

When dog training meets pragmatism

There are instances in which you need someone reliable and pragmatic by your side. It is not only soldiers on battlefields who need mates full of practical sense and decisiveness, dog people need them as well. Some dog people, especially those with red hair who get lost in training philosophies and follow shamans, need these people more than others.

After religiously following [White Feather](#) for more than six months, Briony decided that it was time for a change, she wanted less discipline and more freedom, I could hardly find the balance. WF training grounds, furthermore, were no longer available as the alfalfa and other crops were growing quickly. No other suitable training ground was available: spring was coming with its crops which were going to make impossible to run a dog anywhere. My only option was to go to some private areas, called Zone B or Zone C, in which dogs are allowed to run all year round, there I went. My first training sessions were short, I wanted to play on the safe side, until one morning, C. showed up accusing me to train at a "snail speed".

I first met C. in **1999**, I just had to say goodbye to Massachusetts for good, my former dog had died and I decided it was time to treat myself with an English Setter. After all I had wanted one since I was a 10 years old child. Given my unhealthy tendency to save the world and rescue those in need, I had absolutely no interest in a puppy: I wanted a rescue and I got one. I fell for a sweet and gentle orange belton male who reciprocated my feelings immediately and with too much enthusiasm: after eight hours in my house he had already developed a severe form of separation anxiety. I knew he had been poorly socialized, kept kenneled for three years and then trained (aka abused) by a professional trainer. I knew he had

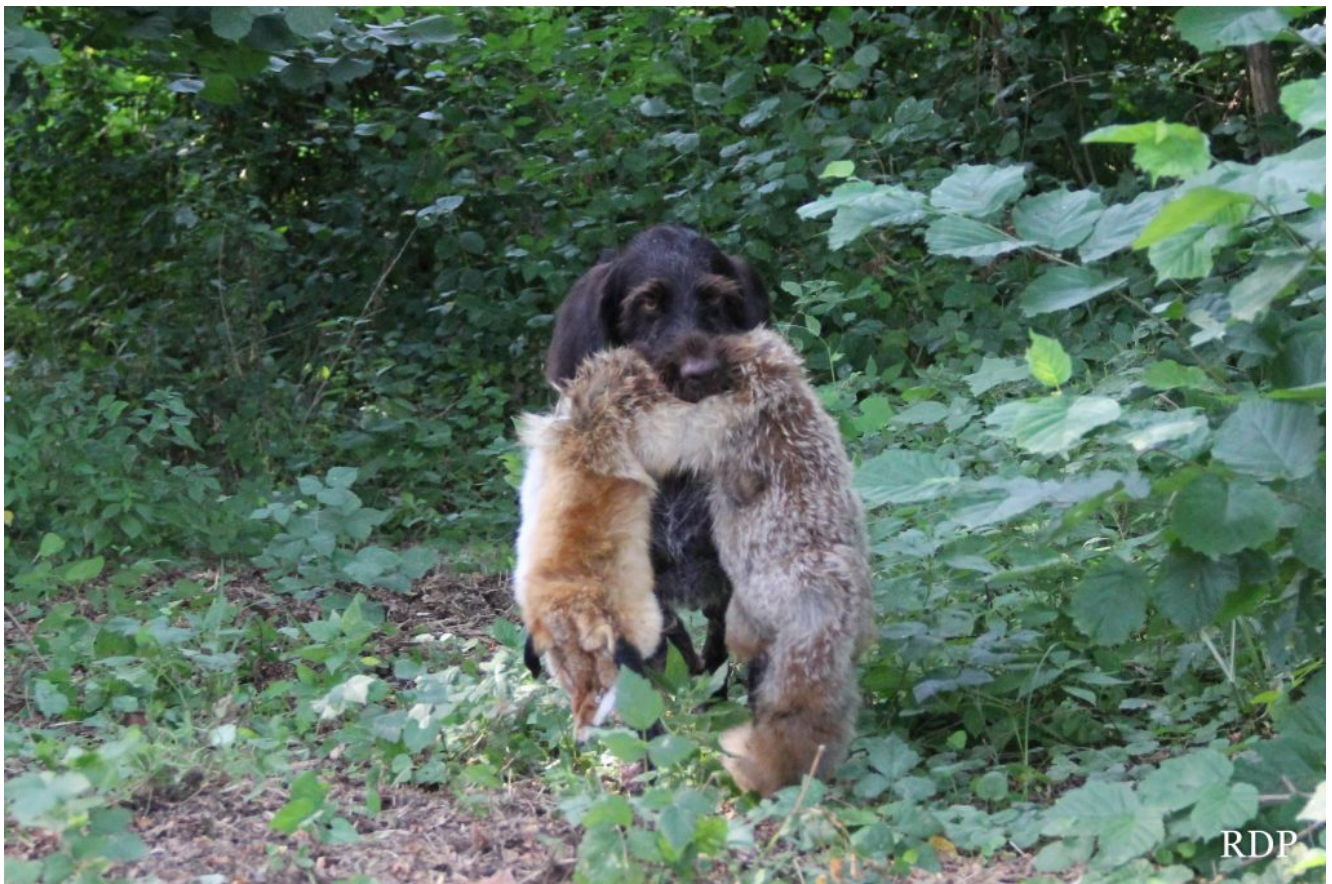
all the reasons to behave like he did but...living with him was hell! I follow the manual: undertook a behavioral therapy; enrolled him in an obedience class; started him as a search & rescue dog and even gave him antidepressants, improvements, however, were small and slow. His breeder, happy to know the dog had been safely re-homed, gave me his pedigree and I realized Socks was meant to be a working dog, he even had a great ancestry. He was my first "gundog" but, my previous experience with other breeds told me that, MAYBE, letting him do the job he was born for, could have helped him to overcome all his fears.



