

Dog leftovers from Port. - Spaces.

Trooper was floating too, warmed by mother sun. But he was no hero either. He had grown older and sick, and then he had recovered. He got from this a whiff of death. He knew less of it than me but enough to separate him from wild animals. (The partridge always dies young and bold. She lives in constant danger, evades it if she can, but flies into the valley of death without fear.)

The partridges flushed wild, most of them, and flew so far that we could not find them again. They had changed genetically since the Middle Ages. Back then, their worst predators had been raptors and the best defense-mechanism was hiding rather than flying. A pointing dog could creep into a covey and turn his head from one bird to another while his human shot them on the ground with a crossbow, which is an exceedingly slow and cranky weapon.¹ In post-revolution Portugal we could seldom get close enough even with a shotgun.

Trooper loved it. Perhaps for him the good scents came from rabbits that had hopped around before dawn, but the old dog knew that I was too stupid to decipher his illicit pleasure. And he could range widely to either side instead of being hacked back constantly into place, which was necessary in a line.

Dogs do look like their people, or vice versa, and the resemblance between Trooper and me would have been amusing. We had clearly come from some great northern kingdom of perpetual snow. We were big, expensive, independent, and naive. We were also thirsty, hungry, and accident-prone. The Portuguese had a different concept of dog. Theirs were small, cheap, obedient, and

wary. They represented every known breed, sometimes in the same individual, but they were too small to eat much and too slow to build up great thirsts. They were tough because they would have died young otherwise. They were cautious because, in Portugal, caution was the best way to get a partridge.

The odd part of this is that the modern pointing dog was bred from Iberian stock -- probably both Spanish or Portuguese. The old breeds still exist, in limited numbers. They are big and bold, though not as fiery as Trooper. I did not see many in the field. They had been bred for times that were long gone, except in a few abandoned places.

Trooper and I were in one of those. I wanted him to run wide and point coveys, but after an hour's search he simply stopped, puzzled. Then he tipped his muzzle down and looked between his feet. There was a partridge, dead. It was still faintly warm, and I supposed that it had flown as far as it could after taking a single wild pellet of shot from one of the fusillades. The bird gave me no exhilaration but added a comfortable weight to my game-pocket. It also gave me hope that the rest of its covey was somewhere around. Red-legged Partridges figure out what is happening after the first hours of opening day and seek secluded places for the duration.

I moved slowly in the center of the dog's orbit while he swept the slopes for a quarter-mile on each side. In perhaps twenty minutes the scent entered his nostrils and coursed back through his spine to the tip of his tail. I watched it happen. Back and tail stiffened as he crept closer to paradise. When he

was sure that he was at its gates, he stopped with tail high and one foot off the ground. He waited for me. The covey did too, almost. Only the last bird was close enough for a shot. It flushed with the usual bravado and died in the air. Trooper had it at once and was so excited that he brought it almost to me before remembering that he should have had a taste while he could. We both stopped and sat for a rest. I clutched our prey as if it could still get away, then relaxed, fluffed its feathers smooth, posed it. The bird was relaxed too. The old dog turned his eyes from partridge to me.

Trooper and I hunted together because we had the same cells down the middle of our backs. When he was pointing some scent strong and close, a ridge of hair along his spine would ruffle. My back hairs fell out during the Pleistocene but the cells where the hair used to be still worked fine, so there I'd be, out in a dawn field believing my dog. He made mistakes but he did not lie. Something sudden always happened when I took a few steps. Maybe it would be a hedgehog; maybe it would be a stray cat; and once in awhile it was a partridge.

* * * * *

An American making a Statement buys a dog that reflects what he wishes were his Lifestyle. For example, a man who wishes that he were tough picks a Doberman, pit bull, or hybrid wolf. A woman who wishes that she were beautiful picks a dog with beautiful hair. A person wishing to be a celebrity picks a creature that

demands to be looked at -- a shar-pei, say. These dogs look
samely different because their role is to nourish fantasy. They
have no other function. They bark a lot. They get fussy about
things that do not matter. Some of them have psychiatrists. They
want to be more than house-pets.

