

Animal-Assisted Therapy in Virginia Woolf's *Flush, A Biography*

Masami Usui

I. Introduction

Virginia Woolf's *Flush, A Biography* has rarely been criticized because it is usually considered as Woolf's least important book since it is a mock-biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel, Flush.¹ It is, however, important to notice that Woolf's pursuit for inventing her own style of biography can be witnessed in three biographies, *Orlando, A Biography* (1928), *Flush, A Biography* (1933), and *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940). It is, therefore, significant to reinvestigate *Flush* as an embodiment of Woolf's search for her own voice and self by replacing it in the other voice under the name of biography of a dog. In *Flush*, the woman poet's marginalized self is retrieved in her companionship with her dog in a process of animal-assisted therapy.

Especially, *Orlando* and *Flush* embody Woolf's intention to heal her mind after she established a unique form of literature. Woolf began to write *Orlando* in 1927 after completing *To the Lighthouse*; while she began to write *Flush* in 1931 after completing *The Waves* and while continuing writing *The Pargiters*. Woolf plunged into sketching *Orlando* and *Flush* in order to heal her mind after the enormous and heavy works of compiling *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* respectively.

Flush is only by way of a joke. 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. I wanted to play a joke on Lytton — it was to parody him. But then it grew too long, and I don't think its up to much now. But this is all very egotistical. (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf* 4 161-62)

By repeatedly manipulating the word, “joke,” in the following letters regarding her new biography, *Flush*, Woolf disguises her serious attitude toward her new creative force. While she was indulged into writing *Flush*, she realized that the little book had become “too slight & too serious” (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf* 4 134) and it would take more efforts and time than she had first expected. *Flush* is considered as another experimental work whose importance Woolf discovered while she sought for a healing effect by writing it. *Flush* expresses Woolf's challenge of creating the inarticulate narrative voice sprung within the equal human-to-dog bond and companionship.

II. The Dual Therapy: Barrett Browning's *Flush* and Woolf's *Pinker*

What motivated Woolf to write *Flush* is as important as what healed her in her writing. It is known that Woolf created *Orlando* for her lesbian lover, Vita Sackville-West, and wrote *Flush* for Barrett Browning. Woolf's compassion to both Vita and Barrett Browning as women artists motivated her to seek for their voices. The significant yet hidden tie between *Orlando* and *Flush* is, moreover, that the cover model of the first edition of *Flush* by Hogarth Press is known as *Pinker* (or *Pinka*), Woolf's own cocker spaniel who was presented by Vita in 1926 during a period of their most intense relationship between 1925 and 1928 (See Figure 1). When *Pinker* was given to Woolf when she spent the night on July 26, 1926, with Vita at Long Barn,

Woolf suffered from what Leonard called “‘a whole nervous breakdown in miniature’” (Reid 293).

In *Flush's* case, Mary Russell Mitford, an essayist, novelist, and playwright, had an admiration of and compassion to Barrett Browning and gave *Flush* to her. In “Married Poets,” Mitford describes how “intimacy ripened into friendship” between them and illustrates the physical features of Barrett Browning: “On a slight, delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on either side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes richly fringed by dark eyelashes, a smile like a sunbeam, and such a look of youthfulness, ...” (170). Mitford’s description of Barrett Browning is similar to Woolf’s one of both Barrett Browning and *Flush* in *Flush*: “Heavy curls hung down on either side of Miss Barrett’s face; large bright eyes shone out; a large mouth smiled. Heavy ears hung down on either side of *Flush's* face; his eyes, too, were large and bright: his mouth was wide” (20). Mitford, then, records Barrett Browning’s physical and psychological difficulties especially after she “broke a blood-vessel upon the lungs” (“Married Poets” 170). Mitford’s strong sympathy to Barrett Browning is expressed in her understanding of Barrett Browning’s agony over her brother’s tragic death, her confined life during her winter stay at Torquay, her devotion to literature, and her ultimate confinement in her father’s London house.

Returned to London, she [Barrett Browning] began the life which she continued for so many years, confined to one large and commodious but darkened chamber, admitting only her own affectionate family and a few devoted friends (I, myself, have often joyfully traveled five-and-forty miles to see her, and returned and the same evening, without entering another house); reading almost every book worth reading in almost every language, and giving herself, heart and soul, to that poetry

of which she seemed born to be the priestess. (“Married Poets” 172) The reason why the writer Mitford gave Flush to the invalid poet Barrett Browning is proven the same as that the writer Vita gave Pinker to the invalid writer Woolf.

Flush is overlapped with Pinker as Flush came into Woolf’s mind while she shared her life with Pinker. It was observed that friends of Leonard and Virginia in 1933 “could readily draw the parallel between Flush Browning and Pinker Woolf” (Szladits 504). In some photos taken in the 1930’s, Pinker is in the middle of Virginia, Leonard, and their friends and close relatives (See Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Woolf’s diary entries on Pinker between 1927 and 1935, moreover, divided into two distinct sections: the early period between 1927 and 1929; and the later period between 1933 and 1935. Between 1927 and 1929, Woolf mentions about Pinker frequently as her walks (*D3* 146; *D3* 186), her sleep in the chair (*D3* 166; *D3* 184), the lice (*D3* 175), and her bearing four puppies (*D3* 196). Between 1933 and 1935, Woolf mainly reports Pinker’s decline of health such as eczema (*D4* 162) and weak eyes (*D4* 195), and finally her death (*D4* 317). During the period between 1930 and 1932, however, Woolf remarks primarily on her progressive *Flush* instead of mentioning Pinker. It is also significant to note that the relationship between Woolf and Vita was over in 1935 when Pinker died unexpectedly. Woolf’s own dog, Pinker, is switched into her half-biographical and half-fictional dog, Flush, both in her writings and in her psychology because Woolf’s life with Pinker is identified with Barrett Browning’s life with Flush.

