on humans include accommodating the natural needs of the animals and, through that, modifying our own ways of living and thinking (McKenna 134-137).

To demonstrate the uniqueness of horses and dogs as companion animals, I will compare them to two other similar and common animals, cows and cats.¹¹ The difference between horses and dogs as compared to cows can be readily seen from the fact that there is little scholarly literature available on personal human-cow relationships and on the cultural and societal importance of cows (when removed from their purely agricultural and economic qualities). This is notable, since in terms of numbers, cows are comparable to dogs, and in terms of physiology and habitat to horses.¹² Even though cows can be interacted with and though they have individual personalities, they are not usually trained to perform complex actions and are primarily owned for agricultural purposes, which usually remains a central part of the human-cow relationship even when cows are considered as companion animals.

Cats are comparable especially to dogs through their size and anatomy as well as them commonly living and sleeping with their human owners. However, according to McKenna, "Cats have a complicated history. They have been vilified as instruments of the devil, been blamed for the plague, and been considered in many superstitious beliefs as harbingers of bad luck." (184). While dogs do not have a history of solely positive portrayals and broader cultural attitudes towards them, the complicated history of cats is much more notable in the way it follows them up to this day. For example, cats are often "targets of choice for those who want to torture other animal beings" and

¹¹ The term "cow" is often used when discussing the female, but it can be used to cover both sexes. Here, I am using the term in its latter meaning. In my primary texts, both sexes feature almost exclusively as an agricultural commodity and not one individual is identified as a companion animal. Thus, there is no further need to distinguish the two sexes here.

¹² Regarding the number of domesticated animals, there were about 90 million cows (United States, Department of Agriculture 19) and 80 million dogs (Hunter et al. 1) in the 2010's in the United States. Regarding physiology and habitat, cows and horses are both hooved and grazing farm animals.

shelters having a time finding homes for black cats (McKenna 184). McKenna sums this up by noting that “In general, cats are seen as expendable and so not worth any investment of time or money.” (184). Also, cats can be very solitary and aloof, not anxious to please humans, and bound to their owners merely because they feed them, and through these characteristics it can be argued that cats have not been fully domesticated, unlike dogs (McKenna 185; McLean 11). Indeed, McKenna notes that “except for a few specialty breeds, cats’ breeding is not greatly controlled by humans” (185). Lastly, “17.4 percent of people say they dislike cats”, whereas the same statistics for dogs is merely 2.6 percent (McKenna 188).

Thus, the agricultural purposes and herd reliance of cows and the complicated history, current status, and independence of cats prevent these two species from attaining the kind of physical and psychological closeness that horses and dogs share with humans. The same pattern is repeated, but even more conspicuously, when considering other common animals which can be considered companion animals, such as sheep, birds, and fish. These observations confirm that horses and dogs are high on the purity hierarchy and can serve effortlessly as highly sentimentalized animals. Accordingly, this serves as a foundation for the special attention that horses and dogs receive in my primary texts and already starts to shed light on the question why these two species in particular might be used for exceptional political effectiveness.

3.4. Why study animals in post-presidential autobiographies?

I have chosen to study companion animals in American post-presidential autobiographies for three main reasons. Firstly, while companion animals are not the main focus of the primary texts, the frequency and content of their portrayals are outstanding. Considering that former presidents have a limited amount of space in which to write about their life and all the important political decisions they have made, dedicating even a few pages to companion animals lends them a great deal of weight. This in itself gives their study cause, but I argue that these portrayals are even more important when

considering that to write about animals is, in part, to write about ourselves; when people are influenced by rhetoric related to animals because it somehow pertains to them, the rhetoric should be viewed critically and the mechanisms behind it analyzed. This is especially true considering my following point:

Secondly, companion animals in politics in general have been little studied, and in post-presidential autobiographies as a whole not at all. In their 2012 article, Maltzman et. al call it a “larger disciplinary failing” that dogs and other companion animals have received little serious interest in political science research (395). There is, for example, casual and entertaining literature on companion animals in the White House and factual literature on animal rights legislation, but from the perspective of my subject, information is incidental, scattered, and largely non-academic. Furthermore, animal and animality studies in general are a relatively new field, and only in the early twenty-first century have animal representations and animals in rhetoric started to merit regular scholarly attention (Blankfield, 335; Fuller-Seeley and Groskopf 55; McLennan 9-10). However, when it comes to strict politics, the field is still in its infancy. Thus, my thesis will be able to bring new perspectives and material to both political and animal studies.

Lastly, I believe that animals in politics should be studied due to persistent misinformation on the subject. Especially, there are several popular stories which, despite being at least partially debunked, are passed on as facts, including in several sources I reviewed while preparing this thesis. Stories that have been proven false or inadequately researched include the notion of shark attacks having played a role in presidential elections (Fowler and Hall) and several presidents having had alligators as companion animals in the White House (Emery). If political animals have not received much scrutiny due to their status as a fun subject or safe locus, then it is all the more important to consider the subject critically.

Through my study of the subject, I will consolidate disorganized information and theories, apply them to the primary texts, and, through this, define what kind of roles companion animals serve

in in American post-presidential autobiographies, how and why these roles have changed, and to what purpose the portrayals are employed in the works. This will also reveal whether the portrayals of companion animals truly are a conscious and deliberate construct.

4. From a Utilitarian Era to a Familial Era

In the primary texts, animals are present in many ways. There are live animals, dead animals, and animal products. There are domesticated animals and wild animals, ranging from mosquitos to cats to elephants. Animals are also present in language, including names of people and places as well as in metaphors and sayings. However, my thesis concerns companion animals. To reiterate briefly why, the reason for this is that portrayals of companion animals are notably frequent, cohesive to the point of forming trends in this body of works, far more personal than portrayals of other animals, and, thus, capable of affecting readers through the highly sentimentalized appeal that companion animals have.

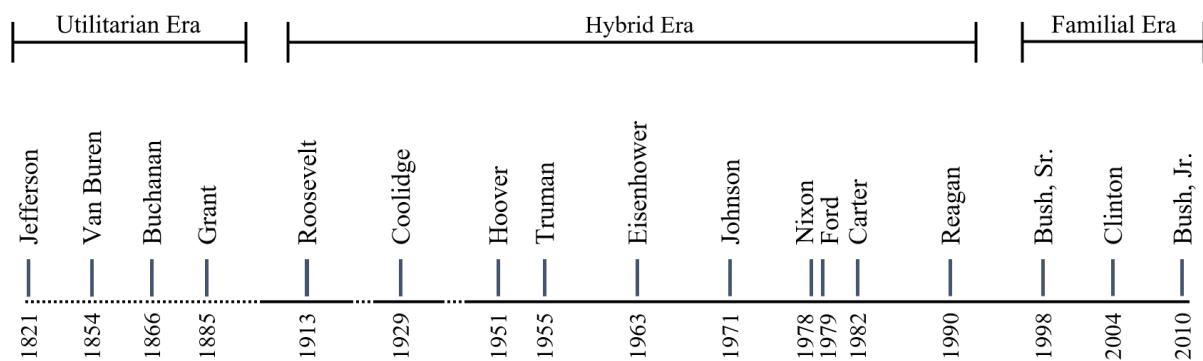


Figure 1. The “Era” categorization visualized. For clarity, multi-volume works are represented here only by the year the first volume was published. Posthumously published works are represented by the year their manuscripts are dated due to them being publicly available already before their commercial publishing (cf. footnote 7).

The central finding from the primary texts is that the portrayals of companion animals do not occur randomly but rather form trends that fall into three distinct eras. As Figure 1 indicates, the eras are the Utilitarian Era, up to Grant’s autobiography, the Familial Era, beginning from Bush Sr.’s autobiography, and the Hybrid Era, which takes place between the other two eras. The names I have given the first and last eras are derived from the purpose that companion animals most commonly are portrayed to serve in them, with the middle era featuring representations that often literally form a hybrid of the two other eras. However, the eras also have several other characteristic features. Apart from purely useful and utilitarian roles, the Utilitarian Era is defined by companion animal portrayals that are physical and practical, whereas the Familial Era is further defined by portrayals pertaining to leisure and enjoyment, in addition to solely familial portrayals. In addition to the Hybrid Era being

largely defined by featuring mixed elements of the other two eras, it also contains a few non-standard portrayals where companion animals are portrayed with only token-like or nearly no especial significance. Besides the functional roles the animals perform, the eras can also be distinguished by a shift from passive object-like animals who humans command to animal actors portrayed as individuals that are nearly autonomous. Accompanying this change are portrayals that shift from focusing on the concrete and tangible aspects of human-animal relationships to personal and even sentimental ones.

Deeply connected to the different characteristics of the eras are the animals that are most prominently featured, almost to the extent that the Utilitarian Era could be called the “Horse Era” and the Familial Era the “Dog Era”. Horses and dogs have an outsized presence, especially considering how small a role they play in, for example, day-to-day legislation and strenuous decision-making, which are staples of political autobiographies. The primary texts’ portrayals of horses and dogs correspond well with their unique real-life characteristics that I outlined in chapter 3.2., affirming the potential of these two species for an especial reaction in readership. Indeed, horses and dogs are not distinguished from other animals only by the frequency of their mentions, but also by the content of their portrayals. They feature mainly as companion animals whereas other animals mainly feature in other roles, such as work animals, livestock, and as wild animals, and in an unsystematic and minor manner where they are not relevant to the ongoing narrative.

In this chapter, I will analyze these portrayals closely and demonstrate how individual instances and works contribute to the era model. I will do this to an extent which is appropriate to demonstrate the eras, but further examples will be analyzed in chapter 5. In my analysis, I will use the terms “utilitarian” and “familial” to refer to their dictionary meanings and “Utilitarian” and “Familial” to refer to features representative of the respective eras. For example, being familiar with different horse breeds is a typical Utilitarian feature, but it is not in itself literally utilitarian.

I will proceed with my analysis in an order that is not fully chronological. The reason for this is that demonstrating the workings of the Hybrid Era is much more coherent if the reader is familiar with where the portrayals start from and where they end up; the progression of companion animal representations in the Hybrid Era proceeds in such a haphazard and non-linear manner that if observed chronologically, it might seem like the era is heading towards full chaos or, at least, a variety of different modes of representations, instead of leading up to the clearly-defined and homogenous Familial Era.

4.1. Utilitarian Era

In the Utilitarian Era, which includes autobiographies by Jefferson, Van Buren, Buchanan, and Grant, the dominant companion animal is the horse. Apart from the choice of animal, what distinguishes the era from others is that while the works depict horses as uniquely useful, utilitarian animals that are physically close to humans, the relationship is not depicted as personal or emotional (although it is not explicitly ruled out that such forms of relationship could exist, either).

Modes of portrayal which make the horse a unique animal in these works while also characterizing the era itself include presidents demonstrating knowledge of horses and related equipment, using horseback riding as a form of exercise and rational enjoyment, and as a means through which the president-authors demonstrate personal qualities such as leadership and vigor. Even in modes of portrayal that are shared by other animals, such as in traditional roles of transport, farm work, breeding, and trading, horses tend to be the most frequently portrayed animal, and they are never solely defined through these uses, thus emphasis more companionable aspects of the human-animal relationship. Furthermore, horses stand out in comparison to other common animals of the day, such as cows, by never being depicted as food.

In his autobiography, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, Grant displays all Utilitarian Era traits when writing about horses. Thus, his autobiography can be understood to be the defining work of the

Utilitarian Era. Grant displays knowledge of horses and horsemanship and includes many evaluations of horses, including the following: “The horses were generally very strong, formed much like the Norman horse, and with very heavy manes and tails.... [T]hey generally rendered as useful service as the northern animal; in fact they were much better when grazing was the only means of supplying forage.” (1: 70). He also draws attention to details of horses even when they are not the main point of focus, as in small evaluations like “I saw a very fine saddle horse” (1: 27), “miserable little half-starved horses” (1: 117), and “The horse I rode was vicious and but little used” (1: 581).

Grant describes horse-related pastimes of his upbringing, such as “taking a horse and visiting my grandparents in the adjoining county, fifteen miles off... or taking a horse and sleigh when there was snow on the ground”, as “rational enjoyments” (1: 26-27). Defining the enjoyment derived from such activities as “rational” indicates a need to present a proper reason for spending free time with a companion animal, as opposed to later accounts where companion animals have intrinsic value. Grant also describes how he uses riding as a form of exercise to treat ill health: “I kept a horse and rode, and staid [sic] out of doors most of the time by day, and entirely recovered from the cough which I had carried from West Point, and from all indications of consumption” (1: 57). He explicitly notes that “I have often thought that my life was saved, and my health restored” by this kind of “exercise and exposure” (1: 57-58). Not only do horses serve here in a typical Utilitarian Era manner, but their role in rehabilitating a president and even saving his life highlights the animal companion’s special importance.

Grant demonstrates his leadership and personal vigor by depicting daring and dangerous deeds on horseback. Amongst many scenes of serving in the United States forces on horseback during wartime is a recollection from the Mexican-American War where he escapes from enemies by dropping to the side of a horse and riding away while enemies on the other side of the horse fire at them (1: 116). This is in contrast to portrayals of both the Hybrid Era and the Familial Era, where

companion animals are never endangered like this. Grant explicitly notes only of himself that “I got out safely without a scratch” (1: 116).

