

The Human-Animal Boundary in *Flush*: An Eco-critical Approach

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Abstract

Flush (1933), written by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), is the biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's pet dog, a cocker spaniel. Named after its animal protagonist, the novel portrays the relationship between the spaniel and the Victorian poetess. The novel also portrays the courtship and marriage of the poetess and Robert Browning as perceived by her pet dog. This study attempts an ecocritical reading of the canine's biography. The study attempts an assessment of the canine's growth from puppyhood to adulthood as to show whether the writer endows him with excessive anthropomorphic traits. An examination of the point of view of Flush is integrated into the study as to show whether the protagonist experiences a development of cognitive abilities. The study focuses on the consciousness of Flush as to trace phases of his achievement of maturity and wisdom, in his own fashion. The paper engages diverse studies in the fields of science and humanities as to show whether Woolf is ensnared in sentimentality, and to what extent does she maintain a balance between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism.

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علاقة الانسان بالحيوان في رواية "فلش" قراءة نقدية بيئية

حنان بركات

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث علاقة الانسان بالحيوان كما تصورها رواية "فلش" لفرجينيا وولف. هذه الرواية تصور السيرة الذاتية للكلب فلش و الذي كانت تقنتيه الشاعرة الانجليزية اليزابيث باريت براونينج. يطبق البحث قراءة نقدية بيئية على الرواية حيث يتم تتبع مراحل النمو المختلفة للكلب فلش (بطل الرواية) لمعرفة ما اذا كان يمر بمراحل معرفية تتطور طبقا لمراحل عمره المختلفة. و بدأ فان الدراسة تركز علي وعي بطل الرواية لتقصي مراحل وصوله للنضج و الحكمة و مدي تناسبها مع قدراته الحيوانية. يقوم البحث ايضا بقراءة النظريات و الاكتشافات العلمية في مجال علم الحيوان المعرفي و ذلك لبيان ما اذا كانت الكاتبة تصور سلوكه بأسلوب أدبي واقعي أم انها تبالغ في منح اليطل قدرات تفوق قدراته الحيوانية.

Flush (1933), written by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), is the biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's pet dog, a cocker spaniel. Named after its animal protagonist, the novel portrays the relationship between the spaniel and the Victorian poetess. The novel also portrays the courtship and marriage of the poetess and Robert Browning as perceived by her pet dog. This study attempts an ecocritical reading of the canine's biography. The study attempts an assessment of the canine's growth from puppyhood to adulthood as to show whether the writer endows him with excessive anthropomorphic traits. An examination of the point of view of Flush is integrated into the study as to show whether the protagonist experiences a development of cognitive abilities. The study focuses on the consciousness of Flush as to trace phases of his achievement of maturity and wisdom, in his own fashion. The paper engages diverse studies in the fields of science and humanities as to show whether Woolf is ensnared in sentimentality, and to what extent she maintains a balance between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism.

Eco-criticism connects between literature and nature. Cheryll Glotfelty defines this type of literary criticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). The multiplicity of natural features as well as animal life cannot be included in a single field of a study. Thus depicting the relationship between literature and environment, or ecocriticism "must cross interdisciplinary boundaries and use the methods and findings of other disciplines when it asks, "what is environment?" or "Why think in ecological or evolutionary ways about it?" (Cohen 11). The diversity of physical environment suggests an interdisciplinary reading that engages both science and humanities. Such a reading gives power and authority to eco-critical discourse.

Of the humanities and sciences that are involved here are anthropology, psychology, zoology—the study of animals and their behaviour-- and post-behaviorist-scientific interest in animal consciousness. Anthrozoology is also involved; it is a "relatively new interdisciplinary field that takes the human animal relationship

as its central focus" (DeMello xi), it is "concerned with reaching a complete understanding of how and why we interact with animals in the many different ways that we do" (Bekoff xxx-xxx). The strong engagement of animals in these studies asserts that "animals are an ecocritical issue" (Estock 63), but they had been marginalized as "interest in animals was on the fringes of mainstream environmentalist movements (61).

Furthermore, though animals have had clear presence in plenty of literary works such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Animal Farm*, they were addressed by critics "primarily as symbols" (McHugh 363). For example, the Albatross in Coleridge's is read as symbolic of man's burden of guilt. The reason for delaying diverse engagements of animals here is mainly attributed to both the downgraded position of animals, and the common belief that animals are to be mastered and used by man. Aristotle expressed this belief as he was "certain that all... animals existed for the sake of Man"(Clutton-Brock 424). Thus, animals are denied any right to entities or having feeling or agency of their own. In the seventeenth century Descartes asserted this view as he claimed that animals are "effectively machines lacking in significant self-awareness" (Smith 349). Descartes' complements the eighteenth century Enlightenment's idea that "Man and man alone was the standard by which all things were measured...His interests were paramount" (Hazard 9). Such a view is summarised in Alexander Pope's *An Essay On Man* (1734), where he asserts that, "The proper study of Mankind is Man" (281).