Socks at 13 years old retrieving a pheasant

At the time, however, I had no idea of how an English Setter was supposed to work; of how I should have handled him and of what I needed to teach him. I read books, which is what I do when I need to learn something, but I wanted to meet someone who could provide a face-to-face support. Given Socks' behavioural problems, I could not board him at a professional trainer's kennel and... professional trainers boarding their

pupils seemed to be the only people training English Setters. I tried to ask some shooters for advice, but none seemed to take seriously a young and inexperienced woman with a rescued ES. Women with English Setters in Italy are still very rare in 2016, imagine how the situation could have been in 1999: it was, and still is, a male dominated and male oriented world! Opportunities, however, often show up when you least expect them and, Monica, a woman training GWP's in sunny Tuscany, phoned to tell me she had the "men" for me, and that they were located just a few miles away from my house. To make the long story short, Monica contacted [two famous drahthaar](#) (GWP's) handlers and trainers and convinced them to help me. One of them could not offer any support at the time (he did later), while the other one was brave enough to accept to work with us.



For about two months, I trained at least twice a week with C., who was already a quite successful trainer and handler in Italy and in Germany. We worked mainly on recall, but he taught me some very basic things I would have never imagined

at the time, such as how to use the whistle and how to keep the dog focused on me by changing directions. Socks improved, and I later continued to work him by myself and for himself: I knew he was not going to become a great shooting dog, I simply wanted him to enjoy life and become more sure of himself. I think I last trained him with C. on quails in 2004, I then moved to work with other setters on the hills and we never had other chances to train together, We always kept in touch though and in the years, I sent him some "clients" who, together with other dogs he worked with, gave him the opportunity to become one of the most successful HPRs trainers I know.

C. is now a well known "pro", specialized in training GWP's for German Hunting Tests (VJP/HZP/VGP) and personal rough shooting dogs, I was not surprised to meet him on the training ground dealing with a GSP who used to eat and swallow quails. I watched his pupil running, and saw she retrieving the quail correctly after the shoot, so I asked the gamekeeper if C. had already solved the problem. "

"No... The dog never eats the quail in his presence, just with the owner. It should be a matter of body language and stance, look at him.... But he needs the dog to make the mistake to correct her... He is the best trainer working on my ground".

I kept watching and nothing happened on that day, until it came my turn to run the dog. "Let her go" – yelled someone behind my back "- but when you whistle be firm, and yell at her if needed. The key to freedom is control", easier said than done! That was just the preface.



Let her go...