Pinker plays a child-like role for the Woolfs in the psychologically matured period of their marriage and professional life. Though Quentin Bell defines that Woolf was “not, in the fullest sense of the word, a dog lover” (175), both

Virginia and Leonard were terribly depressed when Pinker ended her eight-year life unexpectedly and mysteriously one day before their homecoming from their travel to Germany, Holland, Austria, and Italy.

Holidays are very upsetting. And its cold & grey. And my hand shakes. And I want some regular hours & work. And it'll take at least a weeks agony to get back into the mood. And I shall slip back by reading about in the book, & dreaming after tea; & perhaps, if nature allows, taking a walk. L. very depressed too, about poor dear Pink. 8 years of a dog certainly mean something. I suppose – is it part of our life thats buried in the orchard? That 8 years in London – our walks – something of our play private life, thats gone? And – odd how the spring of life isn't to be tapped at will. (D4 318).

Pinker as a token of love between Vita and Virginia turns into a companion both for Virginia and Leonard. Virginia's letters to Ethel Smyth and Vita at the beginning of June 1935 also represent the Woolfs' agony over Pinker's death: to Smyth, "This you'll call sentimental – perhaps – but then a dog somehow represents – no I cant think of the word – the private side of life – the play side"(D4 396); and to Vita, "That very nice of you, about giving L. a dog. But at the moment I think he feels too melancholy" (D4 400). The Woolfs' intense sense of loss due to Pinker's death on May 30 is proven in their gain of a new cocker spaniel of the same breed and color as Pinker's, Sally, a month later, on June 30 (See Figure 7). Bell's remark on Virginia as the one with an "odd and remote" affection to animals and Leonard as "a systematic disciplinarian"(175) is a misjudgment upon the childless couple in their late middle ages. Shown in two sets of photographs of Virginia and Leonard (See Figure 8, 9, 10 and 11) taken at Monks or Monk's House, the Woolfs as a childless couple discover and embrace the importance of having

a mutual companion dog in their life that confronts a series of crises yet that still cultivates intimacy, reliability, and understanding within the common private space.

Considering these factors, Woolf presents Flush as a companion dog for animal-assisted therapy for Barrett Browning, by way of observing and embracing Pinker who cures Woolf's own mind and reflects her as she suffers from a series of repeatedly occurred mental breakdowns, struggles with her own creative activities, and makes an effort of transforming her love affair with Vita which was actually over in 1928 into their close friendship which continued until 1935. Though spread and motivated in the United States, the dog-assisted therapy traces back to 1792 in the York Retreat, a mental hospital in York, Britain, and was also encouraged by Florence Nightingale in 1859 who "observed that pets were perfect companions for patients who were confined to longterm stays due to illness" (Janssen 40; Burch 4). The contemporary definition of animal-assisted therapy is, as Nightingale connotes, that animals help the patients "to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning" (Janssen 40).² Used in various types of patients, animal-assisted therapy expects a number of goals where animals can "ease loneliness," "improve communication," "foster trust," "reduce the need for medication by providing a diversion from pain," "improve cognitive functioning," "improve physical functioning," "decrease stress and anxiety for patients and their families," "improve body image," "motivate" the patient "to participate in" his or her recovery (Miller & Connor 65-67). Neither specialized nor hospitalized, Barrett Browning in the former part of her life lived a confined life as an invalid whose physical, social, emotional, and cognitive functions were restricted and suppressed under her father's overprotection. Barrett Browning's confinement causes both physical

and psychological strife and fatigue. Barrett Browning, therefore, needs the two programs of animal-assisted therapy that are regarded as the most common ones in psychotherapy and physical rehabilitation as Voelker remarks. Confined and suppressed, Flush as a companion dog suffers both physical and psychological strife and fatigue and desires the freedom and ideal life. Though usually focusing on “the human partner and the potential benefits from interaction with companion animals,” the human-animal interactions, especially in animal-assisted therapy, have to be reconsidered from “the animal’s point of view and its quality of life” (Hubrecht and Turner 267-68). As equal partners, both Barrett Browning and Flush have to undergo the paradoxical process of developing and establishing the harmonized relationship.

The meaning and effect of animal-assisted therapy in *Flush*, therefore, has to be observed in the dual aspects of Barrett Browning’s establishment of the emotional bridge between the inner world and the outer world with an assistance by Flush: first, the encounter between Barrett Browning’s agony enclosed in her back bedroom and Flush’s sympathy over her agony; second, the resolution between Barrett Browning’s liberated self from the back bedroom and Flush’s domesticated self within human privacy.