Under the influence of such anthropocentric views, which assert man as the centre of the Universe, both scientists and writers had been hesitant to deal with human non-animal relationship. In the field of science, anthropomorphism was believed to be more based on assumption than on lab experiments and scientific research, thus attributing baseless human traits to nonhuman animals. Philip Armstrong surveys the reasons behind such an allegation as a distraction of researchers of such topics from the reality of human life by an "immature emotional investment in nonhuman animals"(20). As for the field of literary studies, there was the possibility of the prejudice, "that research into the meaning and

function of the animal in the human world involves a kind of self-indulgent taste for the trivial" (20). Also, dealing with human-nonhuman animal relationship in literature was "dismissed for fear of allegation of sentimentality" (Armstrong 20). These apprehensions represented obstacles against literary investigation of such relationship.

However, with the advance of science, especially in the nineteenth century, many theories emerged which had had their impact on man's relation to both nature and animal. Of the most influential naturalist studies are those by Charles Darwin, which were published either in magazines or books. The naturalist's famous statement that "light would be thrown on the origin of man and his history" (1), and his inquiry into "whether man, like every other species, is descended from some pre-existing form" (3) produced many debates, both in scientific as well as humanistic societies. His evolutionary views on the kinship between man and animal sparked off many studies on the consciousness of non-human animals and their agency. These scientific researches resulted in a change of human attitude toward animals; thus, "the subject of relations between people and other animals has become a respectable area of research" (Podberscek et al. 1). Allan Burns defends the genre by clarifying that "[a]nimal narratives, at their imaginative best, are not invitations to anthropomorphic sentimentality, but rather literary extensions of natural history and a potentially potent ethical force" (350). In consequence of this development, [t]heories from the fringes of mainstream contemporary ecocriticism...have...produced significant scholarly dialogue about connections between environmental and animal issues" (Estok 61). Further, these studies created more elaborate and specialized fields that, hopefully, would lead man to consider non-human animal agency and rights

In writing *Flush*, Virginia Woolf experienced similar fears of "being dismissed as sentimental" (Smith 351). In a letter to her friend Ottoline Morrrell, she calls the book "a joke," she further justifies its writing as follows, "I was so tired after the Waves, that I lay in the garden and read the Browning love letters, and the figure of their dog made me laugh so I couldn't resist making him a Life"

(qtd in Caughie 52). This motive reflects a kind of apology and justification for choosing to write a biography of a nonhuman animal. Other motives are given by her, either that she needed to write something "to sell...and as a profit-making enterprise" (Caughie 53), or that life of the poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning was what really mattered and not that of her pet. Even in writing the book, "she was impatient...and anxious to be done with [it]" (Gordon 251-2). *Flush* sold very well when it was first published.

However, the novel remains the least celebrated work by Virginia Woolf; it does not enjoy critics' attention the way her other works such as *To the Light House* and *Mrs Dallaway* do. The bulk of the literary studies on *Flush* dates back to the late 1990s. Actually, very few critical works are published then and the great majority of the bulk belongs to the 2000s. This late interest could be attributed to the emergence of ecocriticism and the growing interest in animal rights; both have inspired a re-reading of literary works with animal characters playing different roles, either major or minor.

Critics have offered diverse readings of the novel. Pamela Caughie contests the reasons for denying *Flush* a canonical status, Alison Booth focuses on narrative olfaction in *Flush*, and Jeanne Dubino examines "Woolf's use of Darwinian discourse in constructing a history of the origin of the history of the spaniel"(143). She views the novel as expressing Woolf's interest in the "lives of the silenced, the subordinate, the excluded" (143). Jutta Ittner attempts a comparative reading of Paul Auster's *Timbuktu* and *Flush*. She "presents a contrasting analysis of canine constructs and their complex narrative fabrics of human and animal lives and consciousnesses" (181). Craig Smith investigates the reasons for the novel's dismissal by critics, and approaches it "as a feminist allegory of the subjugation of women in Victorian England" (349). Indeed, the consciousness of *Flush* often guides the reader to Elizabeth Browning's downgraded position as a woman.

It is noteworthy here that though the poetess plays an important part, both in the novella and in *Flush*'s life, yet, the focus is mostly, but not exclusively, on the canine's internal perspective rather than on that of his mistress. Jutta Ittner points out that *Flush* is "endowed with the consciousness" to reflect on himself as well as on

"human existence, and to philosophize on [his] species' place in the world" (184). Flush is never endowed with the human verbal ability of talking; Woolf's revelation of his consciousness represents substitute to such a lack. Here, a clarification of types of point of view employed in animal narratives is necessary before approaching the consciousness of Flush.