Trooper was just the best pointing dog I could find. It
occurred to me that a non-statement was a kind of Statement too,
but Trooper did not ponder this. He went looking for the things
that all dogs and all humans want: love and work. The love came
easy, as it does for most dogs, but in work he was also
successful. He found important things hiding in the grass. He had
no existential crises. He had no causes. He had no position on
the line, if any, between art and obscenity. He had no more
doubts than the troops in Pickett's charge. He had no
frustrations, except when he could not go hunting.

"In Japan for an international conference on religion,
[Joseph] Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social
philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, 'We've been
now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your
shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your
theology.' The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then
slowly shook his head. 'I think we don't have ideology,' he said.
'We don't have theology. We dance.'"²

Trooper hunted.

I followed.

* * * * *

Three partridges were enough to make an opulent meal for my family of three. With less than three I would still have been happy, but with the full Thanksgiving dinner fluffy in my game-pocket, [ends].

(1) Arkwright, William. The Pointer And His Predecessors.

Tain:Argue, 1989. (Reprint of the 1906 London edition.) pp. 29-40.

(2) Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. The Power of Myth.

NY:Doubleday, 1988. p.xix.

Material on dogs left over from Portugal

Trooper was floating too, warmed by mother sun. But he was no hero either. He had grown older and sick, and then he had recovered. He got from this a whiff of death. He knew less of it than me but enough to separate him from wild animals. (The partridge always dies young and bold. She lives in constant danger, evades it if she can, but flies into the valley of death without fear.)

The partridges flushed wild, most of them, and flew so far that we could not find them again. They had changed genetically since the Middle Ages. Back then, their worst predators had been raptors and the best defense-mechanism was hiding rather than flying. A pointing dog could creep into a covey and turn his head from one bird to another while his human shot them on the ground with a crossbow, which is an exceedingly slow and cranky weapon.¹ In post-revolution Portugal we could seldom get close enough even with a shotgun.

Trooper loved it. Perhaps for him the good scents came from rabbits that had hopped around before dawn, but the old dog knew that I was too stupid to decipher his illicit pleasure. And he could range widely to either side instead of being hacked back constantly into place, which was necessary in a line.

Dogs do look like their people, or vice versa, and the resemblance between Trooper and me would have been amusing. We had clearly come from some great northern kingdom of perpetual snow. We were big, expensive, independent, and naive. We were also thirsty, hungry, and accident-prone. The Portuguese had a

different concept of dog. Theirs were small, cheap, obedient, and wary. They represented every known breed, sometimes in the same individual, but they were too small to eat much and too slow to build up great thirsts. They were tough because they would have died young otherwise. They were cautious because, in Portugal, caution was the best way to get a partridge.

The odd part of this is that the modern pointing dog was bred from Iberian stock -- probably both Spanish or Portuguese. The old breeds still exist, in limited numbers. They are big and bold, though not as fiery as Trooper. I did not see many in the field. They had been bred for times that were long gone, except in a few abandoned places.

Trooper and I were in one of those. I wanted him to run wide and point coveys, but after an hour's search he simply stopped, puzzled. Then he tipped his muzzle down and looked between his feet. There was a partridge, dead. It was still faintly warm, and I supposed that it had flown as far as it could after taking a single wild pellet of shot from one of the fusillades. The bird gave me no exhilaration but added a comfortable weight to my game-pocket. It also gave me hope that the rest of its covey was somewhere around. Red-legged Partridges figure out what is happening after the first hours of opening day and seek secluded places for the duration.

I moved slowly in the center of the dog's orbit while he swept the slopes for a quarter-mile on each side. In perhaps twenty minutes the scent entered his nostrils and coursed back through his spine to the tip of his tail. I watched it happen.

Back and tail stiffened as he crept closer to paradise. When he was sure that he was at its gates, he stopped with tail high and one foot off the ground. He waited for me. The covey did too, almost. Only the last bird was close enough for a shot. It flushed with the usual bravado and died in the air. Trooper had it at once and was so excited that he brought it almost to me before remembering that he should have had a taste while he could. We both stopped and sat for a rest. I clutched our prey as if it could still get away, then relaxed, fluffed its feathers smooth, posed it. The bird was relaxed too. The old dog turned his eyes from partridge to me.