Grant further demonstrates his capabilities by showing how his reputation remains intact as he recovers from a variety of riding-related injuries. These cases have the potential to be viewed as failed horsemanship, which would go against the Utilitarian Era leadership-boosting trait, but by demonstrating how he himself vigorously recovers from the injuries and contrasting this with how others do not serves to show that it is indeed an element that can be viewed as a Utilitarian trait. This is exemplified especially well through his recounting that the horse-related injury of a fellow general “gave rise to exceedingly unfair and unjust criticisms of him when he became a candidate for the Presidency” when considering that Grant himself ultimately did become president (1: 147).

While none of the post-presidential autobiographies by Jefferson, Van Buren, and Buchanan feature all of the individual traits of the Utilitarian Era that are featured in Grant’s work, they can be viewed in a supporting role when defining the Era. Despite being works that differ very much from each other in style, structure, and content, all of them feature portrayals of horses that make it the most notable animal found in the works and that depict it as important to humans unlike no other.

In “Autobiography”, Jefferson demonstrates the association of horses with leadership and power in his account of his visit to France, where the French Revolution is just beginning: The French King rides in a horse carriage (95), there is “a body of about one hundred German cavalry” (97), and Paris is patrolled by “horse guards” (100). The contrast between leaders being mounted in this setting while others are not is apparent in the following passage: “Omitting the less important figures of the procession, the King’s carriage was in the centre; on each side of it, the Assembly, in two ranks a foot; at their head the Marquis de La Fayette, as Commander-in-chief, on horseback” (Jefferson 100).

Also, in noting (on a separate occasion) that the French “King went out to ride” (95) and that horses “eat the food of freemen” (30), Jefferson demonstrates that for people at the upper end of the social stratum horses are an appropriate pastime and a co-equal eating companion, which sets them

far apart from other animals in the work. This special status is reaffirmed by horses being the only animal mentioned in Jefferson's crime bill: "Whoever shall be guilty of Horse-stealing, shall be condemned to hard labor three years in the public works, and shall make reparation to the person injured" (157-158).

Leadership and power through horses is present in a far-reaching manner in *Mr. Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of Rebellion*. By exercising his powers as president, Buchanan is effectively the master of thousands of horses. His work chronicles how important the strategic placements of military horses are in an attempt to prevent, and later to prepare for, the Civil War. Although Buchanan's work is an outlier in the sense that his own horse-related leadership is shown to be at times thwarted, as is the case in a showdown between himself and Congress (105-106), I argue that this does not lessen the autobiography's role in defining the Utilitarian Era, since these come at the expense of other people's command over horses. Thus, *someone's* horse-related leadership is emphasized, which promotes the role of horses unlike no other animal. Furthermore, he does also write about emerging as the winner in horse-related exercises of power. For example, regarding insurrection in the Territory of Kansas in 1857, he demonstrates how the large number of horse-mounted soldiers, as ordered by him, are "indispensable" in ensuring law and order (38). This reinforces the role of horses being centrally valuable forms of carrying out leadership.

In *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, Van Buren recounts the occasion when he saves a general from falling, and possibly saves his life, while they are riding on horseback (403). He does this by grabbing the other rider's bridle while simultaneously guiding his own horse in poor conditions. This account bestows especial skill and leadership upon Van Buren, with horses being the vehicle of the heroic deed. As another physical form of horsemanship that serves as a Utilitarian Era trait, Van Buren and his peers partake in horseback exercise. In a letter, an acquaintance explains that he attributes "the improved condition of my health mainly to the exercise I take in the open air on horseback" (585), and Van Buren, too, practises "severe horseback exercise" (422), echoing the

purposes that Grant lays out for riding as a form of exercise. Van Buren also demonstrates knowledge of horses by employing special horse-related vocabulary and evaluations, such as in “his stud of blooded horses” (421), “good saddle horse” (422), “colts” (422), and “riding *à la mode Anglais*” (436), which also serve to highlight horses as an animal that receives special attention.

4.2. Familial Era

Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr.’s post-presidential autobiographies form a coherent new mode of companion animal depictions, the Familial Era. Even though the works are very different in structure and content, as was the case in the Utilitarian Era, they all feature dogs in a similar way. This includes individual-recognizing and emotional portrayals where dogs are not owned for utilitarian purposes but rather for enjoyment and company. The bond is shown to be both physically and psychologically close, and the presidents depict dogs in familial scenes often taking place in private spaces shared by humans and companion animals alike. Elements of empathy, care, solidarity, and consideration towards dogs by the presidents are common, and no other animal is focused on in any significant way, including the horse. (The sole full anecdote regarding horses, by Clinton, has no trace of either the Utilitarian or the Familial Era and will be analyzed separately in chapter 5.3.1.)

Both Bush’s include explicit portrayals of dogs as family. In *A World Transformed*, Bush Sr. sets the scene working in the Oval Office: “I could look out the window and watch the grandchildren playing. Sometimes my dog Ranger, dripping wet from the rain, would straggle to the door begging to get inside.” (29). He also explicitly emphasizes the familial aspect of this space occupied by both humans and animals: “It was this welcoming, family environment that made the White House more than a place of work and responsibility, and made the duties of office easier.” (29).

Bush Jr., in turn, begins his acknowledgements in *Decision Points* by noting that he comes “from a family of bestselling authors” (478). This includes books not only by his parents, sister, wife, and daughter, but also his parents’ dogs, C. Fred and Millie, who “authored their own works” (478).

Further emphasizing the notion of dogs as family members, Bush Jr. includes the acknowledgements of his own dogs, Barney, Spot, and Miss Beazley, alongside those of the human members of his family (480).

Both Bush's portray their dogs in a role that resembles one traditionally reserved for the First Lady or other human members of the First Family when they recount their dogs having met world leaders such as Boris Yeltsin, in the case of Bush Sr.'s Ranger and Millie (between 272 and 273), and Vladimir Putin, in the case of Bush Jr.'s Barney (433). Bush Sr. also demonstrates how human kinship is reinforced through animal family ties by describing the White House chef as "a very special friend to me" and then noting that "he now has one of Millie's puppies", Millie being another of Bush Sr.'s dogs (29).

In *My Life*, Clinton does not explicitly tie his dogs to family, but the implication is clear when he places memories of his wife and his dog in the White House on equal footing: "We [Bill and Hillary Clinton] gazed out the windows to take a long, admiring look at the beautiful grounds where we had shared so many memorable times and I had thrown countless tennis balls to Buddy." (952). Clinton describes his relationship with dogs as a "lifelong love affair" (18) and characterizes the passing of one of his dogs as having hurt badly (48), demonstrating the close and personal bond he shares with them.

Further examples of dogs being depicted familiarly include Clinton and Bush Jr. referring to other people's dogs by name, too. Clinton especially highlights the significance of Brumus, Robert Kennedy's "large, shaggy Newfoundland," and goes as far as to suggest that the dog was an even greater drawer of attention than the name and countenance of Kennedy, thus underlining the great importance of dogs in his work (97).

Both Clinton and Bush Jr. highlight their dogs as family members during trying times. When Clinton discusses the Lewinsky scandal and emphasizes putting an effort into making his family life work, he includes Buddy in a scene where the family is hurting: "As we walked out to the South

Lawn to get on the helicopter, with Chelsea between Hillary and me and Buddy walking beside me, photographers took pictures that revealed the pain I had caused” (803). Likewise, when the White House is under threat during the September 11 terrorist attacks, Bush Jr. emphasizes the human-dog family bond by describing the situation followingly: “I told Laura [his wife] we needed to move fast... I grabbed her robe and guided her with one arm while I scooped up Barney, our Scottish terrier, with the other. I called Spot, our English springer spaniel, to follow.” (139).

While Bush Sr. does not depict a threat situation, he does comment on the burden of the presidency and notes that the familial environment that includes dogs “made the White House more than a place of work and responsibility, and made the duties of office easier.” (29).

Bush Jr. ends his narrative with a scene from the first day after his presidency. In an especially notable account of one of the first things he does as a private citizens, he depicts himself going for a walk with his dog Barney and using a plastic bag to pick up the animal’s “business” off a neighbor’s lawn (475-476). That this kind of a mundane scene of life with a dog ends the last work of the Familial Era is a fitting demonstration of how much has changed from the leadership-centered Utilitarian Era where humans are commanders of animals.

4.3. Hybrid Era

The Hybrid Era (which includes autobiographies by Roosevelt, Coolidge, Hoover, Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan) is defined by animal portrayals which do not unambiguously belong to either of the distinct eras. Rather, the works either contain elements from both eras, by featuring both Utilitarian horses and Familial dogs or by mixing these elements, or portray horses and dogs with little if any attributed importance. Overall, there is a gradual, although non-linear, increase of Familial dog-centered portrayals and decrease of Utilitarian horse-centered features. Also, the early-to-mid Hybrid Era includes a few instances of other animals than horses or dogs being mentioned not equally, but somewhat noticeably as companion animals, as if there were

a slight hesitancy on which animal to centrally focus on after horses started to fall out of favor and dogs were not yet the new norm. However, these instances remain isolated and do not form consistent patterns.

In other words, the Hybrid Era is not defined by static and unchanging characteristics, but through change and irregularities, which, however, share some commonalities. To demonstrate developments in this era, I have categorized these commonalities into four different subcategories, which I will next analyze.

4.3.1. Utilitarian and Familial simultaneously

In *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* and *Memoirs*, Coolidge and Truman feature elements of both utilitarian horsemanship and familial dog ownership, although out of the two, Coolidge focuses more on dogs and Truman on horses.

Of Utilitarian Era traits, Coolidge includes evaluations of horsemanship and knowledge of horses, as in noting of his grandfather that “He was an expert horseman... fond of riding horseback and taught me to ride standing up behind him. Some of the horses he bred and sold became famous.... He also gave me a mare colt” (14). Also, he judges a horse to be “much company” and riding one a “pleasure”, adding that “riding over the fields and along the country roads by himself, where nothing interrupts his seeing and thinking, is a good occupation” (42), thus portraying horses as a rational pastime in the vein of Grant (1: 26) as well as a general subject of interest, unlike all other animals in the work, apart from dogs.

Truman, too, recalls his relationship with horses in positive and knowing terms. He recalls that his father “rode a beautiful gray horse” (1: 116) and himself having ridden a “beautiful black Shetland pony” with “the grandest saddle... I ever saw” as a child (1: 115). Also, he demonstrates his knowledge of the role of work horses at farms and how to take care of them, including currying, watering, and feeding them (1: 117).

Although Truman's autobiography was published nearly three decades after Coolidge's, his work includes accounts of horseback vigor and leadership, whereas Coolidge does not. These include Truman performing vigorous and risky feats with horses, including the account of making a dangerous crossing over a flooding river (1: 123) as well as riding on horseback in World War I battlefields (1: 129-130).

Despite Truman's work being more Utilitarian in this regard, he indicates at uses of horses which begin to approach Hybrid-like qualities. These include recounting fine times spent at horse races (1: 123) as well as watching admiringly his father on horseback in a parade organized for Grover Cleveland winning the presidential election (1: 116). Although horse races feature acts that certainly have much to do with vigor and masculine horsemanship, for Truman as a spectator their purpose here is purely for enjoyment, and not in a "rational" sense, thus deviating from the Utilitarian Era. Likewise, although parades and celebration on horseback are concerned with Utilitarian Era leadership values, the purpose of the horse in such cases is not otherwise immediately or tangibly utilitarian, but rather it serves as a tradition and symbol. I mention this specifically because this mode of horse portrayal becomes a staple later in the Hybrid Era when portrayals of its solely utilitarian functions have fully ceased.

Regarding Familial Era traits, Coolidge includes a detailed description of personal familial animal companionship. He describes a white collie dog called Rob Roy as his "companion" who at "nights... remained in my room and afternoons went with me to the office" (221-222). Coolidge is the first president to describe a dog's personality, characterizing Rob Roy as "a stately gentleman of great courage and fidelity" who "loved to bark from the second-story windows and around the South Grounds" and whose "especial delight was to ride with me in the boats when I went fishing" (221-222), emphasizing the dog as an individual with individual thoughts and preferences. Venturing even further into the human-animal bond, Coolidge attempts to penetrate his canine companion's thoughts in the afterlife by suggesting that "he would bark for joy as the grim boatman ferried him across the

dark waters of the Styx” (222). He also mourns his dog’s death by noting that “his going left me lonely on the hither shore” (222). As an illustrative indication of his special relationship with dogs, Coolidge notes that his white collies “became so much associated with me that they are enshrined in my bookplate, where they will live as long as our country endures” (221).