When C. Found out I was training Briony for grouse trials, he started to behave as if he wanted to be part of the project. We kept meeting on the training ground by chance but, each time we met, he had some good advice for me. He never tried to train Briony in my place, nor to ditch the [Shaman](#) methods, he simply intervened, firmly and pragmatically, to speed up my training and to teach me to be more sure of myself and of my training. I think he somehow trained me: he was the person who forced me to remove the check cord and the same one who encouraged me to forget quails and start testing steadiness using partridges and pheasants. He also encouraged me to trust the dog more and to run her on other grounds to see how she would react to different birds in different places. He watched all my moves and all my handling, corrected my mistakes and created new, more advanced (that was smart!), settings in which to test Briony. He minimized my concerns on rabbits and even lent me an expensive bird launcher. Well to be honest he lent that but... recommended me several times to switch it off

after each use and... not to loose it (as if it were small!). So, well, thank you C. for being one of those experienced and helpful people who made grouse trials possible for me and Briony.

Guidare in Inghilterra: verso nord

Gli italiani che programmano un viaggio in auto nel Regno Unito hanno una grande preoccupazione, quella di dover guidare sull' "altro" lato. Io avevo un piano: avrei seguito la macchina davanti a me (il che non ha sempre senso, lo ammetto) e mi sarei ricordata che il mio corpo avrebbe sempre dovuto viaggiare sul lato della strada, accanto al marciapiede. Il discorso destra-sinistra mi toccava poco, lasciate che vi racconti un segreto: non riesco a distinguere bene la destra dalla sinistra! Sono destromane ma il mio occhio dominante è il sinistro, l'ho scoperto praticando il tiro a volo. La dominanza crociata rende molto più complicata qualsiasi disciplina sportiva che preveda tiri di precisione ma, soprattutto, rende difficile differenziare la destra dalla sinistra. Alla fine, ragionandoci, capisco dove stanno l'una e l'altra nello spazio, ma non è immediato. Il problema della destra e della sinistra ricompare anche ogni volta che devo sganciare il cane indirizzandolo su un determinato lato o, peggio ancora, quando l'addestratore che mi segue mi urla, stando alle mie spalle (o peggio di fronte – devo ri-ragionare la destra e la sinistra spazialmente) in che direzione inviare il cane.



Sebbene induca spesso confusione e incomprensioni, la mia relazione complicata con i lati, è diventata un punto di forza quando mi sono ritrovata a guidare sul lato “sbagliato” (nel testo il lato britannico verrà indicato come “l’altro lato” o il “lato sbagliato” perché, come ho spiegato poco sopra, fatico a distinguere i due lati). Raggiunta [Folkestone](#), mi sono limitata a seguire l’auto che mi procedeva, sentendomi subito a mio agio. C’era molto traffico, ma un tipo di traffico che definirei educato, placido e mansueto anche quando incolonnato per il Dartford Crossing. Il Dartford Crossing è qualcosa di peculiare: all’andata, verso nord, era un tunnel; al ritorno, verso sud era un ponte. Ancor più strano è però il fatto che i titolari del Dartford Crossing pretendano del denaro per l’attraversamento, ma non diano agli automobilisti la possibilità di pagare. Mi era stato detto che avrei dovuto sborsare alcune sterline, ma nessun Dartford-Elfo è venuto a chiedermelo, né ho incontrato barriere e caselli in cui versare le mie monetine. Quindi... ho attraversato senza pagare, non perché volessi fare la furba ma

perché semplicemente non c'era alcun modo per pagare! Mi è stato detto che verranno a stanarmi in Italia, minacciando multe, vengano pure, racconterò quel che è successo: nessuno mi aveva detto che avrei potuto pagare in anticipo con la carta di credito o, al limite, pagare online entro la mezzanotte del giorno dell'attraversamento. Probabilmente, prima che la Brexit diventi veramente la Brexit, qualche europeo porterà la questione in qualche sede giudiziaria europea: come è possibile pretendere dai clienti un pagamento e non offrire loro la possibilità di pagare? Tutto ciò mi ricorda il viaggio di Alice nel Paese delle Meraviglie.