Trooper and I hunted together because we had the same cells down the middle of our backs. When he was pointing some scent strong and close, a ridge of hair along his spine would ruffle. My back hairs fell out during the Pleistocene but the cells where the hair used to be still worked fine, so there I'd be, out in a dawn field believing my dog. He made mistakes but he did not lie. Something sudden always happened when I took a few steps. Maybe it would be a hedgehog; maybe it would be a stray cat; and once in awhile it was a partridge.

* * * * *

An American making a Statement buys a dog that reflects what he wishes were his Lifestyle. For example, a man who wishes that he were tough picks a Doberman, pit bull, or hybrid wolf. A woman who wishes that she were beautiful picks a dog with beautiful

hair. A person wishing to be a celebrity picks a creature that demands to be looked at -- a shar-pei, say. These dogs look samely different because their role is to nourish fantasy. They have no other function. They bark a lot. They get fussy about things that do not matter. Some of them have psychiatrists. They want to be more than house-pets.

Trooper was just the best pointing dog I could find. It occurred to me that a non-statement was a kind of Statement too, but Trooper did not ponder this. He went looking for the things that all dogs and all humans want: love and work. The love came easy, as it does for most dogs, but in work he was also successful. He found important things hiding in the grass. He had no existential crises. He had no causes. He had no position on the line, if any, between art and obscenity. He had no more doubts than the troops in Pickett's charge. He had no frustrations, except when he could not go hunting.

"In Japan for an international conference on religion, [Joseph] Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, 'We've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your theology.' The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. 'I think we don't have ideology,' he said. 'We don't have theology. We dance.'"²

Trooper hunted.

I followed.

* * * * *

Three partridges were enough to make an opulent meal for my family of three. With less than three I would still have been happy, but with the full Thanksgiving dinner fluffy in my game-pocket, [ends].

(1) Arkwright, William. The Pointer And His Predecessors.

Tain:Argue, 1989. (Reprint of the 1906 London edition.) pp. 29-40.

(2) Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. The Power of Myth.

NY:Doubleday, 1988. p.xix.

Material on dogs left over from Portugal

Trooper was floating too, warmed by mother sun. But he was no hero either. He had grown older and sick, and then he had recovered. He got from this a whiff of death. He knew less of it than me but enough to separate him from wild animals. (The partridge always dies young and bold. She lives in constant danger, evades it if she can, but flies into the valley of death without fear.)

The partridges flushed wild, most of them, and flew so far that we could not find them again. They had changed genetically since the Middle Ages. Back then, their worst predators had been raptors and the best defense-mechanism was hiding rather than flying. A pointing dog could creep into a covey and turn his head from one bird to another while his human shot them on the ground with a crossbow, which is an exceedingly slow and cranky weapon.¹ In post-revolution Portugal we could seldom get close enough even with a shotgun.

Trooper loved it. Perhaps for him the good scents came from rabbits that had hopped around before dawn, but the old dog knew that I was too stupid to decipher his illicit pleasure. And he could range widely to either side instead of being hacked back constantly into place, which was necessary in a line.

Dogs do look like their people, or vice versa, and the resemblance between Trooper and me would have been amusing. We had clearly come from some great northern kingdom of perpetual snow. We were big, expensive, independent, and naive. We were also thirsty, hungry, and accident-prone. The Portuguese had a

different concept of dog. Theirs were small, cheap, obedient, and wary. They represented every known breed, sometimes in the same individual, but they were too small to eat much and too slow to build up great thirsts. They were tough because they would have died young otherwise. They were cautious because, in Portugal, caution was the best way to get a partridge.

The odd part of this is that the modern pointing dog was bred from Iberian stock -- probably both Spanish or Portuguese. The old breeds still exist, in limited numbers. They are big and bold, though not as fiery as Trooper. I did not see many in the field. They had been bred for times that were long gone, except in a few abandoned places.