Whereas Coolidge’s depiction of dog ownership fits fully in the Familial Era, Truman’s recollections of his dog are especially typical of the Hybrid Era. The reason for this is that he includes both Familial and Utilitarian elements and does this by not only writing about his “little black-and-tan dog... called Tandy” but by commenting simultaneously on his “bobtailed Maltese gray cat... named Bob”, too (1: 113), thus briefly expanding the selection of companion animals that are individually and equally focused on. Familial Era traits include the naming of individuals, depicting closeness through writing that the animals followed him and his sister “everywhere we went”, and experiencing joy from watching the companion animals’ activities (1: 113). However, his lack of personal concern for his cat when describing how its tail once lost an inch when it caught fire is reminiscent of the Utilitarian Era, where animal injury is seen as a material loss and not the affliction of an individual. Truman simply notes matter-of-factly that “I can well remember his yowls, and I can see him yet as he ran up the corner of the room all the way to the ceiling” (1: 113).

Thus, both Coolidge’s and Truman’s autobiographies can be categorized with ease into the Hybrid Era; the former through its depictions of Utilitarian horses and Familial dogs, and the latter through depictions of the horse, the dog, and the cat, which do not belong solely into either Era.

4.3.2. Neither Utilitarian nor Familial

The autobiographies by Hoover, Eisenhower, Johnson, and Carter can be categorized into a varied subcategory of the already complex Hybrid Era. They form a “neutral” mode of companion animal portrayals by not strongly featuring elements of either of the other two eras, with a general impersonal attitude towards companion animals being shared by all of them. That the four works were published

in four different decades, with other autobiographies being published between them, demonstrates that there was no systematic lull in representations of companion animals; rather, these non-standard portrayals appear unsystematically in the chronology, showing once again the shift from the Utilitarian Era to the Familial Era happens in a non-linear manner.

In these works, horses are no longer the central animal. They are mainly portrayed as either a dying mode of transport in an increasingly technological world or as a ceremonial animal, the latter being a consequence of the former. The sole longer assessment of the animal is decidedly un-Utilitarian. This takes place in *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, where Hoover professes in a light tone that he

arrived finally at the conclusion that a horse was one of the original mistakes of creation. I felt he was too high off the ground for convenience and safety on mountain trails. He would have been better if he had been given a dozen legs so that he had the smooth and sure pace of a centipede. Furthermore he should have had scales as protection against flies, and a larger water-tank like a camel. All these gadgets were known to creation prior to the geologic period when the horse was evolved. Why were they not used? (1: 18)

Furthermore, he sees the cost of upkeeping horses for work purposes as a nuisance and is glad when “four automobiles replaced the driving horses” and make “unheard-of” progress (1: 86), implying that he has no other use for horses than purely for work.

Interestingly, considering his disregard for horses, Hoover provides the most direct commentary out of all presidents on the changing role of the utilitarian horse to something else:

During my administration we insisted upon... the conversion of the cavalry to a mechanized corps. This was a painful job because a horse was a pet as well as a tradition. There is no body of men so effectively conservative and obstinate of change as the run-of-mine military man. The cavalrymen honestly believed three things: battles could not be won without horses; defeated enemies could not be pursued; and the breeds of horses would deteriorate without the cavalry. (2: 339)

This changing role of horses, from the most prominent animal companion to a tradition, as observed in Hoover’s work, can also be seen in the rest of the works of this subcategory of the Hybrid Era. The new main role of horses is as a ceremonial animal and distinguished attraction. In Eisenhower’s *White House Years*, horses feature in a performance at the festivities of his first inauguration, such as in the following scene: “A California cowboy, riding on a highly trained horse, got clearance from the Secret

Service, stopped in front of me, and threw a lasso around my shoulders.” (1: 102). Similarly, in Johnson’s *The Vantage Point* and Carter’s *Keeping Faith*, horses play a ceremonial role on occasions of mourning, with horse-pulled caissons leading the funeral processions of assassinated leaders. Johnson writes about this in the case of John F. Kennedy (33) and Carter in that of Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt (272). Ceremonial-like use is also seen in Eisenhower and Johnson demonstrating horses as a way to entertain visiting dignitaries and other valued guests; Eisenhower writes of this in the case of Queen Elizabeth II (2: 214) and Johnson regarding Jacqueline Kennedy (4). However, in both of their works horses remain impersonal in this role, too, since neither of the presidents show themselves to be ready to partake in the event. That horses are not mentioned any further in Johnson’s or Carter’s work apart from the above examples highlights their shift from central animal to one that has some remaining esteem but little prominence. Eisenhower, too, barely mentions the animal otherwise, with main remaining instances being a short childhood anecdote of a horse being lassoed (1: 22n10) as well as an analysis of horse-powered transportation being replaced by “luxury liners, jet planes, electronics, and atomic power.” (2: 260).

The four works also demonstrate the emergence of dogs in post-presidential autobiographies, yet in these cases little to no familial relevance is attached to them. Hoover writes about a Belgian police dog his family had while in the White House. He indicates a warm but one-way relationship between companion animal and human when he writes that the dog was “much attached” (2: 325) to his son and even helped nurse the boy when he was sick. However, this aspect is not explored further, nor reciprocated by humans, and the portrayal falls short of a Familial Era representation since Hoover does not name the dog and it is not mentioned along with the rest of the family in summing up private life while president in passages like “Having Margaret and the children at the White House was a continuous joy” (2: 325), as is the case with Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr.

Demonstrating a shift in public opinion in regard to dogs, Eisenhower writes of the perishing of the Soviet space dog Laika: “By a strange but compassionate turn, public opinion seemed to resent

the sending of a dog to certain death—a resentment that the Soviet propagandists tried to assuage, after its death, by announcing that it had been comfortable to the end.” (2: 219). Although Eisenhower seems surprised by the public reaction, he explicitly identifies it as compassion, an element which can be seen explored more fully in the Familial Era. Interestingly, however, the launch of Laika is related by Johnson, Eisenhower’s literary successor, in an unfazed manner and without a comment on the dog’s death (272). Instead, he focuses on the frustration and desperation Americans feel due to their technological lag as compared to the Soviets (272-273), which once again demonstrates that features do not progress linearly from Utilitarian to Familial in the Hybrid Era.

Johnson’s depictions of his own dogs contain mixed features. He writes about Little Beagle Johnson (whose initials are the same as everyone else’s in Lyndon Baines Johnson’s immediate family) (154) and includes an intimate photograph of him in the Oval Office with a grandchild (between 540 and 541), both of which tie the dog closer to the Johnson family. In contrast, he belittles the seriousness with which some members of the public react to a photograph of him pulling another of his dogs by its ears (106). Also, he includes a photograph of ferocious-looking police dogs in a struggle against protesters, thus depicting them in a very Utilitarian and non-Familial manner (between 180 and 181).

In his work, Carter promises a soldier “that he and I would walk together behind a bird dog around the fields of our native south Georgia—some day when both of us had more time” (521). This is the sole instance of a dog in Carter’s work. Here, he simultaneously demonstrates the animal’s general cultural importance, through the promise he makes, and its unimportance to him as a presidential autobiographer, through him mentioning not having time to carry out the promise sooner and by it being the only mention of a dogs in his work.

To conclude, these works serve as witness to the diminishing role of horse-centered and Utilitarian animal portrayals and the emergence of dog-centered and Familial portrayals while simultaneously not assigning special personal importance to either animal. Still, the meagre

commentary that is granted to companion animals is entirely focused upon horses and dogs, meaning that the works of this subcategory, too, reaffirm the understanding of these two species being special ones in post-presidential autobiographies, and, more broadly, in American culture. As such, these works form a unique subcategory of the Hybrid Era where companion animals feature merely as token-like mentions that can be understood to touch upon their importance, without actually making especial use of them. Thus, it is difficult to conclude whether the works temporarily attenuate the significance of companion animals or whether they attempt to briefly touch upon the subject while being able to make use of a new normative mode. However, when noting that these works were mostly published inconsecutively, it can be understood that there was no major, simultaneous diminishment of the importance of companion animals, but that rather some individual works were not able to make use of them.

4.3.3. Horsemen and horse individuals

In *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* and *An American Life*, Roosevelt and Reagan stand out as the two central horsemen of the Hybrid Era. What tie them together as Hybrid Era autobiographers, and set them apart from the preceding Utilitarian Era, are their portrayal of horses, which contain many Familial elements, especially the identification of the animals as individuals. The works are the bookend autobiographies of the era, with Roosevelt's being the first and Reagan's the last, and through their features they demonstrate, in part, that the progression from utilitarian horses to familial dogs during the Hybrid Era is neither linear nor entirely haphazard.

Utilitarian Era horse-related traits that both autobiographies share are horses used for exercise, demonstrating knowledge of horses and related equipment, horse-related exercise and pastime, and horseback leadership. What separates these two works from the Utilitarian Era, and make them part of the Hybrid Era, is Familial Era -like recognition of horses as individuals, such as by identifying them by name, and showing them to have intrinsic value as beings, as opposed to purely utilitarian

purposes or as a “rational” pastime. Reagan, especially, studies his personal relationship with horses deeply.

Roosevelt displays his knowledge of horses by evaluating the animals (“a sedate animal” (35), “half-broken horses” (114), “many bad horses” (118), “a spirited horse” (202)), evaluating different levels of horsemanship (“a respectable rider” (34), “the bronco-busting class” (34), “a first-class horseman” (35)), discussing breeds, and demonstrating his familiarity with related equipment and techniques such as bridling, saddling, and breaking in his own horses (118). Reagan, too, shows that he knows horses well through use of various horse-related terms and breed names (“a black thoroughbred mare” (103), “a dapple gray thoroughbred stallion” (195), “a beautiful black colt” (195)) as well as through evaluations of horsemanship (“the fountainhead of high-quality riding” (103)). Already here, Reagan partly departs from the purely Utilitarian by including aesthetic evaluations amongst traditional practical ones.

The kind of pastime and exercise Roosevelt depicts is more related to well-being of the body than the mind, the latter of which, in turn, is an aspect that Reagan highlights. This reflects how the human-animal connection is more physical in the Utilitarian Era and more emotional in the Familial Era. Some of the most significant horse-related memories Roosevelt writes of are quantifiable feats, such as in “So one day I took a ride of a little over one hundred miles” (55) or when he writes about how he once rode “nearly forty hours in the saddle” (117). Reagan, in turn, does comment on the physical aspect of the riding in a lengthy rumination on the benefits of the practise, but he counters this mode of portrayal by also exploring the mental effect of his companion animal on him:

To my mind, nothing compares with the kinship between man and animal you find on the back of a horse. I’m not sure what it is, but there you are, in charge of an animal with more muscle in its neck than you have in your whole body. From the minute the horse takes its first step, every muscle in your own body begins to respond to it; how much of the experience is physical and how much is mental, I don’t know, but there’s no better place for me to think than on the top of a horse.

As you rock along a trail to the sound of the hooves and the squeak of leather, with the sun on your head and the smell of the horse and your saddle and the trees around you, things just begin to straighten themselves out. Somehow, it just seems a lot easier to sort out a problem when I’m on a horse.

I did a lot of thinking atop Baby during those pleasant years, and I made some important decisions about my life. (131)

The sentiment of mental work done on horseback is echoed throughout the text. Reagan returns to it nearly ten times in his autobiography, including when he is considering a run for the presidency (“As I rode Little Man... I thought a lot about the lost vision of our founding fathers and the importance of recapturing it and the voices from around the country who were pressing me to run for president.” (199)), when solving political problems (“I was able to ride across the lovely green hills and mentally sort out the problems we faced at the time.” (219-220)), when comparing methods of concentration and preparation with a surgeon (“I think people who haven’t tried it might be surprised at how easily your thoughts can come together when you’re on the back of a horse riding with nothing else to do about a decision that’s ahead of you” (195)), and when dealing with a problem with Soviets (“gave me lots of time to do some thinking on the back of my horse about our impasse with the Soviets, and I came to a decision” (603)). The mere presence of a horse is shown to be beneficial for Reagan (“If a horse was nearby, that always helped in my decision-making” (297)).

These instances also demonstrate that while Reagan depicts himself very much as a leader on horseback, his pensive brand of leadership has come a long way from Utilitarian Era and early Hybrid Era depictions of presidents literally demonstrating their leadership on horseback in battles. This earlier mode can be found in Roosevelt’s autobiography, which depicts many of his brave and vigorous horseback deeds in the Wild West and the Spanish-American War. In general, for Roosevelt, horseback leadership and brave deeds are inseparable from other horseback work and horseback free time. As he writes of his dangerous and vigor-emphasizing lifestyle, “we led a free and hardy life, with horse and with rifle” and “we saw men die violent deaths as they worked among the horses and cattle” (103-104), a lifestyle which he simply defines to be “exhilarating as a pastime” (107).

Although horses are a central part of Roosevelt’s narrative, they are not shown to be a central part of him in a personal sense; when he is with horses, which is often, he is a horseman, but they are not shown to be on his mind during other times. In contrast, for Reagan there seems to be no

separation between time spent with horses and other time. He thoroughly defines himself through horses, which can be seen from his wish to be thought of “on the back of a horse wearing a cowboy hat” (104) and him thinking about horses even when he is not riding or breeding them, such as when picking up a “magazine about horses and riding” for bed-time reading (250). Even after surviving an assassination attempt during his presidency, “[o]ne of the first things I asked the doctors at George Washington University Hospital after the shooting was whether I’d be able to ride again” (175).

