I A Dog

by Andrew Kenneally

I am a dog — four legs, a tail, a carefree enough manner, I do this, I do that, get into fights, sniff the ground and so on, I'll spare you the details. But maybe you like all the details, the more the merrier you find them convincing, like to pronounce generously how you've been amply convinced by all the details, but I'm afraid whatever your liking for them you won't find too many here. It might be myself more I'm the sparing than yourself.

But I can't just ignore all details and what kind of dog am I I'm a mongrel a stray, live born die on the street. You might think I'm apologetic half-ashamed looking for pity. More anything the opposite. Pure-breeds are less alive, smugly nestled within the confines of their breed, stupidly proud of these confines, they enter shows, they're obedient, but a mongrel's free of all that.

And you believe all this so or willing to believe it — I a dog? Well I'm not the first dog in print, never mind children's literature there's been first-person dog narratives in Bulgakov, not to mention Kafka. In not mentioning Kafka I did mention him. Vulgar, but what you expect from a dog? We've different standards, could hardly call me civilized. But I've acquired language you protest and so yes civilized, extraordinarily civilized, especially for . . . a mongrel. And then there's the company I'm in, Bulgakov, Kafka - so civilized, even maybe touching on genius.

But we better see what I come up with before implying a dog narrator not aimed at a children's audience must equal genius - as with Kafka, Bulgakov, so myself. To write anything is to be in dog terms a dog of genius but that's hardly enough to make you a genius in genius terms: ‘Yes it's awful rubbish, but you must remember it was written by a dog.' I've no interest in that kind of acclaim.

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But maybe a dog in print is regression for a dog, a movement downwards. An idea.

That last time Kafka before Bulgakov, I changed the order. Symbolic? No, I'm a dog, interested in reality things-in-themselves, no use no interest in symbols. That's where I've problems with you, your eco-system - there's no end in it to symbols, things that aren't themselves, like say money. But even money's old-fashioned now, plastic's the new gold. I'm spraying thoughts al over the place.

You're fierce abstracted, who knows what kind of world half you imagine yourselves live in. But who am I to talk, amn't I on the same road now myself? What kind of dog is it acquires language? Look at your man say the other dogs, who's he think he is? Not that they say it, but if they could say it, had the language to, they would. Or no they probably wouldn't since with the language themselves the point would be a pretty pyrrhic one. Pyrrhic - not bad for a dog. You were probably expecting more in the way of Woofs! than pyrrhic.

But they do those dogs give me looks. Contempt mixed with fear is how I'd describe the looks. That's unfair, they're deeper than that. That's now a sign of my abstracting. And even if there is contempt amongst their looks it's probably only a show of contempt, answering what they imagines my own contempt. And my own? Probably only a show too - in defence against their incoming contempt. And maybe their contempt is something else entirely in my abstracting head I'm turning into contempt.
What the hell kind of dog am I growing all subtle like this? A Jesuit of a dog. Verbalising our looks, analysing them. . . .

Anyway you believe all this — I a dog, acquiring language, writing all this down? Why not? Because I'm a bloody dog, that's why not. And if I am a dog then how'd I get the language? Well however I got it also figurerd how to write, and type - with these paws! And not only that I got it published! I a dog!

And if you believe all that you'll believe anything.

But you might say, a dog with a completed manuscript, his own — of course you'd get it published. What publisher would pass that up? Better again if you were a bit less maybe a mongrel but still . . .

Good point. Maybe it is really I am a dog so.