III. The Encounter between Barrett Browning’s Agony and Flush’s Sympathy

The human-to-human relationship is transformed into a solid and individual-based relationship by establishing the reliable human-to-dog relationship. Presented as a companion dog by Mitford, Flush influences Barrett Browning’s relationship with the others because Flush plays an important role to display his sympathy and emotions to Barrett Browning

who has been confined as a sick gentlewoman by her patriarchal father in Victorian London. Barrett Browning's loneliness and super-sensitivity in her imprisonment deprives her of having opportunities of becoming social with the others. Even after Barrett Browning has her selected visitors such as Mitford, Mrs Jameson, and Mr. Kenyon, Barrett Browning becomes exhausted as she "sank back very white, very tired on her pillows" in her privacy with Flush (*F* 30). Barrett Browning's strong sense of fatigue embodies the lack of energy to sustain her nerves as well as her physical strength. Flush assists Barrett Browning to confirm the reliability of human natural emotions and instincts during the course of verbal and nonverbal communication. As described at the beginning of *Flush*, spaniels "are by nature sympathetic" and Flush has "an even excessive appreciation of human emotions" (*F* 12). Flush's influence upon Barrett Browning not by language but by display of instincts is enormous enough to give her encouragement to confront the men with power such as Robert Browning, even the boss of the gang, Mr. Taylor, and ultimately her father Mr. Barrett.

Flush is the only private companion with whom Barrett Browning can share the natural emotions and personal secrets concealed in her confined life in her bedroom, especially regarding Barrett Browning's secret love to Robert Browning. The back bedroom that symbolizes confinement in Barrett Browning's life is, however, a purely private space where inward emotions can be born and shared among its inhabitants. The back bedroom as Flush's schoolroom witnesses the conflict and resolution of sharing the privacy between Barrett Browning and Flush.

Such an education as this, in the back bedroom at Wimpole Street, would have told upon an ordinary dog. And Flush was not an ordinary dog. He was high-spirited, yet reflective; canine, but highly sensitive

to human emotions also. Upon such a dog the atmosphere of the bedroom told with peculiar force. We cannot blame him if his sensibility was cultivated rather to the detriment of his sterner qualities. Naturally, lying with his head pillowed on a Greek lexicon, he came to dislike barking and biting; he came to prefer the silence of the cat to the robustness of the dog; and human sympathy to either. (*F* 32)

The first five years from his puppyhood to his adulthood consist of Flush's transformation from an untrained puppy to a well-trained house pet by overcoming the struggles. This transformation, moreover, empowers the private innermost emotions through the established sense of respect and reliability.

It is true that Flush's transformation is defined partly in a negative tone: "All his natural instincts were thwarted and contradicted" (*F* 25). Louis DeSalvo argues that Flush as a young male dog with "greater freedom" and "greater access to experiences, treated better than a young woman of the privileged class" has to be changed into an English-girl-like dog when he joins the Barrett household and becomes Barrett Browning's dog (286). Considering the long history of human-to-dog relationship that began in the undated ancient times, the dog's "contradicted" natural instincts can be regarded as ones that trace back to their undomesticated days over millions of years and it is impossible to extinguish their natural instincts and temperaments in the course of only thousands years (Fox 54). The "bond" born between Barrett Browning and Flush after Flush overcomes "another feeling, urgent, contradictory, disagreeable" (*F* 26) is, however, not that between confined English girls, but that between the master and the house pet.

As for the domesticated dogs in Britain, spaniels in general have a long

history since they were taken to England from Spain through France possibly by Romans who brought various breeds to Britain (Smith 8 & 14). In the tenth century when the dogs were first recorded as guards for sheep in *The Enclosure and Redistribution of our Land* by W. H. R. Curtler, spaniels are referred with greyhounds (Smith 8). Spaniels are then mentioned as sporting dogs during the period of the Forest Laws that began in the eleventh century and became empowered under the control by British monarchy. Only spaniels and greyhounds were restricted as sporting dogs for centuries in Britain, and especially spaniels were developed into setters and evolved into seven varieties until 1892 when the Kennel Club registered them officially. As Caughie remarks that Flush has “all the markings of good breeding” (517), the history of spaniels in Britain represents that of domesticating, training, breeding dogs for the small-game retrieving in the field trials and ultimately for companionship. The encounter between Barrett Browning and Flush is, therefore, that between the human being and the dog in the field, the master and the subject in the forest, and the owner and the companion in the domestic space.

Trainings for the house pet are based on the disciples of taking advantages of dogs' natural instincts that include their group society regulations, their leader-to-subject relationship, and their hunting habits. Flush's natural temperament issued outside at Three Miles Cross embodies the dog's natural instincts of living, hunting, and pursuing reproduction registered for some million years. To domesticate the dog in the most ideal way is not to destroy the dog's temperament but to retrieve the natural instincts in a way that they accord with humans. Flush at Three Miles Cross has an open space where he can live without a chain and walk with Mitford. The expedition in the nature reflected by Flush is actually described in Mitford's *Our Village*: “At

noon to-day, I and my white greyhound, May-flower, set out for a walk into a very beautiful world, — a sort of silent fairy-land, — a creation of the matchless magician the boar-frost” (27). Flush’s longing for the nature is retrieved by already-nourished instincts of domesticated dogs. Training Flush’s self in Barrett Browning’s back bedroom is a trial to retrieve the dog’s natural instincts of living in a group in a cave in ancient times as Flush “felt that he and Miss Barrett lived alone together in a cushioned and firelit cave” (F 25). The relationship between Barrett Browning and Flush is that between the master and the domesticated dog, or that between the leader and the subject. The private companionship between Barrett Browning and Flush is grounded upon the strategy of sharing the life between the humans and the dogs.