Even though Roosevelt’s and Reagan’s relationships with horses demonstrably have significant differences, they share a familial and individual-emphasizing attitude towards horses like no other president does, which not only sets them firmly apart from the Utilitarian Era, but from the Familial Era, too, through their choice of companion animal. Pertaining to the recognition of animals as individuals, Roosevelt starts the “naming tradition” in the body of post-presidential autobiographies. Not only does he mention many horses by name (including Boone, Crockett, Ben Butler, Manitou, and Algonquin), but he also demonstrates horses to be important enough to be bestowed names with great significance. For example, in his childhood, Roosevelt’s family owns a pony called General Grant, after Ulysses Grant, the name of which he passes on to another pony in adulthood when he has his own family. Also, he mentions that a riding horse called Buena Vista got its name “in a fit of patriotic exaltation during the Mexican War” (15). Reagan, too, names several of his horses (including Baby, Little Man, and El Alamein). Notably, he mentions having named one of his horses Nancy D after his wife’s maiden name, indicating the horse having exceptionally great personal importance (195).

In addition to horses being bestowed with prestigious and personally meaningful names, Roosevelt and Reagan analyze and view them in a manner they do not in the case of their other companion animals (which will be discussed later). For example, Roosevelt describes his favorite horse, Manitou, as a “wise old fellow, with nerves not to be shaken by anything” (125). Whereas animals thus far had been analyzed purely in terms of their practical features, describing an animal as

both “wise” and a “fellow” adds value to the recognition of its individuality and personality. This kind of an analysis is not found many times in the primary texts until it becomes a norm in the Familial Era. Roosevelt also demonstrates elements of empathy (49, 369) and even love (355) for horses, as well as how companion animals in general can be “intimate friends” (370-371). However, most of the sentimental notions towards animals that Roosevelt writes of are depicted through the eyes of his children. Although it could be argued that third-person experiences are not as strong indicators as first-person ones, the fact that Roosevelt writes of companion animals that he and his family owns through the eyes his children does still bestow significance on the animals. Furthermore, Roosevelt is the first former president to demonstrate that an intimate mode of relationship with companion animals is even *possible* at all.

Reagan, too, explores a sentimental relationship with horses, but takes it much further than Roosevelt. Regarding the passing of Nancy D, he characterizes the death as a “loss” and explains that it happened due to “an extreme case of gastroenteritis” (195). Explaining the cause of death with this level of detail is a singular case in all of the autobiographies and highlights a deepness of relationship rarely shared with animals. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Reagan declares himself to be “in love” with one of his horses (103). Other comments that exemplify an exceptional relationship with his companion animals, and which indicate the onset of the upcoming era, include Reagan describing how the sound of hooves and the smell of horses inspire his thinking (138) and comments on the familial relations of his horses (195), amongst others. Reagan sums up his personal life philosophy by referencing the well-known equestrian quote “Nothing is so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse” (74) and by noting that “there was no place on earth I’d rather be than in a saddle, on the back of a horse” (75).

In all, despite featuring several extremely Familial elements, Reagan’s portrayals of horses still remain indicative of the Hybrid Era. Apart from the primary companion animal of choice differing from following works, what really sets Reagan apart from the Familial Era is his choice of visual

representation. Whereas all Familial Era presidents show their animals in individual- or family-emphasizing roles in their illustrations, the ones in Reagan's work are notably lacking in this regard. The two photographs of Reagan are on horseback, with him wearing riding equipment and with reins and a whip in hand, leading a horse in jumps over an obstacle. Although horse jumping is a form of entertainment as opposed to being strictly Utilitarian, much like horse races in Truman's autobiography, this portrayal is certainly otherwise Utilitarian, with the power dynamics being pictured as very one-sided in terms of both the positioning of rider and horse and the equipment which Reagan uses to lead the horse.

Although both Roosevelt and Reagan write about their dogs, these depictions are much less brief and Familial than their horse portrayals. Roosevelt does mention having owned dogs, two of which he names and defines as being "intimate and valued family friends" whose "deaths were household tragedies" (370), but this happens, once again, through the viewpoint of his children. These are certainly Familial elements, but what diminishes their significance, as opposed to the situation regarding horses, is that Roosevelt does not show himself interacting with the dogs. As a result, dog portrayals pale in comparison to horses, thus making Roosevelt primarily an individual-recognizing horseman of the Hybrid Era.

Reagan barely mentions his dog Rex and does it in a decidedly un-Familial manner. For example, the first instance takes place in the familial environment of the White House personal quarters, which is self-evidently a trait of the Familial Era, but there is a strong element of distance that separates Reagan from his companion animal. This is demonstrated clearly in a diary quote which starts with "Day opened with "Rex" on our bed", and which then proceeds to other matters (510). Firstly, the dog's name is referred to in quotation marks, which has the air of signifying something unusual or going out of one's way to emphasize that the dog does indeed have a name, which seems especially out of place in Reagan's own diary. Secondly, Reagan notes that the dog is "on our bed",

which, I argue, signifies more a temporary state of being on top of the piece of furniture as opposed to, for example, being “in our bed”, which would imply belonging there as a co-user of the bed (510).

Thus, both Roosevelt and Reagan can be primarily classified as horsemen who recognize horse individuals. Despite many Familial features, their works on the whole must be characterized as part of the Hybrid Era due to several Utilitarian features, and because horses are the primary companion animal portrayed, instead of dogs. The fact that “horsemen and horse individuals” feature as the first and last works of the Utilitarian Era demonstrates that while there is a general tendency of increasingly Familial elements during the Hybrid Era, the increase does not happen linearly.

4.3.4. Seemingly familial dog owners

Nixon’s and Ford’s autobiographies, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* and *A Time to Heal*, stand out amongst Hybrid Era works by featuring dogs in a way that on the surface level seems familial. However, the works cannot be seen as part of the Familial Era due to non-personal elements of their relationships with their dogs that they openly reveal in their works. Both also feature brief Utilitarian Era -like portrayals of horses, but due to their brevity and superficial content they, too, cannot be categorized as such.

Nixon and Ford’s seeming familiarity and ultimate disclosure of its superficiality come about in different ways. Nixon’s autobiography features his dogs several times in texts and in photographs. The dogs often occupy a physically close space, often within quarters shared by the Nixon family. However, in contrast with physical closeness is emotional distance. Nixon writes about very little personal interaction with his dogs and is, in fact, straightforward about their political purpose in photographs and speeches. Nixon’s use of his dog Checkers as a political tool is on display when he explains how he means to defend himself against accusations of improper use of an election fund. He explicitly refers to the success that Franklin D. Roosevelt had in his “Fala Speech” as a model to follow:

I also thought about the stunning success FDR had in his speech during the 1944 campaign, when he had ridiculed his critics by saying they were even attacking his little dog Fala, and I knew it would infuriate my critics if I could turn this particular table on them. I made a note: “They will be charging that I have taken gifts. I must report that I did receive one gift after the nomination—a cocker spaniel dog, Checkers, and whatever they say, we are going to keep her.” (99)

That Nixon does not even attempt to portray the use of his companion animal as an original or personal idea, but rather as being directly modeled after an earlier instance, emphasizes the politically pragmatic, non-familial aspect of his dog portrayals. Thus, Nixon makes no attempt to “repress” a reality where dogs are, at least in his narrative, a political tool, even though the hiding of it is an alternative available for the autobiographer (Abbott 14).

This mode of portrayal is echoed in Nixon’s request “that the dogs be brought in for the last pictures” (1075) as he is preparing to leave the White House. Highlighted here are both their utility in photographs and that they are delivered like props by someone else, conveying a distance between the Nixon family and the dogs. Furthermore, this calls into question the photographs of dogs included in the autobiography itself. Especially the first one, including the entire Nixon family, with Checkers the dog at their feet, is clearly not a candid photograph but one where they are posing in a formation that has been staged (between 532 and 533). In light of Nixon’s comment on bringing dogs in for photographs, it could be supposed that here, too, the dog has been placed at the family’s feet, as opposed to it really having been spending time where it is, seemingly as part of the family.

In his warm-hearted recollections of dog acquisition, Ford very clearly displays characteristics of the Familial Era. He writes that his daughter decided to “rectify” the situation of the family not having a dog when they moved into the White House, especially since Ford was “feeling pretty low, and I guess it showed” (188). When the puppy arrives, Ford relates the scene warm-heartedly and describes how he gets down on his hands and knees to play with the dog on the rug. He uses words such as “[d]elighted” and “joyous experience” and characterizes himself as being “thrilled... to welcome the new addition to our family” (189).

However, while the characterization of a joy-bringing dog being a family member is a fully Familial portrayal, Ford reveals a reality of unusual and inactive dog ownership that lessens the familial tie and which is not found in Familial Era companion animal portrayals. This can be seen from instances such as his description of him watching a White House gardener taking the dog for a run on the White House lawn, which acts as a display of Ford not participating in a common dog-owning routine. This is re-enforced by a story of Ford substituting the dog's trainer who had to go out on one occasion; before leaving, the trainer gives instructions ("Mr. President... she's no trouble at all. If she wants to go to the bathroom, she'll just come and lick your face") which reveal Ford to be an owner who does not know his dog well (307-308). Furthermore, despite the earlier explicitly stated familial connection, Ford reveals that the dog, Liberty, does not sleep with the rest of the family, but rather they keep it elsewhere, commonly "in the kennel on the ground floor" (307).

Nixon and Ford also feature brief and utilitarian representations of horses that, however, fall short of being properly Utilitarian. Nixon begins his autobiography with early recollections, including his first conscious memory of running after a horse-drawn carriage which he had fallen out of (3-4), along with a few other minor horse-related ones. Nixon's main horse-related instance comes when Soviet leader Khrushchev complains about a resolution by the American congress by declaring that "This resolution stinks. It stinks like fresh horse shit, and nothing smells worse than that!" (207). Nixon counters this by displaying knowledge on practical animal matters, which defuses the situation. He writes:

I... remembered from my childhood that horse manure was commonly used as fertilizer but that a neighbor had once used a load of pig manure, and the stench was overpowering.

Looking straight into Khrushchev's eyes but speaking in a conversational tone, I replied, "I am afraid that the Chairman is mistaken. There is something that smells worse than horse shit—and that is pig shit." (207)

Childhood horse memories show Nixon to have had a connection to a world having revolved around horses, but in all of these cases it is someone else who actually interacted with the horses and, furthermore, Nixon does not return to horses later in his narrative. Although horse carts and horse

manure are very utilitarian topics, they are also un-Utilitarian in the sense that Nixon is a passive actor in them by having fallen out of the cart and by someone else having used the manure.

Like Nixon, Ford demonstrates having been part of the horse-led world. He relates a local firehouse's use of horse-drawn equipment as an "attraction" and a spectacular sight while noting that it was the last in the city to rely on horses for such purposes (42). Thus, this action is simultaneously depicted as a fond memory and as something of the past. This is Ford's sole horse-related story in the entire work, which, as in the case of Nixon, makes the animal as a secondary one.

To conclude, Nixon and Ford present themselves as dog-owners whose portrayals of their dogs share elements of the Familial Era on the surface level, but which turn out to be Hybrid Era portrayals through their revealing of a relationship which is impersonal, although in different ways, for both presidents. Whether Familial Era presidents really had caretakers for their dogs or not is irrelevant, since they simply do not mention the subject, thus affirming the separateness of their works from Nixon's and Ford's. Both also touch upon utilitarian horses, but the portrayals are brief and not prominent. Thus, Nixon's and Ford's autobiographies are Hybrid in this sense, too.

5. Why Companion Animals Are Portrayed the Way They Are

In this chapter, I argue that my primary texts increasingly deliberately feature companion animals in a way that the authors deem to be politically beneficial. I will use several different perspectives to demonstrate what kind of factors affect the portrayals, why a political autobiographer might use them, and thus indicate what the overarching reasons are for the change that allows the portrayals to be categorized into three distinct eras. Of especial interest here are why portrayals begin to deviate from the baseline and how a historically ubiquitous work and transportation animal, the horse, came to be replaced in my primary texts by an animal, the dog, not essential for day-to-day life in modern times.

I will present my main arguments in three main parts, starting with tangible sociopolitical factors that explain the direct need to write about companion animals in a certain way, then gradually proceeding to arguments more concerned with different literary factors. Sociopolitical and literary arguments cannot be fully divorced, as will be shown, yet I have chosen to use a clearly categorized structure to distinctly consider the various perspectives deemed necessary for the study of the “polygenre” that political autobiography constitutes.

Individual theory will be presented in each subchapter where relevant. Generally, I rely centrally on the notion from chapter 2 that post-presidential autobiographies very consciously craft a certain narrative to appeal to a voting or otherwise influenceable readership, as well as the notion from chapter 3 that because animals are a “safe locus” they can be expected to be put to political use, with horses and dogs being particularly suitable for this due to their high position in the “purity” hierarchy in the Romantic tradition.