Comunque, andiamo versi nord. Quello che si incontra dopo è Londra, o meglio, un'autostrada che gira attorno a Londra. L'idea di affrontare il traffico londinese può spaventare molti stranieri, ma non coloro che sono avvezzi a guidare sulla tangenziale di Milano. Chi sopravvive abitualmente al traffico milanese nelle ore di punta è pronto a tutto. Prendiamo la A, un'autostrada che conosco bene e che collega Genova a Milano. Attorno sette del mattino, giunti in prossimità di Milano, succede di tutto: per esempio una è normale venire superati sulla destra (ricordo che in Italia è proibito superare sulla destra) da qualcuno lanciato a 160 km orari. Il milanese deve arrivare in ufficio puntuale, a Milano si va veloci, punto e basta, tutti devono correre, anche se non ne hanno motivo. Altrettanto normali sono i milanesi imbruttiti che, in prossimità della barriera autostradale di Milano, anziché rallentare accelerano! I londinesi, seppur numerosi e indaffarati, non guidano come il milanese medio: guidare attorno a Londra è stato incredibilmente semplice.

In prossimità di Stanstead, ho avvertito la necessità di reperire un benzinaio così, seguendo le scritte "stazione di servizio", sono finita in un grazioso villaggio, con un grazioso country club e nessun benzinaio in vista. Girando attorno alla rotonda per una ventina di volte, ho poi notato un centro commerciale provvisto di benzinaio. Non ho nulla

contro i centri commerciali ma, normalmente, in Italia i benzinai e gli Autogrill si trovano SULL'autostrada, non sono necessarie cacce al tesoro.



Risolto il problema benzina, ho continuato a guidare verso *"The North"*, come scritto sui cartelli, familiarizzando con i lati oscuri dell'A1. L'A1, che in certi tratti viene chiamata M1, dovrebbe essere un'autostrada ma il suo status è un po' vago: a tratti lo è a tratti non lo è, spiegano i britannici, ma la cosa resta di difficile comprensione per uno straniero. In qualche maniera sembra un'autostrada, certo non delle migliori, ma pur sempre un'autostrada. Aspettate un attimo: cosa fa quel deficiente-c@gli@ne, imbecille – è impazzito e taglia di traverso l'autostrada? Ero sinceramente scioccata: nel mio imperfettissimo paese, in cui nessuno va in galera, per una cosa simile rischi di andarci. Ma... Oddio, eccone un altro fare lo stesso pochi chilometri più in là, è un'abitudine che lascia sgomenti. Prestando attenzione, ho in seguito notato cartelli e "punti letali" specificamente pensati per consentire questi comportamenti. Non riesco ancora a credere che fare inversioni a U e attraversare le autostrade sia legale, così come fatico ad accettare la possibilità che i pedoni attraversino (Attenzione, attraversamento pedoni! Dicono certi cartelli) o che un trattore o peggio, un carretto



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ritto dai cartelli esiste, e si materializza nei peggiori punti e incalza nei momenti meno opportuni. In alcuni tratti dell'A1 ci sono lavori in corso che obbligano a procedere con lentezza ma questa strada, come tutte le strade britanniche, è gratuita. I guidatori lassù non pagano pedaggi ma, usando la loro rete viaria, si capisce il perché. Le nostre autostrade sono costose, eccessivamente costose, solo alcuni tratti della famigerata [A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria](#), dato lo squallore, sono gratuiti. Non mi resta che provarla e confrontare!

Comunque, alla fine, sono arrivata a [Woodland](#).

Accommodations, hosts and guests

To plan my trip to the UK I used two instruments: Booking.com and Google Maps. Booking.com showed me where I could stay, mostly hotels and pubs, but I wrongly believed to be a Bed & Breakfast person. Whereas in the UK everybody runs a B&B, or at least have a friend who does, these accommodations are quite unusual in Italy. I thought (wrongly – again) that B&B were sort of “friendlier” and cheaper than pubs. Hotels sounded more expensive and houses, despite being extremely attractive, looked a bit too much for a tiny single human being and her dog. Each time I read stuff like “sleeps 6”, I imagined myself surrounded by empty bedrooms and silent sitting rooms.