The encounter between Barrett Browning’s agony and Flush’s sympathy is built upon the established relationship between them. The communication between Barrett Browning and Flush is, however, not a verbal communication but a transmitted inarticulate empathy between them.

Flush was equally at a loss to account for Miss Barrett’s emotions. There she would lie hour after hour passing her hand over a white page with a black stick; and her eyes would suddenly fill with tears; but why? ‘Ah, my dear Mr Horne,’ she was writing. ‘And then came the failure in my health . . . and then the enforced exile to Torquay . . . which gave a nightmare to my life for ever, and robbed it of more than I can speak of here; so do not speak of that anywhere. *Do not speak of that*, dear Mr Horne.’ But there was no sound in the room, no smell to make Miss Barrett cry. Then again Miss Barrett, still agitating her stick, burst out laughing. She had drawn ‘a very neat and characteristic portrait of Flush, humorously made rather like myself’,

... (*F* 27)

Barrett Browning's unstable emotions as an invalid poet is observed, perceived, and sympathized by Flush. Barrett Browning's letter to Mr. Horne implies her agony over her physical and psychological unhealthy self and life, while Barrett Browning's drawing of Flush embodies her sense of humor. The contrast between Barrett Browning's opposing characteristics symbolizes the silenced self that Barrett Browning bear in her confinement.

Barrett Browning's revelation of her inarticulate conflicting characteristics to Flush is made because Flush is the only private dweller inside Barrett Browning and in her back bedroom. Barrett Browning's silenced self ultimately encounters the means of exposing her innermost emotions to the other self, Flush.

The fact was that they could not communicate with words, and it was a fact that led undoubtedly to much misunderstanding. Yet did it not lead also to a peculiar intimacy? 'Writing,' Miss Barrett once exclaimed after a morning's toil, 'writing, writing . . .' After all, she may have thought, do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbols that lie beyond the reach of words? Once at least Miss Barrett seems to have found it so. She was lying, thinking; she had forgotten Flush altogether, and her thoughts were so sad that the tears fell upon the pillow. Then suddenly a hairy head was pressed against her; large bright eyes shone in hers; and she started.

...

So, too, Flush felt strange stirrings at work within him. (*F* 27-28)
This established bond between Barrett Browning and Flush confirms their nonverbal communication. To transmit the inarticulate emotions, feelings, and thoughts from Barrett Browning to Flush provides both of them with the

curer-healer relationship.

Transmitting emotions from Flush to Barrett Browning is also important because Flush is dignified as a companion. The most intriguingly-conveyed episode of this transmission delineates Flush's evoked terror and anger over a "force," or an intruder between Barrett Browning and Flush. Flush's imagination of a hooded man as a force is turned into Flush's encounter with an actual intruder and force, Robert Browning. Flush's jealousy and anger is strengthened enough to bite Robert Browning twice in the Barrett's household. Flush's suppression of biting and barking as the outcome of the house-training is challenged in his instinctive aggression against the outsider. In her letters to Robert Browning, Barrett Browning employs Flush as a media of conveying her emotions to Robert Browning. Woolf, moreover, uses Barrett Browning's letters to Robert Browning in order to present a tension between Barrett Browning's vigor and self empowered by Robert Browning and Flush's annoyed self.

It is important to trace how the private companionship between Barrett Browning and Flush influences the birth and development of intimacy between Barrett Browning and Robert Browning. Flush's instincts to the male force that Robert Browning possesses is described in his instinct to the danger that the imaginary hooded man would bring about. During Barrett Browning's correspondence days and five meetings with Robert Browning, Flush observes Barrett Browning's "agitation," "vigor," "excitement," and a change with "her strength" and "improvement" and concludes that he "felt nothing but an intense dislike" for Robert Browning (*F* 41). It is also important to note that Flush is in the prime time as a male dog whose first intercourse was made at Three Miles Cross as hinted that "Love blazed her torch in his eyes; he heard the hunting horn of Venus. Before he was well out of his puppyhood, Flush

was a father” (*F* 13) and later being remembered by Flush in his aging: “They [the young dogs] were chasing each other in and out, round and round, as he had once chased the spotted spaniel in the alley. His thoughts turned to Reading for a moment – to Mr. Partridge’s spaniel, to his first love, to the ecstasies, the innocences of youth” (*F* 100). Flush’s natural instincts to pursue female dogs are, however, suppressed in Barrett Browning’s back bedroom. Robert Browning is illustrated as a love-stealer who intrudes upon the established relationship between Barrett Browning and Flush.

The encounter between Robert Browning and Flush alters the relationship between Barrett Browning and Flush, and ultimately the relationship among the three. Flush’s sympathy encounters the final trial to accept Robert Browning as Barrett Browning’s new companion. The resolution is made by Flush’s eating Robert Browning’s cake and this resolution is shared with Barrett Browning.

He [Flush] would eat them now that they were stale, because they were offered by an enemy turned to friend, because they were symbols of hatred turned to love. Yes, he signified, he would eat them now. So Miss Barrett rose and took the cakes in her hand. And as she gave them to him she admonished him, ‘So I explained to him that *you* had brought them for him, and that he ought to be properly ashamed therefore for his past wickedness, and make up his mind to love you and not bite you for the future – and he was allowed to profit from your goodness to him.’ (*F* 48)

The final encounter between Barrett Browning’s agony and Flush’s sympathy bears the new companionship among Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, and Flush.