5.1. Normalcy and relatability for demographic majorities

Considerations related to majority demographics of the readership of my primary texts at the time of their publishing affect how companion animals are portrayed in them. How this happens is by writing

about companion animals in a way that makes the former presidents seem more normal and more relatable to their readership, which in turn is a way to increase political influence and longevity in a democracy. Having been occupants of one of the most important political offices in the world, former American presidents have in this regard led a singularly abnormal and isolated life, which is problematic for political work, because they can seem to be out of touch and unable to relate to everyday problems. They might, thus, be negatively defined as being “elite”, a designation many Americans commonly regard with suspicion when it comes to politicians. Whatever a president’s pre-political background was, their new status is true and can never be fully reverted to what it was, even if they originally arrived on the political stage as “outsiders” (cf. chapter 3.2.).

It is natural for politicians to confront these problems. According to Manning et al., politicians commonly strive to appear relatable and authentic as part of their political strategy (127). This commonly happens through politicians presenting themselves as ordinary people doing everyday things, such as by sharing images on social media of them “hanging out” or “making mistakes”, so as to seem like they are in touch with the concerns of the average citizen (Manning et al. 133). Manning and Holmes argue that a centrally vital function of seeming relatable is its ability to overshadow practical factors directly related to political work “such as the state of the economy, policy, electoral cohort effects, and leadership” (699) which they observe to derive from an “uncritical sense of familiarity or sameness” (705). Thus, it is easy to conclude that in a country as oriented towards companion animals as the United States, an effective way of seeming more ordinary is writing about them in a way that is relatable to common people. This appeals to people whether or not they themselves own a companion animal; depictions of companion animal ownership in my primary texts are directly relatable for companion animal -owning readers, but creates a general sense of “normalcy” for others, too, animals simply through companion animal owning being so prevalent in the United States.

With slight variations, maintaining normalcy and relatability applies to nearly all cases of companion animal portrayals in all Eras. An example of this is the shared avoidance of writing about owning exotic and rare animals that the average citizen would not be able to own (even though, in reality, animals such as a hyena, an antelope, a wallaby, and a pair of tigers have been owned by presidents). A rare mention of exotic animals owned by a president is by Coolidge, whose example serves to underline the avoidance of anything elite when it comes to animal ownership.¹³ He writes about receiving many animals as gifts of distant or otherwise unusual origin, including a Mexican bear, lion cubs, and a South African hippopotamus, but instead of depicting them in lasting personal ownership, he notes that he placed these animals in a zoo (221). Even animals that as species are endemic to the United States but are not common as companion animals prove to be scarce in my primary texts. For example, Clinton writes of returning a frog that his daughter shortly owned back to nature to lead a “normal life”, implying that frogs do not share the same status as the dogs and cat he writes of owning (466).

What dictates the use of companion animals as demonstrations of normalcy and relatability, and why do portrayals of these animals change? I argue that these are derived from observations of demographical majorities or near majorities, which are a key component of attaining and maintaining political power, especially in an elective democracy. In turn, the fact that demographic shifts coincide so well with changing portrayals of companion animals proves, in its own part, that the portrayals are a deliberate response to the timely political purposes of my primary texts. As examples of this, I will discuss the demographics of my primary texts’ politically influenceable readership from the viewpoint of rural and urban habitation, companion animal ownership, and women’s suffrage.

¹³ The only outlier in terms of properly featuring exotic animals in personal ownership is Roosevelt. However, the exotic status of the animals is not the focus when he writes about them, but rather his deep affinity for them. Thus, although his choice of species portrayed deviates from others, his portrayals do not have an elite tendency to them. They also fit the beneficial biophilic perspective analyzed in chapter 5.2.1.

5.1.1. Rural versus urban habitation

Demographics of American rural and urban populations affect how former presidents can appear normal and relatable through companion animal portrayals in their autobiographies. In this section, I will especially demonstrate how this led to a change from the Utilitarian to the Hybrid Era.

Throughout the history of the United States, the amount of people living in rural areas, as opposed to urban areas, has constantly declined. The share of rural dwelling has dropped from 95 percent in 1790, when the first census of the independent country was conducted, to 49 percent in 1920, and to 19 percent in 2010 (United States, Census Bureau 20).¹⁴ Thus, the assortment of animals that the majority originally was familiar with, or even personally interacted with, consisted of animals typically found in rural settlements, such as farms. As the urban population outgrew the rural population, the assortment of animals kept became more and more urban-compatible, favoring dogs over horses as companion animals due to factors such as the large size and needs of horses as well as their cost of its upkeep when they no longer have directly utilitarian purposes (Grier 191-194). In addition to having an effect on which species are familial to the average American, a shift to urban majority living also led to a different mode of viewing and interacting with companion animals; when strictly utilitarian needs lessened, personal and sentimental aspects of the human-companion relationship started to emerge, also leading to growing recognition of the animal individual. The correlation between urbanization and attitudes towards animals being re-evaluated is widely noted in many different fields, as demonstrated in chapter 3 through works by Tuan, Kenyon-Jones, and Perkins.

The original type of familiarity with animals is reflected by companion animal portrayals in the Utilitarian Era, which serve as the baseline, and in some early Hybrid Era portrayals. Here, companion animal portrayals occur commonly in tandem with work- and transport-related practices, which were

¹⁴ The definitions of “urban” and “rural” for census purposes have changed over time, but this has not significantly altered the comparability of the results, with the different definitions giving results that differ by 3-7 percentage points (United States, Census Bureau 20).

widespread and normal in a largely rural and agrarian society. A particularly utilitarian example is Grant's account where he "did all the work done with horses, such as breaking up the land, furrowing, ploughing corn and potatoes, bringing in the crops when harvested, hauling all the wood, besides tending two or three horses" (1: 26). Such anecdotes, along with demonstrations of being familiar with horses, breeds, and related equipment, show that the authors share experiences with the average citizen, and serves to distance them from negative connotations of belonging to a ruling elite from a privileged background (Manning and Holmes 707). Even when horses are used for pastime purposes by the presidents, they commonly have a strong air of normalcy to them, such as Grant going for a sleigh ride (1: 26-27), and several presidents riding for exercise. An element of relatability that is shared by Utilitarian Era and horse-oriented Hybrid Era primary texts is that although the former presidents often demonstrate themselves to be masterful horsemen, something that might set them apart from the average person, they do this, too, in the context of relatable practices. Apart from Roosevelt, practices concerning horses that could be viewed as elite or otherwise unrelatable are not written about in relation to oneself, such as playing horse polo or riding in fox hunts.

That demographics of habitation and companion ownership are tied to appeals for normalcy and relatability to win over a majority of American readers (at the time of publishing, or in the relatively short term) can be demonstrated by comparing census data of habitation to the eras. Notably, the watershed moment of the beginning of majority urban living coincides notably well with the dawn of the Hybrid Era, with urbanites becoming a majority between 1910 and 1920, and the Hybrid Era beginning in 1913 with Roosevelt's autobiography, which has been demonstrated to differ greatly from its predecessors. After this shift in demographics, portrayals of companion animals started to change in terms of species of companion animal, how they are viewed, and what the presidents show they do with them. I argue that appeals for normalcy and relatability are centrally connected to these changes.

Although publication of the first Hybrid Era primary texts coincides with a new urban majority, there still are several works which contain significant depictions of horses in utilitarian use. What, in part, explains this is that for a time there existed an overlap where there was simultaneously a majority of urban dwellers and a majority of people who originated from rural areas, this being a result of rural flight. Furthermore, the fact that rural modes of living still formed a sizeable portion of the population also explains why portrayals remained in many cases rural-compatible for some time. Thus, it was not feasible for Truman to write about his dog and cat in an individual-recognizing way and as non-utilitarian sources of enjoyment while also depicting a variety of activities with horses, such as conducting farming activities with them and riding them into battle.

While an increasing share of the urban population explains, in its own part, increasingly Familial depictions in my primary texts, derived from an increasing need to be appear normal and relatable to urbanites, I identify a somewhat overlapping yet independently definable demographic to have supremacy in this regard. I will analyze it next.

5.1.2. Companion animal ownership

The increasing real-life importance of companion animals owned for purposes that are primarily not utilitarian led to the emergence of another majority voting bloc, companion animal owners. Here, too, I argue that companion animal portrayals are affected by the need to appear normal and relatable to a majority demographic. Modern information on demographics and voter behavior prove this. Surveys conducted in the 2000's and 2010's show that around an estimated half to two-thirds of American households have a companion animal (Hunter et al. 1; "Industry Statistics") and that as much as 85-95 percent of American companion animal owners consider the animals to be part of the family ("Poll", "Report").¹⁵ The results of a 2011 survey demonstrate how important owners of companion

¹⁵ Although some sources include more conservative estimates of these figures (Brulliard and Clement), the fundamentals of my arguments remain unchanged.

animal are for politics: “66% of pet owners would not vote for a presidential candidate who is perceived to not like pets” (“petMD Survey”). When considering the results of these studies and that the United States currently has a population of more than 250 million eligible voters, it becomes clear that over 100 million potential voters may make their decision based on the relationship a politician is perceived to have with an animal.

Although precise data like this is only available from the last few decades, it is easy to infer that the importance of companion animals has continuously grown based on observations that I have already presented on how urbanization and industrialization affected owning companion animals and attitudes towards them. As a further factor, Grier also identifies general growing prosperity as having affected both the growing ownership of “pets” as well as “increasing convictions that pet animals are distinctive individuals whose uniqueness should be celebrated”, and which leads to increasingly strong views of what I have defined as Familial elements (16-17). What further demonstrates that companion animals have become increasingly common are several actions and events, such as an increasing amount of laws on companion animal welfare, including the 1976 federal criminalization of dog fighting, and the first pet insurance policy sold in the United States in 1982 (Liles). Furthermore, such an increasing trend is proven by all surveys available on the subject. For example, the American Pet Products Association (APPA) recorded an increase from 56 percent to 63 percent in American “pet” ownership between 1988 and 2006 (“Industry Statistics”). Lastly, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Fala Speech” (cf. 3.1.) serves to demonstrate that the especial significance of companion animals for Americans is not a phenomenon merely of the end of the twentieth century, when surveys record it, but rather has long roots even before post-WWII American prosperity.

As sentimentalized views of animals started to emerge in public consciousness, normalcy and relatability started to be appealed to through portrayals of companion animals that recognize the animal individual and demonstrate compassion and kindness towards them. This leads to horses and

dogs alike to being referred to by name for the first time and their personalities being described, as Roosevelt and Coolidge are demonstrated to have done.

As was the case in the new urban majority leading to a new era of companion animal portrayals, I argue that when companion animal owners first became a majority, it led to the onset of the Familial Era. The exact date of this is challenging to define due to varying definitions of “pet”, as companion animals often are referred to in surveys, and different methodologies for estimating companion animal ownership. However, supposing that it occurred approximately in the late twentieth century, it coincides with increasingly significant Familial elements in my primary texts.¹⁶

The impending majority is reflected, I argue, in works by Nixon, Ford, and Reagan which already contain significant depictions of dogs and familial, or familial-like, companion animals. These include Nixon featuring a favorite family photograph with his dog in the forefront (between 532 and 533), Ford discussing a puppy being the newest addition to his family (189), and Reagan talking about loving a horse (103) and giving another his wife’s name (195). Although none of these are yet Familial portrayals, the personal significance of companion animals is recognized in them, paving the way for the fully formed Familial Era.

By the time that companion animal had for certain become a majority, the Familial Era becomes fully operative with companion animal portrayals by Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr. As was the case in earlier portrayals, presidents of the Familial Era show themselves taking part in everyday tasks related to their companion animal, but the species has changed from horse to dog. Bush Jr.’s anecdote of picking up his dog’s droppings off a neighbor’s lawn serve as the definite example (475-476). Such caretaking tasks are often blended with elements of pastime or the personal, as can be seen from depictions of sleeping together (e.g. Bush Jr. 138-139) and playing with dogs with other family

¹⁶ By extrapolating from APPA’s figures, and assuming that the growth of animal ownership was steady, companion animal ownership can be dated to have become a majority amongst Americans in, approximately, the early 1970’s. However, the US Housing Survey showed it to be 49 percent in 2013 (Brulliard and Clement). Thus, by supposing that the truth is somewhere in the middle, it can be concluded that companion animal owners became a majority in the United States at the end or at the turn of the century. Furthermore, trends taking place over the course of nearly two centuries can be observed without defining exact dates.

members (e.g. Clinton, between 282 and 283, between 602 and 603), which I argue are attempts to convey true ownership instead of companion animals being shown to be a chore or a political tool.

5.1.3. Women's suffrage

In addition to location of habitation and companion animal ownership, there are, naturally, several other demographics which form majorities amongst voters. In this section, I will demonstrate the role women's suffrage has played in the deliberate portrayals of companion animals. I do not suggest here that women's suffrage has had as strong an effect as companion animal ownership (as one is a gender and the other directly related to animals, after all) but rather study it as a way to employ, and illustrate, yet another viewpoint that can be taken into consideration when studying a subject this involute. Furthermore, it is a particularly interesting majority voting bloc to study because the Nineteenth Amendment, which enshrined women's suffrage into federal law, enfranchised more voters than any other political act in the history of the United States, and occurred at an interesting point, almost precisely halfway through the timeline of my primary texts. Lastly, it demonstrates well how political autobiographers attempt to appeal to a variety of bases when a common denominator is available.