Trooper and I were in one of those. I wanted him to run wide and point coveys, but after an hour's search he simply stopped, puzzled. Then he tipped his muzzle down and looked between his feet. There was a partridge, dead. It was still faintly warm, and I supposed that it had flown as far as it could after taking a single wild pellet of shot from one of the fusillades. The bird gave me no exhilaration but added a comfortable weight to my game-pocket. It also gave me hope that the rest of its covey was somewhere around. Red-legged Partridges figure out what is happening after the first hours of opening day and seek secluded places for the duration.

I moved slowly in the center of the dog's orbit while he swept the slopes for a quarter-mile on each side. In perhaps twenty minutes the scent entered his nostrils and coursed back through his spine to the tip of his tail. I watched it happen.

Back and tail stiffened as he crept closer to paradise. When he was sure that he was at its gates, he stopped with tail high and one foot off the ground. He waited for me. The covey did too, almost. Only the last bird was close enough for a shot. It flushed with the usual bravado and died in the air. Trooper had it at once and was so excited that he brought it almost to me before remembering that he should have had a taste while he could. We both stopped and sat for a rest. I clutched our prey as if it could still get away, then relaxed, fluffed its feathers smooth, posed it. The bird was relaxed too. The old dog turned his eyes from partridge to me.

Trooper and I hunted together because we had the same cells down the middle of our backs. When he was pointing some scent strong and close, a ridge of hair along his spine would ruffle. My back hairs fell out during the Pleistocene but the cells where the hair used to be still worked fine, so there I'd be, out in a dawn field believing my dog. He made mistakes but he did not lie. Something sudden always happened when I took a few steps. Maybe it would be a hedgehog; maybe it would be a stray cat; and once in awhile it was a partridge.

* * * * *

An American making a Statement buys a dog that reflects what he wishes were his Lifestyle. For example, a man who wishes that he were tough picks a Doberman, pit bull, or hybrid wolf. A woman who wishes that she were beautiful picks a dog with beautiful

hair. A person wishing to be a celebrity picks a creature that demands to be looked at -- a shar-pei, say. These dogs look samely different because their role is to nourish fantasy. They have no other function. They bark a lot. They get fussy about things that do not matter. Some of them have psychiatrists. They want to be more than house-pets.

Trooper was just the best pointing dog I could find. It occurred to me that a non-statement was a kind of Statement too, but Trooper did not ponder this. He went looking for the things that all dogs and all humans want: love and work. The love came easy, as it does for most dogs, but in work he was also successful. He found important things hiding in the grass. He had no existential crises. He had no causes. He had no position on the line, if any, between art and obscenity. He had no more doubts than the troops in Pickett's charge. He had no frustrations, except when he could not go hunting.

"In Japan for an international conference on religion, [Joseph] Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, 'We've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your theology.' The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. 'I think we don't have ideology,' he said. 'We don't have theology. We dance.'"²

Trooper hunted.

I followed.

* * * * *

Three partridges were enough to make an opulent meal for my family of three. With less than three I would still have been happy, but with the full Thanksgiving dinner fluffy in my game-pocket, [ends].

(1) Arkwright, William. The Pointer And His Predecessors.

Tain:Argue, 1989. (Reprint of the 1906 London edition.) pp. 29-40.

(2) Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. The Power of Myth.

NY:Doubleday, 1988. p.xix.

About 800 words

Datus Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714
(406) 388-3345

QUALITY CONTROL

Your dog knows what to look for

All of us are hunting for something. We have been after it for at least 30,000 years, judging from evidence that one of us painted on the walls of a cave, and our search shows no signs of slowing. The question before us, then, is not whether to hunt but what to hunt for. We might go looking for a deer, on advice from that cave-painter; a brook trout, on advice from Robert Traver; a lion, on advice from Don Quixote; or a sale at the mall, on advice from Willard Scott. We could even sit in the woods buck-naked and pound on drums, hoping to call something in. I am not making any of this up.