IV. The Resolution between Barrett Browning's Liberated Self and Flush's Domesticated Self

Flush as a domesticated and trained companion dog is confronted with a series of hardships so that it is also necessary to consider the partnership from Flush's point of view. The welfare of animals has to be reconsidered in animal-assisted therapy since animals might be stressed in their activities, suffer from inadequate housing, working conditions, and partnership (Hubrecht and Turner 267-70). The passage to the healthy animal-to-human relationship is reviewed in Flush's life that overcomes his own agony. Flush's agony connotes both the historical background of dogs in Britain and his own personal history from Three Mile Cross to Wimpole Street.

The history of dogs in Britain is that of human control of and power over dogs. Its turning point was in 1895 when the first dog show was held as an important step to "the improvement of the outward appearance of dogs," "the segregation of breeds," "the discovery of new ones," and the public awareness of and attention to "the management and care of their domestic pets" (Smith 45). Among British dogs, spaniels as well as greyhounds, lurchers, mastiffs and sheepdogs existed in early England (Smith 14). Because both spaniels and greyhounds were restricted as sporting dogs for centuries and spaniels were officially classified into seven varieties, as Woolf remarks at the beginning of *Flush*, by the Kennel Club in 1892 (Smith 26), spaniels have been considered as major important dogs in Britain. As Woolf identifies the seven different breeds of spaniels as the dignified aristocratic classes, each spaniel has evolved until "each spaniel has its own character and desirable qualities" as interbreeding is not permitted now (Caras and Findlay 310). It is however, in 1842 when Mitford gave Flush to Barrett Browning in *Flush*.³

It was before The Kennel Club was founded in 1873 and the Spaniel Club was founded in 1886. Flush was, then, not officially registered as cocker spaniel yet described by its early name, “cocking spaniel.”⁴ The instinctive struggle that Flush repeatedly faces from his puppyhood to adulthood is the roles of spaniels, a hunting dog in the field, a domestic pet in the country area, and a companion dog in the confined urban space.

Flush’s own history as well as the dog’s history in the nineteenth century reach to the turning point of resolving the agony. The resolution between Barrett Browning’s self liberated from her back bedroom in her father’s house and Flush’s self domesticated within her back bedroom is made through three steps: Flush’s kidnap, Barrett Browning’s secret marriage to Robert Browning, and their elopement and their new life in Italy.

Flush’s kidnap by a notorious gang of pet thieves and Flush’s confinement in the den in Whitechapel becomes the double trials that Flush undergoes as a domesticated dog and that Barrett Browning goes through by her consistent attachment to Flush, her own sense of justice, and her provocative sense of courage and power. The confinement conditions are severe in inadequate housing, poor hygiene, and entire neglect. In addition to Robert Browning, Barrett Browning shows her strength to another male-force, Mr. Taylor, who kidnaps Flush and blackmails Barrett Browning. As a dog-stealer, Mr. Taylor represents the male-force outside the household like that of Robert Browning. It is usually argued that there is a contrast between Wimpole Street as the wealthy residential area of the high society and Whitechapel as the poor dangerous zone of the low society. Squier points out as the striking ideological background of Whitechapel in the nineteenth century, “the savage butchery of five Whitechapel prostitutes by Jack the Ripper in 1888” (130). Squier interprets that this Whitechapel brutal murder reflects another conflict between

men and women and Barrett Browning herself “extends the Whitechapel conflict from class to sex” (130). Flush was, however, kidnapped in September 1846 and the dog-stealing was actually a good business for the underground gangs as Barrett Browning indicates in her letter.⁵ The danger and crisis that the dogs as house pets faced in Victorian London is a hidden aspect that both dogs and their owners had to challenge.

Though the animal abuse may connote the woman abuse as the weaker vessel in the society, the cruelty of animal abuse is not simply a metaphor of woman's oppression but a reality that Flush faces as a dog. The biographical truth is that Flush was kidnapped three times. In September 1843, for example, Barrett Browning writes that “Flush was rescued, but not before he had been wounded severely; and this morning he is on three legs and in great depression of spirits” and Flush had been targeted by the dog-stealers for a long time (154). In *Flush*, the kidnap experience becomes the trauma during the rest of Flush's life as it is remembered before his death.

And then he lay for a time snoring, wrapt in the deep sleep of a happy old age. Suddenly every muscle in his body twitched. He woke with a violent start. Where did he think he was? In Whitechapel among the ruffians? Was the knife at his throat again?

Whatever it was, he woke from his dream in a state of terror. He made off as if he were flying to safety, as if he were seeking refuge.
(*F* 101)

The kidnap experience is molded in Flush as a well-cared and protected house pet in the urban Victorian society. Not a fictional figure, Mr. Taylor lived as the boss of the gangs in notorious Whitechapel and Flush was a victim that was abused and violated by the gangs.

Flush's experience of living in the worst conditions in the gangs' den implies

the long neglected history of abusing animals in the Victorian society. Though the dogs were popular in Victorian England, they were used as fighting dogs especially in the ratting sports at public houses (Mayhew 3: 6-9). Because the dogs were popular, moreover, the dog stealing was a good business and there were some methods of stealing dogs owned by ladies and gentlemen who could pay them back.