Allan Burns is one of the few critics who deal with this issue. But first, he points out the difficulty of navigating between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism; the former gives human attributes to animals, the latter denies feeling and consciousness to animals. Burns sees that first person animal narratives are excluded from the framework of natural science because of their "overtly anthropomorphic fantasies" (344). Objective third person point of view excludes any possibility of internal perspective which makes it correspond to "anthropocentric or behaviorist position" (344). As for the limited third person point of view, it occupies an intermediate position between these extremes. Burns further elaborates the validity of the third type of narrative as follows:

This point of view mediates the animal's experience and conveys its purposiveness and emotional states, without suggesting that the animal itself relies on language or a symbolic understanding of its environment. Limited third person also allows readers to glimpse the world through the sensory apparatus of different species.(344)

Animal sensory apparatus play an important part in their exploration of their environment. By means of third person point of view, the actions of these olfactory (smell), visual (sight), auditor (hearing), gustatory (taste), abstract (intellectual), and kinesthetic (movement) senses are transmitted to the reader which enables him/her to have a clear view of the animal's different experiences.

When Flush first arrives to the Barretts' house he is left alone with his new mistress in her room. Each shows great eagerness to communicate with one another. A mute dialogue pursues between them, involving a comparison between the facial features of each of them.

Here am I – and then each felt: but how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His

was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? (Woolf 26-7)

The narrator here moves freely between the two different perspectives-- internal and external-- of both characters. A hint at the kind of relationship that both will enjoy is made in the above passage. Some critics believe that Flush "experience[s] love at first sight"(Ittner 186). Indeed, the silent interrogation implies an absence of any sense of mastery on either side. What each of them experiences is a sense of interactive egalitarianism, rather than a hierarchal relationship between a human and non-human animal.

Flush is given to Elizabeth as a present from her friend Miss Mitford. Adrian Franklin argues that "those in Western Anglophone societies who have suffered family trauma and who find themselves alone and possibly socially and physically insecure or isolated often acquire companion animals, particularly dogs and cats" (141). Franklin's argument signifies a positive effect on man in seeking such a company. Yet, the very act of owning a pet is viewed differently by Y. F. Tuan. He finds it to be a kind of 'playful domination' reflecting "man's inherent insecurity and need to display his power to subdue the unruly forces of nature" (qtd in Fox, 529). This view which implies a denial of animal agency, is argued by Rebekah Fox who considers man-animal relation as "more complex than that" (529). She points out that the relation involves "a range of reciprocal exchanges and emotions of both human and animal agency" (529). Indeed, these reciprocal exchanges mark the relationship between the poetess and the dog. Actually, Flush seems to have the final say here, as he decides to have himself lying "for ever after- on the rug at Miss Barrett's feet"(Woolf 27). Views on Flush's choice of his position to on the rug tend to deny "the superiority [of] human over dog" (Sultzbach 114). Woolf intends "Flush an agency in acquiescing to bind himself to human company as if it were his own individual desire motivated by mutual affection rather than a master-pet hierarchy" (114-15). But the rug is not the only place occupied by Flush as he often lies on the sofa to which the poetess "was chained" (Woolf 36); Adrian Franklin points out that seats in Western culture are symbolic of both belonging and

status...To be seated together means to be equally ranked" (141). Such close companionship is further emphasized when travelling together on a carriage, his position is either "by her side...[or] on her lap" (29). These two positions emphasize the sociological suggestion that for man and pet, "[t]o be seated together means to be equally ranked" (Franklin 141). Thus, hierarchal relation between the canine and his mistress does not exist here.

Furthermore, the different effects of culture and nature on these two characters are clear in this scene. The comparison between the different looks on their faces signifies these differences as well as indicates the effect of immediate environment on each of them. Flush has just arrived from the open fields near Reading where he was born and enjoyed the pleasures of "his youth" (Woolf 15). His 'health and energy' symbolize freedom of nature, where restrictions based on social and political reasons do not exist. As for Miss Barrett, she has been living in Wimpole Street, in cosmopolitan London, where "civilization rocks" (19) for a long time. Her pale face reflects restrictions of culture and 'civilization' that impose lack of freedom on people. And as confinement had been is a major aspect of life of Victorian women, it further suppressed the free spirit of the poetess.

By analogy, city life imposes restrictions on Flush which he has not experienced in reading, where he, in the past, enjoyed a life full of freedom. Now, in London, he has to abide by the rules of sheltered life. The restrictions imposed on him have taught him a lesson of self-control both indoors and outdoors. Indeed, on a visit to Regent's Park with Elizabeth, he notices differences between plants here and plants in the fields of his puppyhood home in Reading.