Thinking of being a B&B person, I started my quest for the perfect the B&Bs. I was fascinated by the fact that, usually, B&Bs accommodate one or few guests only so, given the fact I was going to travel alone, I thought my hosts would have noticed if something had happened to me. Let’s pretend my skin had turned green overnight, I was firmly convinced the B&B lady would have noticed that. Once again, I was wrong: during my stay I also experienced a “ghostly” B&B: the place had owners, but I could hardly see them, breakfast would appear magically in the morning and no human beings would ever show up.



Briony likes pubs

Before my trip, in some ways, I would have felt safer in a house with a few people than in a larger hotel. After one month spent mostly in B&Bs , I have to admit that sometimes I did not feel safe at all in a B&B, and that the perceived advantages of the B&Bs come with a full list of real disadvantages. I came to the conclusion that, if you get along with the B&B owners, you can have a great stay, but if you don't... heaven becomes hell! The "roommate" you cannot stand – or viceversa – has the power, it is his or her house and some territorial aggression dynamics (the same ones we see in dogs) can take place. These dynamics usually develop slowly, and manifest themselves after you have invaded their territory for a reasonable amount of time: two or three days in a B&B are usually safe, maybe four if you are brave, if you stay more It is at your own risk. You perfectly know that you are a paying guest, and your host does as well, but some instincts are just very primitive. Another problem with the B&Bs can be the lack of privacy: some B&Bs owners are professional stalkers and arrange their house and furniture in order to support their hobby.

People choosing to live in pubs are for sure smarter than me.

I sort of avoided booking in pubs because I thought it would have been noisy. Pubs might be noisy indeed but, I was told, later, that they must close at 11 PM so, well I can cope with that. To live in a pub, however, you have to be one of those joyful beings enjoying a good meal and a good drink. If you keep counting calories and you do not drink alcohol, you are basically stealing a pub's room to someone who deserve it much more than you! My very limited experience as a pub inhabitant and eater, however, taught me that pub owners are usually laidback, open and willing to do their best to satisfy their customers. Pubs, moreover are extremely dog friendly and food is good, not necessarily light, but good. After all, when you had spent a whole day in the rain, all you want is something warm on your table. Pub owners tend to be professional, respect the client's privacy and be very pragmatic: once, a lady told me that no, they did not have any single rooms, just double rooms, too expensive for one people but, according to her I would have easily found someone with whom to share the room, and yes she was serious!

Riders, walkers
and dogs are
welcome, but

Please remove muddy
footwear before
entering the bar;

Dogs must be kept
on a lead at all
times

Pubs are friendly... and dog friendly

The third form of accommodation I am going to discuss are houses, more commonly known as cottages. I tend to classify myself as an awful housewife who could possibly set someone's else house on fire by mistake but, after witnessing the British housekeeping standards, I came to the conclusions that I am "average", and that Italian's expectations about housekeeping are simply too high. After one month without a kitchen, I wanted a kitchen more than anything else. I know I always claim I do not cook and that I can't cook but In reality, on the rare instances I decide to cook, I cook well, especially If I miss healthy food. I wanted a kitchen simply to assembly a decent salad or, even better fruit salad, or just to relax. I love studying and writing in the kitchen, kitchens are cozy and you have everything at hand. I do not snore, do not smoke and do not drink (which means I can drive drunk people around!) and I am quiet and clean albeit not perfectly tidy (I forget and lose things regularly) so maybe in the future someone will brave enough to share a house and a kitchen with me.

According to my standards, three, maybe four (if include hotels) types of accommodations exists but... field trailers are tough people, I underestimated their strength and adaptability. I discovered that some people were living in caravans, sometimes they were even sharing those tiny spaces with a bunch of dogs. I, indeed, had a chance to go and have a venison & French cheese based dinner in a caravan and it was good, but I did not change my mind. I like the idea you can travel with your own "house", but, I honestly, could not survive without a real bathroom with its real shower (or bathtub). Caravan people say the caravans have showers or that the caravan parks provide these services, yet I remain skeptical.

ROSELEA
HOUSE



Rosalea House could easily become Rossella's House

Given my doubts and concerns about caravans, you should be now easily imagine how astonished I was when, I discovered that some field trailers, despite the cold nights, the wind and the rain, were living in tents and they were doing incredibly well! Hats off to them! Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

On steadiness (... and obedience!)