They [robbers] steal fancy dogs ladies are fond of – spaniels, poodles, and terriers, sporting dogs, such as setters and retrievers, and also Newfoundland dogs. . . . Their mode of operation is this: — In prowling over the metropolis, when they see a handsome dog with a lady or gentleman they follow it and see where the person resides. So soon as they have ascertained this they loiter about the house for days with a piece of liver prepared by a certain process, and soaked in some ingredient which dogs are uncommonly fond of. They are so partial to it they will follow the stranger some distance in preference to following their master. The thieves generally carry small pieces of this to entice the dog away with them, when they seize hold of it in a convenient place, and put it into a bag they carry with them.

(Mayhew 4: 326)

The dog stealing business which was carried out in such methods mostly by professional thieves was accompanied by letting “the owners have them [their dogs] back for a certain sum of money,” “generally from 1*l.* to 5*l.*” (Mayhew 3: 326). A more intriguingly way was applied by a dog-finder who stole a dog, advertised it at a public house, announced the the dog was found, and restored to its owner “on payment of expenses” and one dog-finder called Chelsea George earned the average 150*l.* yearly (Mayhew 2: 52). Flush and Barrett Browning are victims of this dog-stealing business which was

prevalent in Victorian London that could not prevent ladies and gentlemen from being frequently involved in the thefts, robbery, and other underground business.

What both Flush and Barrett Browning undergo by way of this dog-stealing involvement is the challenge to the wholesome conditions and circumstances that both the dog and its owner need to possess. As for Flush, the dog-stealing experience is the most painful one in his life. According to the United Kingdom Farm Animal Welfare Council, the animals have to be housed in conditions with five freedoms: freedom from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, or disease; freedom to express normal behavior; and freedom from fear and distress (Hubrecht and Turner 269). These five freedoms against which Flush stays in the Whitechapel den are registered as important elements both by Barrett Browning and Flush.

The energy and power that Barrett Browning presents in rescuing Flush means that against the male power of the underground world. Her courageous hunting of Mr. Taylor represents her inner strength to Flush and to herself. As Woolf connotes in *Flush*, Barrett Browning's exploration in Whitechapel enables her to illustrate the underground of the Victorian Society in her novel-poem, *Aurora Leigh* in 1857(63).⁶ In depicting women's conflicts in this poem, Barrett Browning is herself "a principal actor in the work of healing" as a woman poet against the Victorian society, its authorized literature, and its canon of criticism (David 118). At the same time, Barrett Browning is a liberated fighter who articulates the silenced selves of the weak in the society. She is empowered to face the dog-banditti by herself because of her affection to Flush and Robert Browning. The relationship between Barrett Browning's liberated self and Flush's domesticated self is developed into the equal

partnership with equal welfare that is sprung and reassured in Flush's kidnap.

As Flush's kidnap became a trial both for Barrett Browning and Flush, the secret marriage ensures the close relationship between them and the common boundary freed from the patriarchal force that Mr. Barrett place upon them. The secret marriage is informed silently to Flush who has a chance to witness the marriage ring which was worn and hidden by Barrett Browning. This marriage brings Flush another reunion, or partnership among the three instead of between the two. The marital relationship between Barrett Browning and Robert Browning changes the partnership between Barrett Browning and Flush. This newly established partnership between Barrett Browning and Robert Browning embodies their freedom from the Victorian father, Mr. Barrett, and from his power to control his daughter's life. Squier, however, draws an interesting comparison between Mr. Taylor and Mr. Browning: as "their parallel experiences during Flush's kidnapping make clear, both Flush and his mistress are equally subject to the wills of the men around them, whether the lawless Mr. Taylor or the lawful Mr. Browning"(131). Mr. Barrett is the most powerful male force with which Barrett Browning is fatally confronted because he is a freedom-stealer as a patriarchal authority within the household. In the new partnership, Flush is also freed from the Victorian patriarchal force to which he has to surrender, obey, and be silenced as he is scared by "a force" of Mr. Barrett (*F* 31). The newly-established partnership between Barrett Browning and Robert Browning gives the intense sense of freedom and reliability to the already-established partnership between Barrett Browning and Flush.

The most significant resolution is carried out when all of the three, Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, and Flush, escape from Britain and settle in Italy that is free from Victorian convention, customs, and social values as

Barrett Browning remarks that “Fear was unknown in Florence; there were no dog-stealers here and, she may have sighed, there were no fathers” (*F* 76). The change of the circumstances due to the elopement to Italy influences the partnership among Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, and Flush. The human-to-society relationship is also nourished, improved, and evolved by leading a balanced life associated with the society. The human-to-dog relationship recovers as the equal and well-balanced one. Gillian Beer remarks that “Flush, like Elizabeth Barrett, like Adeline Virginia Stephen, is a prisoner always on the edge escape in Victorian bourgeois society” (102). Both Barrett Browning and Flush can escape from their confined lives that restrict their physical activities, damage their psychological freedom, and burden their social values.