And then when he saw once more, after years of absence it seemed, grass, flowers and trees, the old hunting cry of the fields halloed in his ears and he dashed forward to run as he had run in the fields at home. But now a heavy weight jerked at his throat; he was thrown back on his haunches. Were there not trees and grass? He asked. Were these not the signals of freedom? Had he not always leapt forward directly Miss Mitford started on her walk? Why was he a prisoner here? He paused. Here, he observed, the

flowers were massed far more thickly than at home; they stood, plant by plant, rigidly in narrow plots. The plots were intersected by hard black paths. (31)

This excerpt concentrates on Flush's inner wonder and puzzlement, as he tries to figure out the difference between two natural landscapes, one of Reading and the other of Regent's Park. It describes the process of his recognition of this new environment.

Sara J. Shettleworth describes 'animal recognition' as including "perception, learning, memory and decision making, in short all ways in which animals take in information about the world through the senses, process, retain and decide to act on it" (278). Virginia Woolf use of the verb "seemed" indicates her exposition of Flush's mind—hard at work—as to sort out the nature of this green landscape. The passage fully concentrates on Flush's inner wonder and puzzlement, as he tries to figure out the difference between two natural landscapes, one of Reading and the other of Regent's Park. Flush's contemplations are rendered by a fusion of what Dorrit Cohn terms as "dissonant" (authorial) and "consonant" (figural) narration (26). Here, the "omniscient third person narrator...freely moves in and out of the spaniel's, at times emphatically merging, at other times creating a distance" (Ittner 185). The narrow distance between the narrator and the protagonist is kept at the beginning of his contemplation. Flush needs to drag the past into the present to figure out the difference between the two places. Lack of freedom affects the way he sees plants; absence of their beauty is obvious. Figurative language that usually describes nature is absent here, which indicates a foregrounded figural narration that exposes a canine's visual sense at work. The narrator is distanced from Flush as to allow for the non-human animal process of slow and simple cognition to take place. This sort of cognition accords with zoologists assertion of the impossibility of qualitative difference between human and non-human cognition, and that the "only difference between human and non-human mind is that we can sustain longer and more complex trains of thought" (Bickerton 862).

Flush builds up a picture of the urban green landscape accompanied by an attempt to comprehend its different atmosphere. This process is marked by its slow pace. First, he

senses lack of his own freedom in his urban green landscape as he notices a difference of green plants. His perception of the park's geometric design is rather simple. The landscape in Regent's Park, based on principles of symmetry, is clearly felt here. Yet, the height of shrubs, dimensions of flowerbeds, geometrical shapes of straight lines, right angles, dissecting sections...etc, are not identified in Flush's perception of the place. Such simple and unsophisticated description matches with non-human animal cognition described earlier by Bickerton.

On the other hand, preventing Flush from running freely in the park has had its impact on his perception. At a slow pace he absorbs his immediate environment; he moves from plant to man, where he senses an ominous air about them.

Men in shiny top-hats marched ominously up and down the paths. At the sight of them he shuddered closer to the chair. He gladly accepted the protection of the chain. Thus before many of these walks were over a new conception had entered his brain. Setting one thing beside another, he had arrived at a conclusion. Where there are flower-beds there are asphalt paths, there are men in shiny top-hats, dogs must be led on chains. Without being able to decipher a word of the placard at the gate, he had learnt his lesson—in Regent's Park dogs must be led on chains. (Woolf 31)

The dog seeks psychological support and assurance by accepting protection of both "chair" and "chain." His fear is followed by a sincere welcome to "the protection of the chair," something that dogs are known to resist as, by instinct, they are eager for wild leaps. Finally, Flush rounds up a comprehensive picture of how and why dogs must be protected in such urban places. His manner of figuring out the situation slightly differs from the scientific argument which attempts sorting out issues of animal consciousness. Some scientists regard animals as,

having some sort of conscious mental life, but one which is defective and qualitatively inferior to our own...[they] think that language makes the crucial difference between human and animal consciousness... Some insist that language is necessary for *conceptual thought*. Animals...can form no general concepts because they lack words. (Cartmill 838)

This particular scientific opinion emphasizes the importance of language as a crucial element of a sound conscious mental life. The second school believes in animals' ability to form general concepts regardless of lack of language. Sara J. Shettleworth rather overlooks the importance of the part played by language and tries to narrow the gap between human and non-human animal understanding, "the animal has a cognitive map, a concept, a theory of mind, it can count, avoids risk" (279). Though Flush is unable "to decipher a word of the placard at the gate," unable to read the words, the gradual process of recognition—simple as it is—suggests animal's "abilities to act on intelligence rather than instinct" (Fox 526). Here, we see Flush form his own understanding of the situation at Regent's Park, and reach the conclusion that restrictions must be imposed on dogs. His comprehension of the situation is achieved without the help of written language. Thus, Virginia Wolf does not privilege the canine with extreme anthropomorphism.