With confusion so widespread in the human race, it is hard to be certain of following the right trail. Fortunately, there

is a school of philosophy called cynegetics, and it never fails to distinguish between pursuits that are good, bad, or trivial. Cynegetics is Greek for hunting with a dog -- most rigorous of disciplines and one of the more honest, because the dog is in charge of quality control. You cannot fool a dog, or more precisely, you can fool a dog once. After that you are fooling yourself.

If you try to stop at the mall, for example, an experienced dog will advise you to keep driving. His specialty is finding secrets in the fields and woods. He can cover ten times more miles than you or me and pick up scents a hundredfold weaker -- or more likely a thousandfold. He uses these skills to detect where a grouse has walked on fallen leaves and then follow up on the clue. A few other predators are, perhaps, able to cover as much ground and smell as keenly as the dog. A very few may even have a brain that makes as much sense of the available information. But none of the others is willing to run in our pack.

A dog was, by far, the first domestic animal. She was probably a bitch pup, just a little less wild than her brothers but still a pack-hunter like us humans, and therefore able to make sense of our rules. After some 20,000 years, her relationship with us is still closer than that of any other animal. The cat sleeps by our fire too, but does not work with us; the horse works with us but does not sleep by the fire.

My dog both lives and works with me. When hunting, he finds

a covey of quail and calls me to come and get what we both want. His way of calling is to stand on point, but other kinds of dogs -- flushing dogs and hounds -- communicate in other ways. What matters is not the breed but the fit between canine and human temperaments, because without that fit, the two cannot mesh as a team.

Personalities match best when a pup is brought up in its natural environment -- a human family. Scholars have confused themselves, on this point, by studying dogs raised in kennels, which resemble nothing in canine evolution. To put it in Greek, pups are anthropomorphic. Translated, this means that they have human characteristics -- not all of them, but enough that dog and human each understand the common ground, when understanding is given a chance. If you keep a pup in confinement, deprived of family and job, you get an impaired dog, just as you would get an impaired human. Both species hate to live on welfare payments.

If, on the other hand, you raise a dog at your hearth and give it meaningful work, it will become as close to you as any human, and in certain ways closer. Your skills and the dog's are complementary, not competitive. He becomes an extension of your personality -- a piece of your consciousness that can run with the wind and stand shaking on scent. At some level, the two of you merge into one hunter.

A remarkable thing happens, then. The man/dog bond is almost too close for comfort, like the link between mother and child in the night. My wife used to say that her baby's cry reached her

stomach, somewhere -- woke her from deepest sleep, made her get out of bed. I snored on. Once a puppy has wriggled down into my limbic system, however, I'm with him every step. I know when he's in trouble with a fence, when he's just running around having a whee of a good time, and when he's working scent. We are chasing the same pheasant, by then, feeling the same emotions. Exactly the same. I know. We both know.

We must be hunting the right thing.

Material on dogs left over from Portugal

Trooper was floating too, warmed by mother sun. But he was no hero either. He had grown older and sick, and then he had recovered. He got from this a whiff of death. He knew less of it than me but enough to separate him from wild animals. (The partridge always dies young and bold. She lives in constant danger, evades it if she can, but flies into the valley of death without fear.)

The partridges flushed wild, most of them, and flew so far that we could not find them again. They had changed genetically since the Middle Ages. Back then, their worst predators had been raptors and the best defense-mechanism was hiding rather than flying. A pointing dog could creep into a covey and turn his head from one bird to another while his human shot them on the ground with a crossbow, which is an exceedingly slow and cranky weapon.¹ In post-revolution Portugal we could seldom get close enough even with a shotgun.

Trooper loved it. Perhaps for him the good scents came from rabbits that had hopped around before dawn, but the old dog knew that I was too stupid to decipher his illicit pleasure. And he could range widely to either side instead of being hacked back constantly into place, which was necessary in a line.

Dogs do look like their people, or vice versa, and the resemblance between Trooper and me would have been amusing. We had clearly come from some great northern kingdom of perpetual snow. We were big, expensive, independent, and naive. We were also thirsty, hungry, and accident-prone. The Portuguese had a

different concept of dog. Theirs were small, cheap, obedient, and wary. They represented every known breed, sometimes in the same individual, but they were too small to eat much and too slow to build up great thirsts. They were tough because they would have died young otherwise. They were cautious because, in Portugal, caution was the best way to get a partridge.