The new life in Florence that enables Barrett Browning to transform from an invalid gentlewoman to a vigorous person results in her matured and fulfilled life both as a poet and as a woman. Becoming “a different person altogether,” Barrett Browning gains her physical strength as she “rattled off in a ramshackle fly to the borders of a lake and looked at mountains” (*F* 73). Casa Guidi, her settlement space with Robert Browning in Florence, is a bare, large, and open space where Barrett Browning can breathe the free air. This settlement provides her with another important gift, her pregnancy and birth of her boy-baby, Penini. The late pregnancy and birth which is accompanied with the danger to both mother's and baby's lives is what Barrett Browning undertakes as the most significant turning point in her life. Barrett Browning's liberated self is confirmed in her physical and psychological recovery and stability outside the British patriarchal society and values.

Flush in Florence, like Barrett Browning, embraces the sexual and spiritual freedom, and even democracy as a “new conception of canine society” (*F*

75), though he confronts Barrett Browning's change, Penini as the newcomer to the companionship, and his own aging problems.

The moment of liberation came one day in the Cascine. As he raced over the grass 'like emeralds' with 'the pheasants all alive and flying', Flush suddenly bethought him of Regent's Park and its proclamation: Dogs must be led on chains. Where was 'must' now? Where were chains now? Where were park-keepers and truncheons? Gone, with the dog-stealers and Kennel Clubs and Spaniel Clubs of a corrupt aristocracy! Gone with four-wheelers and hansom cabs! With Whitechapel and Shoreditch! He ran, he raced; his coat flashed; his eyes blazed. He was the friend of all the world now. All dogs were his brothers. He had no need of a chain in this new world; he had no need of protection. (*F* 75)

Flush's liberation during the prime time of his life nourishes his sense of independence, responsibility, and self-esteem after a recovery from the trauma that he has been confined in the Barretts' house. During this period, Flush's experiences are enlarged enough to embrace the free spirit, accept the democracy among dogs, overcome "rage and jealousy and some deep disgust" to Penini. Flush's sexual liberation that is "in search of something denied him all these years" (*F* 76) is recovered enough to chase female dogs through the night. Flush's sexual desire and its fulfillment is accompanied with Barrett Browning's one that is proven in her pregnancy after the first anniversary of her wedding day. Flush's maturity is also witnessed in his own awareness of his newly-established self and a new concept of values. Flush's companionship with mongrels, his physical freedom without a chain, his nursing Penini, his bareness after his coat was clipped, and his brotherhood with people and dogs in Florence are what Flush embraces till the end of his

life. The dignity of Flush's life and self is affirmed as an equal companion in the human society.

The paradox between Barrett Browning and Flush is ultimately resolved when the equal companionship between them is assured and their revolt against the Victorian force is accomplished. Their empowered selves construct the empire of their own with the strong sense of attachment, reliability, respect, and ultimate companionship.

V. Conclusion

Flush presents to us the significant yet often-neglected topic of a human-to-animal companionship in the modern society. Silenced and marginalized selves in a woman poet and a dog are retrieved in the common space where they are confronted with the invisible force and authority that threaten and injure their genuine talents, abilities, social interaction, interpersonal communication, and attachment to the others. The internal anxiety that haunts both Barrett Browning and Flush is reduced and remedied until the intense sense of independence is born to support their self-esteem and improve their cooperation between them. Animal-assisted therapy is carried out in a well-balanced condition both for Barrett Browning and Flush and the quality of life, the common goal of animal-assisted therapy, is enhanced and guaranteed. In *Flush*, Woolf creates an ideal human-to-animal companionship, especially for the woman artist whose marginalized self is struggling to fight against the invisible enormous force.



Figure 1 Pinker as Flush in a penguin edition of *Flush*



Figure 2 “Virginia with Adrian and Karin Stephen” with no date (Spater and Parsons 133)



Figure 3 “A group outside Virginia’s work-room at Monk’s House” with no date (Alexander)



Figure 4 “Vita with Pinka in her lap in the upper sitting room at Monks House, 1932”
(Spater and Parsons 139)



Figure 5 “Vita and Leonard in Monks House garden,
1933” with presumably Pinka and Vita’s
cocker spaniel (Spater and Parsons 139)



Figure 6 “Virginia with James and Alix Strachey”
with no date (Spater and Parsons 141)



Figure 7 “Virginia bowling with Angelica, Quentin and a friend” with no date (Spater and Parsons 142)



Figure 8 “Leonard, Virginia and Sally, Rodmell, 1938” (Lehmann).



9



10



11



12

Figures 9-11 “Photographs taken in the upstairs sitting room and the garden of Monks House” with no date (Spater and Parsons 96).

Notes

- 1 As for contemporary critical articles on *Flush*, there are a few excellent works, such as Pamela L. Caughie's "Flush and the Literary Canon: Oh where oh here has that little dog gone" and her *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism: Literature in Quest and Question of Itself* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991); Rachel Blau DuPlessis's "'Amor Vin--: Modifications of Romance in Woolf,'" ed. Margaret Homans, *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 115-35; and Ruth Vanita's "'Love Unspeakable': The Uses of Allusion in *Flush*," ed. Vara Neverow-Turk and Mark Hussey, *Virginia Woolf: Themes and Variations* (New York: Pace UP, 1993), 248-57.
- 2 It is based on the definition by Delta Society, a non-profit organization of animal-assisted therapy in the United States, and it leads to enchanting quality of life for the patients (See Hines and Fredrickson 24-26).
- 3 According to Flint, Woolf mistook the year when Flush was first actually given to Barrett Browning and it was in 1840 when Flush was first taken to Barrett Browning (118-19).
- 4 Flint makes a note about its reference in a letter from Miss Mitford to Mrs. Partridge on July 3, 1846 (119).
- 5 In *Flush*, Woolf writes that "Mr. Taylor was said to make an income of two or three thousand a year out of the dogs of Wimpole Street" (53); on the other hand, Barrett Browning writes, in her letter to Robert Browning on September 2, 1846, that "They[banditti] make some three or four thousand a year by their honorable employment" (Karlin 304). In *Flush*'s first kidnap in 1843, Barrett Browning confesses in her letter of September 19 to H. S. Boyd that the dog-banditti "had been 'about stealing Flush these two years,' and warned us plainly to take care of him for the future" (155).
- 6 See Woolf's "Aurora Leigh."