However, Elizabeth, who enjoys the company of Flush, sometimes behaves in an exaggerated anthropomorphic manner. She tries to engage him in a conversation which is beyond animal abilities. Once she asks him whether "the harp, which made music, was itself alive?" (45); the canine never gives a proper answer. Yet, seeing his mistress address him he responds by looking at the instrument; then he, "pondered, it seemed, for a moment in doubt and then decided that it was not" (45). The internal perspective of Flush is Elizabeth's own prediction because the former shows no sign of consent. This is followed by her inquiry as to "why he barked and trembled" (46). In her debate, Elizabeth takes the canine in front of the looking-glass,

Was not the little brown dog opposite himself? But what is "oneself"? Is it the thing people see? Or is it the thing one is? So Flush pondered that question too, and unable to solve the problem of reality, pressed closer to Miss Barrett and kissed her "expressively." *That* was real at any rate. (46)

This indirect thought presentation is rather confusing; since they are both in front of the looking-glass it is difficult to tell whose contemplations are these. However, owing to the philosophic aspect of inquiry of the nature of "oneself", it is unlikely that a question like

that is to be related to senses or instincts. In other words it is a question that goes beyond the cognitive abilities of non-human animal. Therefore, it is assumed here that the inquiry belongs to the poetess who is cultured and sophisticated. And as the canine feels unable to comprehend or "solve the [philosophic] problem of reality," his natural response is to press closer to his mistress as a gesture of need for self- assurance and compassion. On the other hand, research in human psychology points out that

Owners, who engage in a high degree of anthropomorphic behavior, may be doing so due to a lack of general social support and a lack of family social support. Pet owners who engaged in a high level of anthropomorphic behavior were significantly more likely to be female without a university degree and neither married nor living in a common-law relationship (Antonacopoulos and Psych 146-7).

These conditions fully apply to Flush's mistress before meeting her future husband Robert Browning.

The intrusion of the poet Robert Browning into the life of Miss Barrett and Flush disrupts the latter's harmonious close relationship with Flush. This disruption subjects Flush to an emotional conflict. Such a conflict-harmony relationship that involves these three characters accords with Ann Schillmoller's philosophic assumption of the "need to acknowledge that human and nonhuman animals do not encounter one another in a static, hierarchical binary relation, but engage in interactive processes of both harmony and of conflict" (13).

Mr. Browning's first letter to Miss Barrett marks the beginning of a different phase of Flush's relation with Elizabeth, "...it was a different letter... He knew it from the indescribable tremor in her fingers, from the impetuosity with which they tore the flap open, from the absorption with which she read. He watched her read" (Woolf 48). A direct description of the poetess' feeling is not given here. Both the strong attachment of Flush to Miss Barrett, and the anxiousness with which the mistress receives the letter, sharpen his visual sense. Thus, minute details of how the poetess takes, opens, and reads the letter are keenly noticed by him. The repetition

of the preposition "from" further emphasizes such accurate, sharp observation of his mistress' reception of the letter, and the imposition of value judgment ("a different letter") is also based on this close observation. It is concluded here that, the narrator's superior knowledge is dispensed with, giving way to Flush's eyes to inform the reader about Miss Barrett's attitude.

Alternately, the impact of the poetess' reception of the letter on Flush is revealed in detail.

And as she read he heard, as when we are half asleep we hear through the clamour of the street some bell ringing and know that it is addressed to us, alarmingly yet faintly, as if someone far away were trying to rouse us with the warning of fire, or burglary, or some menace against our peace and we start in alarm before we wake—so Flush, as Miss Barrett read the little blotted sheet, heard a bell rousing him from his sleep; warning him of some danger; menacing his safety and bidding him sleep no more. (48-9)

The image of the alarm bell, heard by Flush, signifies his own sense of apprehension. Also, the tone of uncertainty which dominates the passage, indicated by the conjunction 'as,' suggests that this Flush's voice. But this detailed and rather sophisticated image indicates the narrow distance between the narrator and Flush. It is true that the hesitant comparison "as if" contradicts with the omniscience of the narrator, whose "knowledge and prerogatives are unlimited" (Perrine 162), yet the detailed fine toning of the image makes it belonging more to the narrator than to Flush. The image shows a more sophisticated mind at work than that of the same canine when comprehending the necessity of chains for dogs as shown earlier. In addition, the use of the collective first person pronoun "we," indicates authorial generalization of Flush's feeling. Dorrit Cohn sheds light on this generalization which occasions a shifting of point of view, "In pronouncedly authorial narration...the inner life of an individual character becomes a sounding-board for general truths about human nature" (23). This brief shift from figural to authorial narration produces a better exposition of Flush's apprehension and helps the reader with more empathy. On the other hand, this shift of point of view is only brief as the use of the conjunction "so" marks the narrator's immediate resort to figural

narration. The use of the same conjunction, describing the letter as a mere "blotted sheet" and the short successive phrases, all indicate the narrator's adoption of Flush's syntax as a further exposition of his own consciousness. These same apprehensions tone the sound of the couple's voice.