Whereas majority urban habitation coincides with the onset of the Hybrid Era and companion animal ownership with that of the Familial Era, I identify two central events related to the voting of women, who have always formed a larger potential voting bloc than men, as contributing to the beginning of both of these two eras. The first of these events is women's suffrage, which came into federal law in 1920 in the United States and which was expected by many to lead to significant changes in national voting behavior (Abzug and Kelber 107). This coincides with the beginning of the Hybrid Era and the end of horse portrayals that accentuate elements of masculinity. The second notable event related to the women's vote took place in the 1980 presidential elections; this was the first such election in which women as a voting bloc voted noticeably differently for major candidates than men, a phenomenon commonly known in political study as the "gender gap", and exceeded the

men's vote in numbers (Thomson-DeVeaux and Conroy). I tie this second event to the increase of Familial elements in companion animal portrayals in the late Hybrid Era, which paves the way for the full-fledged Familial Era itself.

How do I arrive at the conclusion that women's suffrage and the gender gap affected companion animal portrayals in my primary texts? Since women's suffrage came into law with many states having no previous experience of it, its precise consequences on national-level politics were unknown at the time. Without solid data, political actors had to react based on suppositions and guesswork, perhaps even prejudice. To demonstrate this, I will discuss common beliefs related to women which a perceptive politician will have catered to.

Firstly, in the realm of politics, there are long-lasting beliefs that women are swayed by issues related to caretaking, family matters, and support for the disenfranchised. These beliefs have a background in the traditional societal roles of women (Abzug and Kelber 110-111), but they can also be found in a wide variety of modern literature. Examples of this range from the maternalist hypothesis and contemporary socialization literature, which suggest that women's stances on issues such as social welfare are a result of mothering experiences having politically "transformative power" (Elder and Greene 120), to political analysis itself (Abzug and Kelber 117). A common denominator for all these approaches is how little conclusive data there is on how such beliefs *actually* compare to the personal politics and voting behavior of women voters (Dolan 106; Elder and Greene 119), thus emphasizing the role of guesswork and stereotypes, or "conventional wisdom", in political work (Dolan 106). Indeed, the view of women voters supporting gendered issues is sometimes so strong that it is understood by political analysts as being mere support of women by women. As Dolan notes in her article on the subject, "[t]he notion that women voters should be an automatic base of support for women candidates has been an implicit, and sometimes explicit, assumption of much of the work done on women candidates" (92).

Secondly, women are commonly, both historically and currently, understood to have an elevated interest in animal rights when compared to men (Gaarder). Although data on which gender is statistically more likely to own a companion animal is inconclusive, women are much more concerned about their welfare than men are (Gaarder 94; Riffkin), view them more often as family members (“Poll”), and, since at least the late nineteenth century, have also been more active when it comes to working in practice for animal-related societal change (Gaarder 1; Park and Valentino). In addition to increasing other forms of practical political work and participation, involvement in animal matters can make for single-issue women voters (Gaarder 83-86). There are several theories which try to make sense of observations like these and which often relate them to a connection between women and animals as objects of structural oppression or to women’s “disproportionate role in childrearing” making them more likely to support animal rights “due to the symbolic similarities between children and animals” (Gaarder 44). In modern times, these views blossomed especially as part of the late twentieth-century ecofeminist movement, but they also have strong historical roots in largely women-led antivivisection organizations and human groups, as spearheaded by the likes of nineteenth-century feminist Francis Power Cobbe who linked the abuse of women, unequal voting rights, and vivisection to each other (Gaarder 7-8, 44). Although many such theories have been severely critiqued by other academics (Gaarder 44), important here is not the evaluation of theories or attempting to trace true causal relationship, but rather the mere commonness of such viewpoints and the possibility that these theories may have truth to them.

Why are these perceptions important when considering the effect of women’s suffrage on companion animal portrayals? Firstly, I note several similarities between political issues commonly seen as important to women, women’s views on animal welfare, and the kind of companion animal ownership that became the norm in urbanized America; caretaking, familial relations, and recognizing the disenfranchised are typical elements of all of them. Secondly, disregarding whether a politician acts upon an assumption or proven data, the greater a share of voters are, the keener the politician

will be to cater to them, including in post-presidential autobiographies, especially if they can do it in a safe way that does not alienate their existing supporters. Thus, companion animals can be used as a proxy through which to advance certain political notions without having to explicitly state them, allowing for such references to be picked up by those who are inclined to do so. What further minimizes the political risk here is, once again, the general status of animals as a politically safe domain with broad appeal.

Thus, in the aftermath of women's suffrage, I argue that the mere perception of women supporting a certain type of politics can be traced to a new, emerging tradition of companion animal portrayals that shifted from exclusiveness to inclusiveness. While this process did not immediately lead to a new norm of companion animal portrayals, as can be seen by many inconsistencies in the Hybrid Era, I argue that it did abet and hasten the end of the Utilitarian Era, in its own part. With the women's vote expected to be influenced by an understanding that women valued politicians who demonstrate care for companion animals and considerations for familial matters, early appeals to women include a dramatic lessening of masculinity-emphasizing companion animal depictions, increased portrayals of animal caretake, and a non-linear but sure increase in familial elements in the portrayals. The fact that animal portrayals did not immediately crystallize into the new norm, which ultimately is defined as the Familial Era, can be explained by the women's vote not initially affecting politics as dramatically and immediately as expected (Thomson-DeVeaux and Conroy) and social changes generally have a "long gestation period" (Abzug and Kelber 105). Ultimately, however, as expectations of the women's vote grew stronger with the women's movement in the mid-twentieth century, and as the real and recorded gender gap in the vote emerged, a shift from the Hybrid Era to the Familial Era took place.

Working in tandem with the new companion animal -owning majority, the women's voting bloc enhanced the need to find not only a new mode of companion animal portrayals but also a new animal to bestow wanted characteristics upon; the reason here lies both in a tradition of masculine

horse portrayals not increasing a sense of normalcy and relatability for women as well as in the decreasing importance of horses as a companion animal. To return to the notion of political autobiographers needing to find a way to appeal to the new majority voting bloc without distancing support of the previous majority, dogs were especially suitable for this purpose not only due to their general importance and special qualities as a companion animal (cf. 3.3.), but because they have an especial characteristic that uniquely suits the characteristics of the Familial Era: According to Beck and Katcher, due to cultural and societal factors, dogs are the only species that American men can publicly touch with affection without seeming effeminate and unmanly (89). Thus, if Familial modes of companion animal portrayals were irreversibly on their way in, and women were understood to be suited to view such portrayals positively, dogs were the only species that the authors of my primary texts could put to use to appeal to both the old and the new voting majority. Despite resembling a compromise, this solution is not weak, since dogs as a species do not merely “suit” women and men but are generally very popular amongst both.

This uniquely inclusive feature explains why a plethora of dogs enter the stage in my primary texts the moment women are deemed to potentially be as viable a political force as men in 1920, and why dogs take center stage soon after women are actually shown to vote differently than men in 1980. To demonstrate the effect of this in numbers, none of the Utilitarian Era presidents feature dogs as individuals, while seven out of ten of Hybrid Era presidents mention a dog of theirs by name, and all Familial Era presidents feature an individually recognized dog as their most important companion animal.

Lastly, although representations of women are not the subject of this topic, an observation that supports the association between women’s suffrage and companion animal portrayals is the sudden appearance of women, namely female family members, in scenes where companion animals feature in. Roosevelt writing of his daughter commiserating with a horse caught in the rain (340) and

Coolidge discussing the particular attachment of one of his family's dogs to his wife (221) are two early examples of an occurrence that later becomes much more evident and normalized.

5.2. Beneficial attributes

In this section, I argue that there are certain attributes, both real-life and literary, that former presidents stand to gain from when portraying companion animals in the right way. What calls attention to study the primary texts from this viewpoint, and what supports my argument regarding the deliberateness of companion animal portrayals, is the observation that the attributes to which presidents connect themselves to are exclusively positive.¹⁷ Fundamentally, my arguments in this chapter stem from the notion that writing about animals is a way of writing about ourselves (cf. 3.1.).

While writing about companion animals to make use of attributes might seem a strange practice when considering that former presidents have already demonstrated their capabilities through their time in office, a fundamental argument of my thesis is that writing about companion animals is an emotional appeal which has the capability of overriding more practical considerations in readers. Thus, even familiar politicians can change opinions through the use of attributes related to animals. The power of emotional appeal as demonstrated in this section mirrors the same observation in relation to relatability (cf. 5.1.) and will be demonstrated in relation to the "mobilizing" capability of clichés (cf. 5.3.).

5.2.1. Real-life attributes

While the argument of people supporting a politician who is like them (cf. chapter 5.1.), which leads to politicians consciously emphasizing or forging such an image, is compelling, I raise the following question to consider the hypothesis further and from other perspectives: Besides appearing relatable,

¹⁷ Concurrently, these positive animal attributes enhance the appeal of the authors to owners of companion animals. This serves to demonstrate how interconnected the different perspectives analyzed in this chapter actually are.

is there something else about liking, owning, or caring for animals that appeals to people? My conclusion is that if a president depicts himself as an “animal person”, he is able to associate himself with politically valuable qualities from three categories: 1) general naturalness or realness, 2) personal qualities that make for a good leader, and 3) physical qualities that ensure the capability and continuity of a leader.

According to the “biophilia hypothesis” by biologist Edward O. Wilson, “humans have a natural affinity for other living things—plants, animals, and the natural environment” which derives from an “innate need to associate with other living creatures” (Selly 6). Expanding upon this assessment, Selly demonstrates how being an “animal person”, or even just generally appreciating animals, correlates with naturalness and humaneness (6-8). Conversely, it can be understood that appearing to not have an affinity for animals might imply a certain unnaturalness or perhaps even inhumanness. The challenge this presents for a politician is apparent. Unsurprisingly, appreciation for other living beings is explicitly spelled out in most of my primary texts. Although this natural affinity for animals can be, and often is, demonstrated in relation to all animals on a general level, demonstrating it especially in relation to companion animals occurs because the readership is attuned to view them through a “highly sentimentalized” lens and thus attach a special emotional reaction to the person writing about them.

Examples of biophilia include Grant lamenting cruelty towards both bulls and horses in bull fights (1: 177-178), Ford’s mood being uplifted and confidence restored after watching the nature scenery that includes his dog running (251), Reagan writing about “kinship between man and animal” when discussing his relationship with horses (131), and the loneliness and hurt that Coolidge and Clinton, respectively, experience following the passing of their dogs (Coolidge 222; Clinton 48). An innate tendency to focus on animals can also be seen demonstrated in sections where animals do not play a central part in the narrative but where they still are brought to the forefront, such as when Reagan observes terra-cotta horses complementing terra-cotta soldiers in China (371) and Clinton

dedicates a passage to Robert Kennedy's dog (97). To expand upon this, the oversized role of companion animals that forms the basis of my thesis serves to foster naturalness or realness for the authors in the eyes of their readers.

An association with companion animal ownership lends presidents many qualities that people often want to see in a leader. In an article in the *International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health*, Hawkins et al. note the association between companion animal ownership and "justice, kindness, [and] fairness" as well as "compassion, empathy, and prosocial behaviour" (3). Similar characteristics are found in a veterinary study by Leslie et al. who discuss the correlation between companion animal ownership and the willingness to provide love, care, and affection for someone (220). Similar positive views have long historical roots with, for example, taking care of a companion animal during childhood being seen to correlate with a law-abiding adulthood in the nineteenth century (Grier 178). It is logical to conclude that people respect empathy and the willingness to care for another, be it an animal or fellow citizen, in a politician who represents both moral and tangible leadership of a country. An example of such qualities in my primary texts includes Bush Jr. personally making sure his dogs are evacuated to a safe place during the September 11 terrorist attacks (139). I also view the many practical care-taking acts of companion animals (cf. 5.1.2.) as a way of demonstrating concern for the well-being of animals.

Lastly, besides "naturalness" and positive qualities of the character, companion animal ownership is associated with good physical and mental health (Koivusilta and Ojanlatva 1; Beck and Katcher). For a politician, an image of good health means that they can be expected to be work actively now and for a long time into the future, thus boosting their political attractiveness and viability. As if to underline this, some presidents do not only depict themselves as owners of companion animals, but explicitly tie their activities with such animals to health benefits, too. Roosevelt notes that "men who take part in any field sports with horse ... receive a benefit which can

hardly be given by even the most vigorous athletic games” (314).¹⁸ Both Coolidge and Reagan emphasize the benefits of horseback riding for the mind. Dog-owning presidents portray themselves taking walks with their companion animals and often note how they are companions that make them happy, and Bush Sr. ties dogs as family members to a lessening of the burden of the presidency (29).

While instances of companion animals used to promote general naturalness, individual qualities of character, and health benefits have much overlap, I have used this categorization to approach the use of real-life attributes from several perspectives. As a result of this analysis, it is undeniable that a former president who still wishes to have an influence in politics will want to project these qualities in their literature through animal ownership.