As soon as Briony became steady to flush I, full of pride, posted some videos on Facebook. The road that brought us to steadiness was a long one, I was extremely happy to have reached what, months early, seemed to be unattainable. Briony was originally purchased to be my personal shooting dog and indeed she became a good one. She knew how to locate birds, point, be steady on point and retrieve the killed ones but, like all the Italian shooters, I did not even think to make her steady to wing and shot. I simply did not care and she spent years "chasing" after the bird was produced, until I realized she was good enough to run in field trials.

The videos uploaded slowly but, minutes after they became visible to the public, I began receiving several private messages. Those messages, in the weeks and months ahead, became questions asked face to face. People wanted to know if I used an e-collar, or if I shoot her in the butt, a very popular method suggested by many (in)famous trainers. My answer was that steadiness derived from obedience, an answer puzzled most of the listeners. They could not believe that the

tools I used were a lead, a check cord and a whistle, and the few humans who did believe me asked me to make miracles: a woman sort of wanted me to make is HPR steady overnight using the internet!



I do not have superpowers, but maybe my mentor does, as a matter of fact he is widely known as the “Shaman”, or as “White Feather”. White Feather (from here on WF) has been knowing me for a very long time: I was one of his students at the three months class (!!!) to become a certificate stalker (deer, roe buck, fallow deer, boar...) and he taught me during the course I attended to become a certified biometric data collector (we measure and establish the age of stalked and hunted game). He saw me and interacted with me several times during trials, gatherings, conferences and so... yet, before accepting to “train” me, he wanted to meet me again and look at me under a different light. Our first formal meeting happened over a cup of espresso, we were seated at table by the street, Briony was on lead and a cat passed by: I prevented any possible reactions and he appreciated that, a

training session was scheduled for the following day.

I have to admit I was a little worried, the man was Elena Villa's (that woman won all she could win with GSPs, in Italy and abroad) mentor, he was a well known retired gamekeeper and he had owned, trained, judged and handled hundreds of dogs and shoot over them, in Italy, Germany, Austria and several Eastern European countries. But, most of all, he, himself, probably had the most amazing mentor Italy gave birth to. Born at the end of 1800, Giacomo Griziotti (in my city there are a street and a college dorm in his name) is still deemed to be one of the best judges, handlers, trainers and writers involved with pointing breeds. His first and only book, despite being expensive and hard to find, is still regarded as the Bible, no wonder I was both excited and worried! WF wanted to test me and Briony, if we had passed the test he would have trained us for free, but we had to be perceived to be a good cause.



After another espresso (we both like coffee), we moved to the

training ground and I had my first shocking lesson on the meaning of “obedience”. I opened the car and Briony’s cage to let her out. WF quickly made us clear that she could not leave the cage, nor the car without his permission. During the following months, his permission became “my permission”; she had to learn to sit and stay if I had to cross a ditch and then come later, if and when called. While all my friends were enjoying their shooting season, me and Briony were practicing sit/stay/come/drop to whistle daily, whatever the weather and the place. We trained in the countryside, in the city, in the shops, with or without stimuli. It was hard and even depressing: I spent months studying fish inspection for my veterinary degree and practicing sit/stay/drop!



But then it came the day. Not only Briony was dropping to whistle, she was also steady to game and she had become an obedient and reliable dog (and I passed my fish inspection exam as well). Trials came next and all the hard and boring work brought to fruition, but this is another story. At the

moment I am still incredulous and proud to be part to such a long standing gundog training tradition.

On driving in the UK, to the North

When people plan to drive in the UK they are usually very worried because they will have to drive on the “other” side. My plan was to follow the car ahead of me, and to remember that my body had to remain close to the sidewalks. Left and right did not concern me that much, for the very simple reason that, I will tell you a secret, I am not good at differentiating them. I have a right hand dominance and a left eye dominance, a thing that makes any kind of shooting a bit more complicated and that makes hard to differentiate the left from the right. In the end, I can always solve the puzzle, but I have to think first. The left & right thing resurfaces each time I have to cast the dog or, even worse, when one of my trainers, yells out loud the direction I should send the dog.