...Mr. Browning's voice barked out its sharp, harsh clapper of laughter...Flush noted with horrid apprehension, another note. There was a new urgency, a new pressure and energy in the man's voice, at which Miss Barrett, Flush felt, took fright. Her voice fluttered...as if she were afraid. (Woolf 58)

The sound of the couple's voice signifies a predator-prey image. This animal-image of two human voices, one barking and the other fluttering, is not as sophisticated as the former one. The voice of Mr. Browning's laughter, which is supposed to be cheerful and joyful, is perceived by Flush as sharp and harsh. Flush's conception of the couple, one (Robert Browning) as a monster, the other (Miss Barrett) as a prey, satisfies him with the feeling that he has a superior knowledge to that of his mistress. Thus, the canine assigns himself the role of an onlooker who "hears" the danger waiting for the frightened prey. Further, this image shows the narrator's "cognitive privilege [that] enables him to manifest dimensions of a fictional character that the latter is unwilling or unable, to betray" (Cohn 29). Hence, the predator-prey image betrays Flush's jealousy. Psychologists have proved that dogs are "far more emotionally complex than we ever realized" (Jamieson2). They report evidence on dogs' capability of secondary emotion such as jealousy and pride (Morris et al. 3-4). Scientific findings give evidence on the effect of dogs' jealousy on their behavior as they often try "to prise their owner away from a new lover in the early days of a relationship"(Jamieson 2). Flush's attempts to "prise" Elizabeth away from Mr. Browning, however, his emotional conflict is resolved only when he digests the fact that pleasing his mistress necessitates being in harmony with his antagonist Mr. Browning. Up to this point Flush's understanding of the ways of life has a bit improved owing to his direct contact with humans.

However, the benefit is not restricted only to animals; man

can also learn and improve his behaviour from such contacts. The experience of Flush's kidnap has its strong impact both on the canine and his mistress. And the reader no longer sees Miss Barrett as a silent and oppressed Victorian woman. Against all the odds, she decides to rescue the canine. The rescue prompts her to visit the physically, morally and socially diseased area of Shoreditch in Whitechapel's neighborhood where, "vice and poverty breed vice and poverty" (89), and where the police "could do nothing..." (75). Thus, though the kidnap lasts only for five days, yet it represents "the most terrible experience of his life" (77), for there she was "in a world that [she] ...had never guessed at" (89). For the first time, the reader sees Miss Barrett take the lead. Her determination gives her power. Her attention is turned to the natural world, here, it is represented by Flush. Thus, her egocentrism gives away to an authentic ecocentrism which refuses to exploit nature for personal ends. Human ecologist Joseph W. Meeker points out that, "No individuals and no particular species stand out as overwhelmingly dominant, but each performs unique and specialized functions which play a part in the overall stability of the community" (162). Miss Barrett's determination to rescue her canine applies here. Flush is not a mere company that keeps away a feeling of boredom; he is a companion to share his plight and his personal tragedy.

On the other hand, Flush's return to Whimpole marks a different stage in his relationship to both the place and its people. The experience of the kidnap establishes a stronger bond between Flush and Miss Barrett as now he can "read her feelings more clearly than ever before" (Woolf 97). This is clear in Flush's feeling and conduct in the short period between the poets' secret marriage and their elopement to Italy. By means of free indirect thought presentation, Flush is shown to fully comprehend the specialty of the situation and the secrecy of his mistress

Every start she gave...passed through him too. And she seemed now to be perpetually starting...something had happened. When they were alone she rose and took a diamond necklace from a drawer. She took out the box that held Mr. Browning's letters...and then—as if she heard a step on the stair—she pushed the box under the bed...Were they about to fly together? Were they about to

escape together from this awful world of dog-stealers and tyrants?
Oh that it were possible! (97)

The canine's visual sense is used in the above passage to transmit to the reader the profound impact of the secrecy of marriage on the poetess. Woolf's revelation of the canine's consciousness shows that he strongly feels Miss Barrett's silence and cautious secret action; yet, he doesn't know why all this secrecy. The puzzlement and uncertainty of Flush are indicated by the use of "seemed" and "as if." Flush's uncertainty is clear in the closing sentences of the passage, and suspense is sustained for some time. Neither does the narrator use omniscience to inform the canine or the reader of the poetess secrecy. Yet, with the help of the items that Flush sees "diamond necklace" and "Mr. Browning letters", the reader can get a glimpse that it all has to do with the couple's affair, a comprehension which the canine does not achieve. This gap of comprehension between non-human animal (Flush) and human animal (the reader), indicates that Virginia Woolf is cautious when dealing with the former's anthropomorphic attributions.