5.2.2. Literary attributes

In addition to the effect of real-life attributes, the association with certain literary attributes of animals also enhances the viability of a political autobiographer. To make the most out of their companion animal portrayals, authors need to make use of the right attributes in relation to appropriate animals portrayed in the correct manner. An underlying criterion for all of these aspects is that their symbolic significance needs to be understood by the reader to be effective.

Although former presidents can certainly be understood to benefit from an association with the general “purity” of the companion animals they depict, in addition to them serving as a safe locus in political rhetoric, I will focus on more specific attributes related to the individual species. The reason for this is that I identify changes in the perceived value of specific attributes to lead, in their own part, to changes in companion animal portrayals in my primary texts, whereas the attribute of animal purity has been demonstrated to be a constant in American literature since the Romantic period and does not add anything new here, despite being notable.

¹⁸ With “field sport”, Roosevelt is referring to a sport such as hunting.

In his work *Animal Characters*, Boehrer demonstrates three aspects related to animals in literature which are central for the purpose of this study. Firstly, animals are commonly given attributes in literature, which is a tradition several millennia old. As an example, Boehrer cites Aristotle's remarks in *Historia* on some animals being "mischievous and wicked, e.g., the fox; others are spirited and affectionate and fawning, e.g., the dog; some are gentle and easily tamed, e.g., the elephant." (Boehrer 15). Secondly, both attributes and the value given to them can change over time. For example, the value of parrots in literature depreciated historically as their earlier attributes of authority and distinction shifted to extravagance and mindlessness (Boehrer 20), whilst the opposite occurred for sheep, who rose from common and humble origins to "symbolic preeminence through association with the Eucharist and the figure of Christ as *Agnus Dei*" (Boehrer 22). Thirdly, the attributes and changes in their perceived value are not simply a literary trend but rather a result of a co-exchange between literature and surrounding society and the upheavals that occur in them. For example, in the case of turkeys, the reason that their initial courtly attributes were reconceptualized was their successful domestication in Europe, which meant that they were no longer a prestigious New World delicacy for elites, but a local food resource available to lower classes, too (Boehrer 21).

The use of attributes is effective when they follow well-established symbolic patterns (Simons 115). According to Simons, when employed and understood successfully, such techniques can enrich communication, thus defining animals as not only a safe locus in terms of politics, but also as a communicatively effective one. As horses and dogs have been noted to be both common and outstanding companion animals (cf. chapter 3.3.), and, as such, well-established animals in broader American culture, their symbolic use can be expected to be particularly well understood, too.¹⁹ To add to earlier discussion of the two species, what horses and dogs have in common is their established

¹⁹ Although former presidents of the United States certainly have an international audience, these observations suggest that the works are particularly attuned to consider a local readership; for symbolic references to be understood, the authors must use language that is appropriate for their time and place. This, in turn, supports my argument from chapter 2.3. that American post-presidential autobiographies are not written for all peoples in all times as a way to cement their legacy as much as for timely political purposes.

relationship of being subordinate to human masters and their comparatively easy trainability, allowing for portrayals that are both believable and relatable. It could, of course, be argued that displays of mastery over animals that usually are not successfully tamed, especially formidable ones, would be a more effective way to promote associated qualities such as vitality and leadership. However, it may be that life experiences like this are not available for the former presidents for use in their autobiographies simply because they have not experienced them. Furthermore, they may not want to write about experiences that are unrelatable, as demonstrated in chapter 5.1.2. Thus, I argue, they prefer to settle on animals which have an established formula for associating through attributes and relatable modes of human-animal relationship, where the human is the unquestionable leader.

The way that former presidents benefit from associating themselves with certain literary qualities attributed to animals happens both through direct association with animals that possess certain attributes as well as through implications that arise from the power dynamics of the human-animal relationship portrayed. These can occur both separately and simultaneously.

Association can happen through general depictions of what kind of animal company the presidents keep. This is a common technique in literature, but it can also be viewed through the truism that people and their companion animals are alike (Beck and Katcher, 63). When considered from this point of view, positive evaluations, such as a horse being a “wise old fellow” (Roosevelt 125) or a dog being “good-natured, high-spirited, intelligent” (Clinton 759), serve to benefit the authors through such association. Similarly, when Coolidge defines his white collie dog as having “great courage and fidelity” shortly after describing how white collies are enshrined in his bookplate, he is ensuring his own association not only with the animals but also, effectively, their attributes (221).

Beneficial association can also take place through the qualities that animals closest to the presidents are portrayed to have. In the case of horses, positive attributes that they are traditionally associated with include excellence and intelligence (Grier 190) as well as courage, strength, high social associations, and heroism (Boehrer 8, 18-19, 40), which are also commonly found in the horse

portrayals in my primary texts. These include fording dangerous rivers on horseback by Truman (1: 123) and Roosevelt (120), Van Buren saving an esteemed riding companion from mortal injury (403), and countless depictions of Grant riding a horse in battles of the Civil War. When the horse operates, for example, “without hesitation or urging” (Grant 1: 279) in a perilous and demanding situation, the attributes of the horse are also conferred upon the rider who leads the horse and who is connected to the animal through direct physical contact. Presidents who benefit from association on a macrolevel include Buchanan, Grant, and Roosevelt, who show themselves to be military commanders of large numbers of horses. As horses have attributes of strength and high social associations, showing oneself to be in command of thousands of horses can be viewed as a very potent symbolic display of power.

What, in part, leads to the change in primary companion animal from horses to dogs in my primary texts is a change in the value of their attributes. In the earliest of my primary texts, which form the baseline, the typical attributes assigned to horses related to nationalist and frontier-pushing notions of the nation-building era of America (McMichael et al. 614-615). As a result of several simultaneous sociocultural changes, especially industrialization and urbanization, previously valued horses began to lose their significance and be replaced. In the Hybrid Era, it leads to horses being recalled only briefly and in a token-like manner (cf. examples in 5.3.1.), and even characterized by Hoover as “one of the original mistakes of creation” (1: 18). In fact, the diminishing role of horses is explicitly mentioned by Hoover and Eisenhower (cf. 4.3.2.).

As the derived human occupation is inseparable from the animal when analyzing human-animal relations, the change of horse attributes can also be observed from attributes assigned to people and professions associated with horses. This can be demonstrated in relation to the agricultural horseman and the military horseman, two occupations that traditionally had value assigned to them. Undoubtedly, they had much merit of their own, but their value likely was enhanced due to their relation with horses, which carried associations of strength, intelligence, and social esteem. Mirroring industrial changes in the United States, Truman verbalizes what the agricultural horsemen had begun

to signify when he became a Senator in the 1930's: Some other members of "that august body... looked upon me as a sort of hick politician who did not know what he was supposed to do" (1: 144), thus implying a new and negative attribute of being antiquated or even unintelligent. Likewise, by the time of Reagan, the notion of glorious military horsemen with glorious attributes of physical horseback leadership were old-fashioned. He explicitly notes that "a troop of cavalymen in blue tunics and gold braid, flags raised and bugles blowing" who "raced across the prairie to rescue beleaguered pioneers" was merely a childhood fantasy from Saturday matinees (75). Although he notes that he had a reserve commission in a cavalry regiment before WWII, this remains merely a side note. Accordingly, his recollections of other kinds of horsemanship, such as riding in the countryside, contemplating on horseback, and exercise, are largely devoid of the utilitarian, militaristic, and masculine aspects of the horsemen of the Utilitarian and early Hybrid Eras.

At the same time, partly due to the same sociocultural changes that lessened the value of horses, the significance of dogs began to grow. Notably, in addition to sociocultural changes, Grier identifies the innovation of flea powder as having a profound effect on interactions between dogs and humans in the early twentieth century (87), allowing for the animal to be brought into closer contact with humans, including in bed (Blankfield 339), thus absolving the animal of earlier connotations of uncleanness. Such developments heavily affected cultural depictions of dogs, most notably starting in the 1930's, and thus coinciding with the early Hybrid Era, when dogs began to be featured heavily in cinema as canine heroes with attributes of loyalty, strength, and protectiveness, and which came to be especially fostered to promote wartime idealism and an image of American heroism (Wolf 104-106). The suitability of the physical and behavioral characteristics of dogs as well as their new-found compatibility as companion animals for urban dwellers can be seen to have led these attributes to have been bestowed upon dogs, in particular, thus allowing them to eventually replace horses as the primary companion animal in my primary texts.

As mentioned earlier, all of the portrayals of animals that presidents depict as being closely associated with make exclusive use of attributes that can be evaluated as being positive ones. On the one hand, this serves to appeal to companion animal owners and other animal enthusiasts (cf. 5.1.1.), but on the other hand, it serves to benefit the authors themselves to associate with these qualities. Also, I argue that the complete absence of well-established negative literary tropes, such as the vicious or dumb dog or the fearful horse, when writing about companion animals proves that the exclusive use of positive attributes is deliberate.

5.3. Technical aspects of writing

Companion animal portrayals are affected by technical aspects of writing. Although such aspects are influenced by surrounding society, and thus do not ultimately differ from viewpoints discussed in chapters 5.1. and 5.2., they can be used to study my primary texts from a very different starting point. In this way, a broader perspective on the increasingly deliberate use of companion animals can be achieved and earlier findings can be verified, supplemented, or contradicted. Specifically, I will discuss the role of clichés and readability.

Regarding clichés, I will demonstrate how the avoidance and working around of negative clichés affects the decline of significant horse portrayals. The reason for this approach is that I have already demonstrated several aspects of how companion animals are used as a safe and familiar subject with emotional appeal, or, in other words, as a positive cliché, by identifying the beneficial and repeatedly used modes of horse and dog portrayals. Furthermore, while positive clichés must have first become clichés to reaffirm the use of something, and thus explain a continuance rather than a change, negative clichés become untenable the moment they acquire a negative aspect to them, and thus help account for the decline of horses in my primary texts.²⁰

²⁰ Also, if dog portrayals decline in future post-presidential autobiographies, this provides a ready framework for exploring the role negative clichés might have had on it.

Regarding readability, I will focus on a very practical aspect of my primary texts. This angle is chosen as a means to study one mechanism of how political autobiography is used as a tool for political influence. However, it also calls for attention because the typical reader of a post-presidential autobiography is not a political enthusiast but rather an average person, hence my precise approach being “readability for the casual reader”.

5.3.1. *Negative clichés*

In politics, clichés can be negative from a purely technical standpoint, such as in the form of worn-out expressions like “the American people” (David). There are also topical clichés, which, like literary attributes, evolve as part of an exchange between cultural representations and surrounding society, and can be exemplified by a politician emphasizing being the son or daughter of a blue-collar profession so as to “describe their humble beginnings to show they’re worthy of the nation’s high office” (David). In their applicable handbook, *Technical Writing*, Bly and Blake observe concisely that (negative) clichés should be avoided, because they become “trite through overuse” and “no longer communicate in the same crisp way they once did” (80-81). The detrimental effect of this for a politician is obvious. Thus, it can be deduced that even if a politician is building their brand on conservatism, traditions, and resisting change, they must find ways to express it in terms that have not run their course in the discourse of the day.

A central feature of clichés is that they are ever-changing. In his sociolinguistic work, *On Clichés*, Zijderveld demonstrates how existing clichés are challenged by new concepts, which are “clichégenic” themselves, and which ultimately become clichés themselves once they have routinized and replaced the previous clichés (97). He also notes that a potential cliché needs to have the capability of mobilizing “people who are generally quite passive and uncommitted” (96-97). Although Zijderveld writes of socio-political movements, I argue that the phenomenon is similar in the case of companion animals in presidential autobiographies in two ways. Firstly, due to their

emotional appeal, animals can be used to “mobilize” people in the field of politics, which for many is boring or has left them cynical. Secondly, portrayals of animals, too, can become negative clichés. The only distinction is that whereas clichés of socio-political movements may run their course in the fraction of a human lifetime, clichés regarding animals may take a longer time to become overused in presidential autobiographies since they are a relatively unfrequently occurring work of literature and thus suffer from repetition more slowly.

My primary texts feature two different prominent strategies to solve the problem of negative clichés. One is to avoid the clichéd topic by minimizing commentary on the subject. I tie this solution to the often-diminished role of the horse in the Hybrid Era. Despite the opportunities offered by real-life experiences, especially by being born in a time when horses were unavoidable (which without question applies to all presidents up to Eisenhower, who was born in 1890, but likely to some later presidents, too), presidents may have seen it as advantageous to minimize the role of horses in their works when they deemed the animal, and the ways it commonly was portrayed, to have become overused in political rhetoric and literature. That the horse does not fully disappear can be explained by the notion that Hybrid Era presidents wanted to feature *some* animal, but the portraying dogs may have been deemed too risky at a time when they had not yet been established as the new norm or started to “routinize”. Thus, brief instances of horses could be used to touch upon a familiar element without relying fully on the subject because it has become negatively clichéd.