The odd part of this is that the modern pointing dog was bred from Iberian stock -- probably both Spanish or Portuguese. The old breeds still exist, in limited numbers. They are big and bold, though not as fiery as Trooper. I did not see many in the field. They had been bred for times that were long gone, except in a few abandoned places.

Trooper and I were in one of those. I wanted him to run wide and point coveys, but after an hour's search he simply stopped, puzzled. Then he tipped his muzzle down and looked between his feet. There was a partridge, dead. It was still faintly warm, and I supposed that it had flown as far as it could after taking a single wild pellet of shot from one of the fusillades. The bird gave me no exhilaration but added a comfortable weight to my game-pocket. It also gave me hope that the rest of its covey was somewhere around. Red-legged Partridges figure out what is happening after the first hours of opening day and seek secluded places for the duration.

I moved slowly in the center of the dog's orbit while he swept the slopes for a quarter-mile on each side. In perhaps twenty minutes the scent entered his nostrils and coursed back through his spine to the tip of his tail. I watched it happen.

Back and tail stiffened as he crept closer to paradise. When he was sure that he was at its gates, he stopped with tail high and one foot off the ground. He waited for me. The covey did too, almost. Only the last bird was close enough for a shot. It flushed with the usual bravado and died in the air. Trooper had it at once and was so excited that he brought it almost to me before remembering that he should have had a taste while he could. We both stopped and sat for a rest. I clutched our prey as if it could still get away, then relaxed, fluffed its feathers smooth, posed it. The bird was relaxed too. The old dog turned his eyes from partridge to me.

Trooper and I hunted together because we had the same cells down the middle of our backs. When he was pointing some scent strong and close, a ridge of hair along his spine would ruffle. My back hairs fell out during the Pleistocene but the cells where the hair used to be still worked fine, so there I'd be, out in a dawn field believing my dog. He made mistakes but he did not lie. Something sudden always happened when I took a few steps. Maybe it would be a hedgehog; maybe it would be a stray cat; and once in awhile it was a partridge.

* * * * *

An American making a Statement buys a dog that reflects what he wishes were his Lifestyle. For example, a man who wishes that he were tough picks a Doberman, pit bull, or hybrid wolf. A woman who wishes that she were beautiful picks a dog with beautiful

hair. A person wishing to be a celebrity picks a creature that demands to be looked at -- a shar-pei, say. These dogs look samely different because their role is to nourish fantasy. They have no other function. They bark a lot. They get fussy about things that do not matter. Some of them have psychiatrists. They want to be more than house-pets.

Trooper was just the best pointing dog I could find. It occurred to me that a non-statement was a kind of Statement too, but Trooper did not ponder this. He went looking for the things that all dogs and all humans want: love and work. The love came easy, as it does for most dogs, but in work he was also successful. He found important things hiding in the grass. He had no existential crises. He had no causes. He had no position on the line, if any, between art and obscenity. He had no more doubts than the troops in Pickett's charge. He had no frustrations, except when he could not go hunting.

"In Japan for an international conference on religion, [Joseph] Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, 'We've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your theology.' The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. 'I think we don't have ideology,' he said. 'We don't have theology. We dance.'"2

Trooper hunted.

I followed.

* * * * *

Three partridges were enough to make an opulent meal for my family of three. With less than three I would still have been happy, but with the full Thanksgiving dinner fluffy in my game-pocket, [ends].

(1) Arkwright, William. The Pointer And His Predecessors.

Tain:Argue, 1989. (Reprint of the 1906 London edition.) pp. 29-40.

(2) Campbell, Joseph, with Bill Moyers. The Power of Myth.

NY:Doubleday, 1988. p.xix.

There is no other way to explain why otherwise rational humans insist on breeding dogs with feeble noses, clumsy bodies, and dim wits. The breeder cannot accept that the dog is a slow learner because it has come to seem as if it were carrying the human's own genes.