On the other hand, Flush shows refined understanding of his mistress's state and acts accordingly. Such sensitivity makes him, "lay by her side scarcely daring to breathe, for whatever had happened, it was something that must at all cost be concealed" (Woolf 98). Miss Barrett's tension is understood by him; he can even identify with her. This feeling is shown in the description of the room, "Yet everything...all was concealed" (99). This is the same room in which he has lived for a number of years; now, everything is colored by the secrecy of his mistress and Flush's apprehension. Thus the canine's understanding of the situation decides his own conduct; a further evidence of his agency. Put in comparison with Miss Barrett's siblings who prove to be completely unaware of the change that she experiences, Flush proves to possess a higher sensitivity. Here, his sensitivity of such change is similar to that which he had shown earlier on his first arrival to the room when he sensed an atmosphere of social restrictions imposed on his mistress's life. But this time, his secrecy is prompted by his observation and understanding of his mistress's emotional and psychological state.

Flush is deeply moved by Miss Barrett's state that it shows in his dreams. This sensitivity is reflected on his "uneasy sleep" and the brief dream of their being "couched together under ferns and leaves in the darkness, in a vast forest; then the leaves were parted and he woke" (99-100). This dream sums up the life of Flush and his mistress; it is marked by the latter's longing for freedom which neither society nor family was ready to afford. The darkness is heavily felt by the free spirit of the poetess as freedom is an ultimate necessity for creativity. Needless to say that Miss Barrett's suppression, of which Victorian women suffered, here symbolized by the dark forest, is also suffered by Flush--being a faithful companion of his mistress-- who can easily identify with her as shown before. The parting of the leaves signifies her marriage to Mr. Browning and their consequent elopement to Italy.

Flush's non-human animal cognition develops in Italy. There, he experiences a life of fearlessness and ease of Victorian social restrictions. For his part, Flush develops an understanding of the requirements of this new life. He understands that in Italy everybody is free to do as they like and he takes advantage of the situation. He notices that this country is classless. Such equality pleases him; still he retains his canine aristocracy and knows that he is distinguished. He feels "like a prince in exile" (106), but Flush is humble enough to mess with all mongrels. Thus his past experience in England has added to him wisdom and taught him tactfulness.

The impact of culture on Flush is clear. He could sense the difference between the stiffness of life in England and its ease in Italy. He also senses that his mistress, being married now, no longer needs his companionship. So, his earlier compulsory stay with her in her room, which he welcomed in the past, out of love and sheer sense of responsibility, is no longer needed here. Having sensed these latest developments, he enjoys his new freedom to the full.

Yet, Flush is still to go through another experience that transforms his character. This time it is the pregnancy of Mrs. Browning and the arrival of her baby. For the second time, Flush is perplexed by the strange atmosphere of the household.

... Mrs. Browning...became busy with her needle...there was something in the sight that gave Flush pause. She was not used to

sew... Raising his head from the tiled floor, he looked, he listened attentively...He looked anxiously for signs of trunks and packing. Was there to be another flight, another escape? But an escape to what, from what? They need neither of them worry themselves in Florence about Mr. Taylor and dogs' heads wrapped up in brown paper parcels. Yet he was puzzled. The signs of change, as he read them, did not signify escape...Something, he felt, as he watched Mrs. Browning so composedly, yet silently and steadfastly, in her low chair, was coming that was inevitable; yet to be dreaded...(116-7)

This passage, quoted at length here, exposes the canine's mind at work. Again, Flush senses some vague intruder whom he cannot exactly define. Here, the narrator is completely distanced from Flush while a full exposition of figural mind is offered to the reader; even guiding phrases such as "he thought" or "he said to himself" are not used here. Flush's confusion puts his sensory apparatuses on the alert; his visual "the sight," kinesthetic "raising his head," audio "listened," and abstract "puzzled, read" senses are active, and indicate his tension and anticipation. Further, the narrator insists on giving Flush full independence as the latter recalls two previous experiences that transformed his life (his kidnap by Mr. Taylor, and the escape to Italy), without the interference of phrases such as, "he remembered." Here, Woolf does not attribute Flush with an extra anthropomorphic trait of memory retrieval as scientists argue that some animals "travel mentally backwards into the past, and forwards into the future" (Clayton et al. 690), other scientists give evidence "from a variety of nonhuman animals...that they have some ability to recover personal memories of what-where-when an event occurred" (Zentall 573). Flush's retrieval of memory proves his maturity as he remains self-composed despite the domestic arrangements that puzzle him.