The second strategy I identify to confronting clichés is working around them, instead of avoiding them. This approach is needed in cases where a topic has become a negative cliché in post-presidential autobiography while remaining relevant in other areas. In the cases of horses, they still remain an important part of American tradition, culture, and imagery, and have rebounded in numbers starting from the 1960’s (Kilby 175-176, 187). Furthermore, while a majority of Americans have no longer had a direct relationship with horses since the popularization of engine-powered modes of transportation and urban-majority dwelling (cf. chapter 5.3.2.), there still are many who are personally

involved with them. Together, these mean that after the Utilitarian horse portrayal became a negative cliché there still was potential for horse portrayals to be used for political purposes if it could be done in a way that does not evoke the negative cliché.

Reagan and Clinton have devised strategies to deal with the challenge. Reagan's innovation is to portray horses in a way which emphasizes their sentimental, pensive, and familial side, as opposed to pure physical and practical elements. As this has been demonstrated in chapter 4.3.3., I will demonstrate Clinton's solution here. In his autobiography, Clinton includes a story of his horsemanship which does away with the mastery and leadership of the Utilitarian Era and takes on a humorous, self-deprecating tone:

The sheriff handed me the reins and told me to join the [rodeo] parade and I'd be introduced to the crowd.... I hadn't been on a horse since I was five, and then only to pose for a picture in a cowboy outfit... but I took the reins and mounted the horse. After a lifetime of watching cowboy movies, I thought, how hard could it be? When the opening ceremony started, I rode out into the arena just as if I knew what I was doing. About a quarter of the way around the arena, right after I'd been introduced, the horse stopped and reared up on its hind legs. Miraculously, I didn't fall off. The crowd clapped. I think they believed I'd done it on purpose. The sheriff knew better, but he supported me [in the election] anyway. (216)

Admissions such as not having been on a horse since childhood and it being a "miracle" that he does not fall off go directly against the baseline of Utilitarian portrayals, and the overall tone and content are unparalleled. As a result, Clinton works around modes of portrayal that are "trite through overuse" and avoids the pitfalls that earlier modes of horsemanship might have brought to his narrative while still evoking a culturally relevant subject matter. Clinton provides direct metacommentary on the real-life need to do this when he later describes riding at another farming event: "I wanted to show that I wasn't a cultural alien rural Americans couldn't support" (657). However, working around clichés in this way remains rare in my primary texts and does not become a recurring mode. One reason for this might be that most authors have deemed it less risky and more efficient to focus on other ways of making use of companion animals in their works.

To briefly consider from the viewpoint of clichés why dogs did not immediately become the new norm in the early Hybrid Era, even when they had already become popular companion animals in a majority-urban America with standardized portrayals in popular culture, a reason might be that it took a long time for them to become “routinized”, as per Zijderveld (97); only when a number of works had featured tentative Familial portrayals of dogs could they be put to full use by Bush Sr., paving the way for dogs featuring in an increasingly notable and positively clichéd role in works by his literary successors.

5.3.2. Readability for the casual reader

Despite covering many subjects in a variety of styles, thus fitting the “polygenre” definition of political autobiography (cf. chapter 2.1.), my primary texts are typically quite heavy on the political side. To follow the narrative, knowledge on subjects such as American and world history, geography, the workings of government and diplomacy, foreign cultures, political figures ranging from local bureaucrats to heads of state, and a variety of political policies and related problems is often required. For a layperson, this can make for burdensome reading, potentially to the point that they might not finish the book. Indeed, besides having a negative image, politics is also often characterized as “boring” (Lerner 1-10). That political autobiographers commonly personalize and dramatize their works (Egerton, “The Anatomy of Political Memoir” 346), instead of sticking to strict political analysis and providing information in a neutral manner, may in part be an attempt to remedy the situation. However, I argue that when the main subject of an autobiography is politics, the political autobiographer can only make it so far with such forms of “sophisticated entertainment” (Egerton, “The Anatomy of Political Memoir” 346) to keep casual readers engaged.

Thus, I argue that stories of companion animals can also serve as a kind of “interlude” or respite from pure politics and as a mechanism to get or keep the casual reader engaged. For example, the way that Reagan frequently breaks down his political problems in tandem with depictions of horses

can be seen as a way to offer political analysis in an easy and casual setting, as opposed to being confined to impersonal administrative offices. While readability is centrally connected to relatability, I observe it to function separately, too, when it is used to provide material that a casual reader can *understand*. More precisely, relatability as a mechanism for political influence functions through readers supporting the act of featuring companion animals itself, whereas readability functions through including companion animals as a form of easily palatable material that allows readers to keep on reading and to be influenced by the rest of the work.

Companion animals being used for increased readability is evidenced by the outsized role of companion animals in my primary texts, especially when they are featured in sections where they are not central to the ongoing narrative. As I demonstrated in chapter 3, companion animals can be expected to feature in American political autobiography in one way or another. However, when it comes to politics itself, they are not featured in my primary texts in relation to, for example, analyses of legislation to improve the rights of companion animals. Although this might be beneficial from the viewpoint of the animal owner and could bestow the positive attributes related to compassion and general affinity towards animals, it probably would not serve to increase readability. Instead, companion animals are very commonly featured in sections that, effectively, quicken the narrative and liven it up. This is especially evident in cases where horses are used in what could be called action scenes and when dogs appear in settings of familial loyalty and lighthearted humorous incidents. As such, these can be seen to mirror American TV, film, and literary tropes, including those of military and Wild West horses as well as family-friendly dog portrayals as found in popular works ever since Hollywood's dog hero boom in the 1920's. As was shown to be the case in symbolic uses of animals needing to be ones that are widely understood for maximum effect, mirroring familiar portrayals from the world of entertainment serves to increase the utility and absorbability of scenes that are composed for increased readability.

Examples of horses in action scenes reminiscent of, for example, Western films include the aforementioned instances of Van Buren saving a general's life while riding (403) and Truman fording a dangerous river (1: 123). Others include Eisenhower being lassoed by a cowboy on horseback during his inauguration festivities (1: 102) and Roosevelt and Grant in various battles on horseback. Even Hoover, whose tongue-in-cheek and non-standard admonishment of horses is in many ways an outlier, provides much material that serves to increase readability through fast-paced action in the form of stories of riding in Burmese jungles, in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia, and during civil unrest in China (*Years of Adventure*).

Lighthearted examples of dog-related activities include Clinton describing a campaign advertisement where they employed a dog's bark every time a false charge against Clinton was made (203) and Bush Jr.'s dog doing its "business" on a neighbor's lawn on his first day as a private citizen after his presidency (475-476). At the other end of the spectrum, as opposed to dogs being merely utilized as the subjects of jokes, are portrayals of shared loyalty, as is exemplified by Coolidge writing of him and his dog remaining close to each other during both day and night (221-222) and by Bush Jr. writing both of protecting his dogs during the September 11 terrorist attacks (139) and of his dog comforting him after he gives the order for military operations in Iraq to commence (224). Alternating and intertwined depictions of the comedy and significance of dogs in my primary texts are reminiscent of popular literary and cinematic portrayals of dogs. For example, Toto from *The Wizard of Oz* and Beethoven from the *Beethoven* franchise, who are depicted as causing commotion while also having the enduring loyalty of their human family members, play a very similar role to many of the dogs in my primary texts.

How can I argue that this is deliberate and not incidental, especially since at least a portion of the former presidents can be expected to have "truly" been animal owners and willing to write of the subject, as American demographics of increasing companion animal ownership must have affected them too? Firstly, as has been demonstrated in chapter 2, and will be re-examined here, everything in

a political autobiography serves a purpose, including readability. While the fact that American post-presidential autobiographies have become some of the most valuable publications of the book industry has more to do with the status of the United States as a superpower than with the works themselves being uniquely immersive page-turners, readability cannot be divorced from their success, either. I find it plausible to suggest that in works that have become multi-million-dollar ventures, and that are worked on by the best ghostwriters, editors, and lawyers alike, every single word is weighed carefully and structure and narration are deliberately crafted to maximize readability, including when it comes to companion animals. Here, the motivations of political autobiography to not only aim for political influence but also to make money work in tandem, and an attempt is made to balance a politically driven narrative with an easy reading experience. Indeed, readability increases readership, which increases the potential for influence.

Secondly, companion animals in the roles described in this subchapter have nothing to do with the purposes for writing political autobiography, as expressed by both authors and scholars of political autobiography, which include reasons such as providing historical information and insider accounts of the workings of government (cf. chapter 2.1.). On the contrary, and very conspicuously, at the expense of not divulging expected information, sections pertaining to companion animals often speed up the pace of the works through action sequences and humor and increase entertainment value. Thus, if everything in political autobiography is deliberate and if depictions of companion animals do not correspond to reasons for writing political autobiography while mirroring widely understood tropes of the entertainment industry, the use of companion animals must serve a purpose of increasing readability for the casual reader.

Lastly, the fact that portrayals evolve from horse-led action sequences to humorous yet loyalty-affirming family-friendly scenes of dogs, and, thus, follow changing trends of popular entertainment, shows that writing about companion animals in an approachable way for the casual reader is a conscious construct. Concurrently, the fact that such readers truly are extremely relevant for my

primary texts explains why political autobiography often does not provide much direct information for “historians, political scientists, or literary critics” (Egerton, “The Politics of Memory” 1-2) while maintaining and entertaining “mass readerships” (Egerton, “The Anatomy of Political Memoir” 346).

6. Conclusion

In my thesis, I found that companion animals are portrayed in an increasingly deliberate manner in American post-presidential autobiographies, with horses and dogs being outstanding species that receive especial attention. These portrayals were demonstrated to neatly fit three distinct categories based on the types of portrayal: the Utilitarian Era, the Hybrid Era, and the Familial Era. Overall, portrayals were found to shift from horse-centered utilitarian ones to dog-centered familial ones, but not in a linear manner. Other central changes that were observed include portrayals shifting their focus from physical and human-led modes to ones that are sentimental and that recognize the companion animal individual.

Concurrently, presidential autobiographies were confirmed to be a complex and calculative “polygenre”, as defined by secondary sources, that encompasses several literary styles. The need to analyze my primary texts from a variety of different perspectives, including American demographics, perceived health benefits of companion ownership, and readability for the layperson, was apparent. The ensuing observation that political responsiveness was confirmed by all my chosen approaches proves that American post-presidential autobiographies are not written with mere legacy in mind, but rather with a potentially very immediate political purpose, including running again for elective office, amongst other forms of political work.

I approached my subject based on the observation that animals play a special role in American politics, which in part derives from their role as a safe and seemingly non-political locus in political rhetoric. I connected this to a symbolic status of purity and goodness of animals, which stems from the Romantic period, and which provides a contrast to the negative image of politics, from which politicians need to distance themselves to attain electoral and other political viability. I found the study of this subject to be important, because animals in political rhetoric have been studied little in general and not at all in American post-presidential autobiographies, which have become best-selling works of the book publishing industry.

In my analysis, I tied the trends of animal portrayals, and the changes in them, to several societal changes in the United States. Notably, industrialization and urbanization heavily contributed to the diminishing role of horses in the early Hybrid Era by affecting American demographics, and, through that, how relatable dogs and horses were to the average person. Likewise, around the time when companion animal owners became a majority of Americans, companion animal portrayals heavily shifted towards a familial mode, resulting in the distinctly defined Familial Era, whose primary companion animal, the dog, was particularly suitable for it. I also observed women's suffrage to have contributed to the decrease in portrayals of horses and portrayals centered around traditional traits of masculinity, paving the way for the new dog-led Familial norm.

Related to these societal changes, I found both real-life and literary attributes of companion animals and their ownership to have affected companion animal portrayals in my primary texts. I also tied considerations related to technical aspects of writing to changes in companion animal portrayals, namely avoiding negatively clichéd ways of writing and providing easily palatable material for laypeople in works that otherwise are heavy on potentially boring or challenging political analysis. The results from these varied approaches were very uniform and confirmed an increasingly deliberate use of companion animals in my primary texts, from the steady baseline of the Utilitarian Era to the intricately crafted Familial Era which takes into consideration a wide variety of politically vital viewpoints.

Accordingly, a central conclusion of my thesis is that post-presidential autobiographers must keep finding fresh ways to communicate their relationship with companion animals if they wish to make the most out of the effective and politically safe locus that companion animals are. Notably, the true status of the president's actual relationship with his companion animals is not of importance here since political autobiography has well-established ways to conceal, stretch, and emphasize facts, a practice often enabled by professional editors and ghost writers.

In the coming years, with the publishing of the next post-presidential autobiographies, we will see how or whether the observed trend of the Familial Era continues. Based on the visible, and familial, presence of the two Obama dogs, who were acquired when he entered office, it might be expected that Obama's work continues as part of the current tradition. Trump, on the contrary, is a very notable exception, since he is the first president in over one hundred years to not have acquired a companion animal. The reason he gives for not having a dog is that he would feel "a little phony" (Farzan). If Familial Era portrayals repress a reality of dog ownership where presidents do not actually have a personal relationship with their companion animals, Trump's comment may indicate a new era of sincerity in animal portrayals. Time will tell whether he is an outlier or a trendsetter of a post-Familial Era. Other timely events and trends which may affect the practice of writing about companion animals for political reasons include a continuing rise in interest towards animal well-being and human-companion animal relationships as well as increasing ownership of robotic and virtual companion animals.

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