Works Cited

- Alexander, Peter F. *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Literary Partnership*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992.
- Barrett Browning, Elizabeth. *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Ed. Frederick Kenyon. 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1897.

- Beer, Gillian. *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996.
- Bell, Quentin. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*. 2 vols. New York: Harvest, 1972.
- Burch, Mary R. *Volunteering with Your Pet: How to Get Involved in Animal-Assisted Therapy with Any Kind of Pet*. New York: Macmillan, 1996.
- Caras, Roger, and Michael Findlay. *The Penguin Book of Dogs*. 1980. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.
- Caughie, Pamela L. "Flush and the Literary Canon: Oh where oh where has that little dog gone?" 1991. *McNees* II 514-32.
- David, Deirdre. *Intellectual Woman and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot*. London: Macmillan, 1987.
- DeSalvo, Louis. *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life and Work*. Boston: Beacon, 1989.
- Flint, Kate. Editor's Notes. Virginia Woolf. *Flush*. Ed. Kate Flint. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 116-32.
- Fox, Michael W. *Inu no Shinrigaku [Superdog]*. Trans. Kenji Kitagata. 1990. Tokyo: Hakuyo-sha, 1994.
- Hines, Linda, and Maureen Fredrickson. "Perspectives on Animal-Assisted Activities and Therapy." *Wilson and Turner* 23-39.
- Hubrecht, Robert, and Dennis C. Turner. "Companion Animal Welfare in Private and Institutional Settings." *Wilson and Turner* 267-89.
- Janssen, Maridith A. "Therapeutic Interventions: Animal Assisted Therapy Programs." *Palaestra* 14.4 (Fall 1998): 40-42.
- Karlin, Daniel, ed. *Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett: The Courtship Correspondence 1845-1846*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.
- Lehmann, John. *Thrown to the Woolfs: Leonard and Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press*. New York: Holt, 1978.
- Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*. 4 vols. 1849-1850. London: Frank Cass, 1967.
- McNees, Eleanor, ed. *Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments*. Vol. 2. Robertsbridge, East Sussex: Helm Information, 1994.
- Miller, Julie, and Katherine Connor. "Going to the Dog . . . for Help." *Nursing* 30.11 (Nov. 2000): 65-67.
- Mitford, Mary Russell. "Married Poets." *Recollections of a Literary Life; or Books, Places, and People*. 1852. New York: AMS, 1975. 169-84.
- _____. *Our Village*. 1824. New York: Woodstock, 199

- Reid, Panthea. *Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf*. New York & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.
- Smith, A. Croxton. *British Dogs*. Britain in Pictures 21. 1945. Tokyo: Hon-no-tomoshia, 1997.
- Spater, George, and Ian Parsons. *A Marriage of True Minds: An Intimate Portrait of Leonard and Virginia Woolf*. New York & London: Harcourt, 1977.
- Squier, Susan Merrill. *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985.
- Szladits, Lola L. "The Life, Character and Opinions of Flush the Spaniel." 1970. McNeas 504-10.
- Voelker, Rebecca. "Puppy love can be therapeutic, too." *JAMA* 274.24 (Dec. 1995): 1897+.
- Wilson, Cindy C., and Dennis C. Turner, eds. *Companion Animals in Human Health*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Aurora Leigh." Ed. Michele Barrett. *Women and Writing*. New York: Harvest, 1979. 133-44.
- _____. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Anne Olivier Bell. Vols 3 & 4. New York: Harcourt, 1980 -1982.
- _____. *Flush, A Biography*. 1933. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.
- _____. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. Vol 4. New York: Harcourt, 1979.

Virginia Woolf et le chien Flush : « résoudre le problème de la réalité ». Abstract. The reception and critical evaluation of Woolf's essays regrettably falls short of the appreciation of her fiction. All in all her essays comprise more than 800 reviews and articles on biographies, collections of letters, memoirs, single literary works, editions of works and anthologies: fiction, poetry, literary criticism (cf. Niinning 17; Lee, "Essays" 96), but they were published only ... This study focuses on the biographies and pedagogic work of these Palestinian educators. Specifically, it analyses authorship of educators who were employed by the colonial Department of Education, a system that offered ambiguous objectives for the Arab population. *Flush: A Biography*, an imaginative biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel, is a cross-genre blend of fiction and nonfiction by Virginia Woolf published in 1933. Written after the completion of her emotionally draining *The Waves*, the work returned Woolf to the imaginative consideration of English history that she had begun in *Orlando: A Biography*, and to which she would return in *Between the Acts*. Commonly read as a modernist consideration of city life seen through the eyes of a dog, *Flush* serves as a harsh criticism of the supposedly unnatural ways of living in the city.