Flush's conduct shows a more developed process of cognition. His manner of building up his thoughts in order to sort out domestic changes is different from his manner of trying to sort out the fact that dogs must be led in chains when in public parks. The process, through which his mind works, both now (adulthood) and then (puppyhood), shows a considerable progress. The difference

between the distances that the narrator allows between him and Flush in the two instances of figural narration, at the two different stages of his life, signifies that the former acknowledges Flush's puppyhood dependence, and his adulthood independence.

Flush is yet to be overwhelmed with anticipation and curiosity to know why people of the house are acting strangely.

In his jealous anxiety Flush scrutinized each newcomer...He knew in every fiber of his body that some change was taking place...He lay in the drawing-room without food or drink...he had an overwhelming sense that something was thrusting its way into the house from outside. (Woolf 117-8)

The mysterious atmosphere of change makes Flush alert. It is noticed here that the canine "scrutinizes" newcomers rather than looks at or eyes or stares at them. *OED* defines "scrutiny" as "thorough and detailed examination"; an act that involves a mental activity. Thus, mental capacities (apprehension, jealous anxiety, overwhelming sense) are more active than his senses (olfactory, hearing and sight). Other sensualities (hunger, thirst) do not appeal to him as he is well-determined to know the secret. Nothing could satisfy his curiosity until finally the maid carries him upstairs to see the new-born baby.

On the other hand, Flush's own comprehension and perception of the baby is given in animal terms. The cries of the baby are conceived as bleating-- cry of sheep-- since he has never heard such voice before. He can only identify the new comer as "something wav[ing] on the pillow...a live animal" (118). Indeed, the thing that amazes Flush is that "this animal" is there without the "street door being opened" (118). From his perspective, if animals are allowed into the house, street doors must have been opened. The use of the modifier "horrid" indicates Flush's rejection of the baby, but finally Woolf sheds light on his true feeling toward the baby as "rage and jealousy and some deep disgust" (119).

Flush's feelings are evoked by his senses of hearing and sight which we find alert in this scene. His mind is hard at work as well. He eventually recognizes that the newcomer is a serious rival, and his immediate psychological reaction is, "deep melancholy" that made him resist all efforts to reconcile him. Craig Smith overlooks

his psychological agonies claiming that the freedom which Flush has acquired in Italy "permits him to accept even the birth of Brownings' son without being painfully afflicted" (356). Actually, the canine feels pain for a "fortnight," but then he reminds himself of his past lesson of Mr. Browning when he had to "swallow cakes that were stale when he might have eaten them fresh; he had sworn to love not to bite" (Woolf 119-20). Here, memories of the past help him to reconcile with the current situation.

Flush's wisdom, acquired by a past experience, helps him to accept the newcomer. He does not comprehend that it is Mrs. Browning's son, but he realizes that the stranger has come to stay and so his attitude changes and he acts accordingly. Flush's agency is evident here as he could have deserted the family because of the new rival. But what he had learned in the past helps in dealing with the new situation, and memories of the past help him to change old attitudes and act in accordance.

Flush shows that he is in full control over the new situation. In the new relationship between Flush and the baby, the canine seems to have the higher hand; he shows a better understanding of the nature of the baby as he accepts it to be "set on his back and...to trot about with the baby pulling his ears" (120). Flush's conduct testifies a better understanding of the situation and of the requirements of the age of the baby. This understanding develops into Flush's "return[ing] the baby's affection" (120); a "strangely enough" feeling for Flush. He could have chosen to abandon the baby, even the whole house and its people. But he weighs the situation very carefully in a human-like manner. First, Flush waits until his psychological suffering subsides; second, he retrieves the old memory of his jealousy of Mr. Browning in order to urge himself of a better behavior. He succeeds, and the result is an affectionate relationship with the baby, and the canine acts as an adult that has a better understanding.

Conclusion

In representing human-animal boundaries, Virginia Woolf does not humanize Flush's animality, neither does she animalize his human companion as to bridge the gap between the two entities. She respects the canine's animality as she does not endow him with excessive anthropomorphic traits. The process of Flush's cognition as well as his conflicting emotions of jealousy and love, are proven to be within a scientific framework. These mental and emotional experiences empower Flush with an agency of his own, and help him to achieve a certain level of wisdom, after a fashion. Thus, in writing this nonhuman animal biography, Woolf positively responds to ecocritics' plea for representing fictional animal "as an individual with some measure of autonomy, agency, voice, character, and as a member of a species with a nature that has certain typical capabilities and limitations" (Shapiro and Copeland 344). This peculiar response indicates that she is not ensnared in sentimentality. On the other hand, mutual impacts are shared by human-nonhuman animal relationship. If the canine undergoes positive changes, the life of his mistress also improves. The invalid dependent Victorian woman whom we meet at the beginning is different from the one we encounter at the end as she is now an independent Victorian poetess. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's improvement is not solely due to the human-nonhuman cohabitation, but this relationship has helped her to exert her best.

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Hanan Barakat Dweedar

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