Confusing as it is, my complicated relationship with the sides becomes an advantage when I had to start driving on the “wrong side” (the British side will be referred as the “other side” or as “the wrong side” throughout the text, as I cannot say if you drive on the left on the right, for the reasons I explained above).

When I arrived in [Folkestone](#) I simply followed the flow and immediately felt at ease. There was much traffic but it was a polite traffic even when we were stuck in queue for the Dartford Crossing. The Dartford Crossing is peculiar thing: I went through a tunnel on my way to Northern England and on a

bridge when driving Southwards but, most of all, the Dartford people want you to pay for the crossing but do not give you any chances to pay. I knew I was supposed to give them a few pounds, but no Dartford elves showed up to collect my money, nor the Dartforders placed any barriers to stop me and force me to give them my coins. So? Well, I did not pay, I think they will try to track me and I will simply answer that there was no way I could pay them, as none told me I had to do it in advance (or by the subsequent midnight) with a credit card. I think, that soon or later, before Brexit will be Brexit, some continental driver will rightly bring up the issue at the UE Law Court: how can you ask people to pay and, at the same time, don't allow them to pay? This reminds me of Alice's travels In the wonderlands.

But anyway, let's move northwards, what you meet next is London or, rather, a motorway that goes around London. This step would probably scare the average foreigners but not anyone used to drive on the Milan bypass. If you survive driving around Milan in the rush hour of the morning, you can survive anything. Let's take the A7, for example, the motorways that goes from Genova to Milan: at 7 in the morning is absolutely common to be passed by someone on your right (which for us is the wrong side to pass a car) speeding at 160 kms/hour. The Milanese needs to reach the office on time and you are not allowed to be slow in Milan, no matter what, everybody must run. Equally normal are the Milanesi imbruttiti (the ugly Milanese) who, facing the motorway's last barrier towards Milan, speed up against it instead of the decelerating. The Londoners might be many and might be busy, but none of them drives like the average Milanese driver so passing London was incredibly easy.

When I reached Stanstead I realized I needed a service station and, following the signs, I ended up in a small village, with a nice country club right in front of my car, and no service station in sight. I then went around a roundabout for about

twenty times and I finally realized that the service station was a shopping centre close to the village. I have nothing against shopping centres, I was simply expecting something different: in Italy the Autogrill (which are usually nice service stations) are ON the motorways, you do not have to go hunting for them!



Past the service station, I continued driving to "the North", as written on the signs, and began to get to know the [A1](#) darkest sides. I thought the A1 (called also M1) was a motorway but the Brits say it is not. To me it looks, indeed, like a motorway, maybe not an excellent motorway, but still a motorway hence I was driving as it was. Wait a minute, how comes that "dumb" individual crosses the motorway with his car? Is he crazy or what? I was sincerely shocked: in Italy you would be jailed if you dared to do that on a motorway but...wow, someone else is doing the same, again????!!!! Paying more attention, I noticed signs and "points" (aka deadly gap

his specifically all



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ing drivers to do so. I am still amazed by the fact that this is LEGAL! As it is legal that a pedestrian crosses the A1, or that a tractor or a horse appear on it, signs warn drivers about "Farm Traffic", a traffic which constantly materializes in the worst moments and locations. Some parts of the A1 are undergoing a restyling and you can also be forced to drive for miles at a very slow speed due to some "works in progress". The A1, as all the other British motorways, is free: drivers do not pay a pound to use them and I sort of understand why. Curiously, even though the Italian motorways are expensive, the worst trait of the [A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria](#) in Southern Italy (known as the motorway none wants to be on!) is free: I really have to try it and then compare it to the British A1!

Nevertheless, I arrived in [Woodland](#).

The Universe Speaks

I sometimes get lost in my own dreamy world, a world in which I cannot open gates and sometimes I cannot even see them (Linda!). Being a little weird, as anyone who is much into animals, homeopathy and acupuncture probably is, I sometimes pick up messages from the Universe. Well, it's not that it sends me a text or anything like that, when the Universe "talks" it simply makes things happen. I think I have been having a long conversation with the Universe which lasted more than a year, and it still thinks it is right. The hot topic are my returns to Italy from the UK: I think it does not want me to go back and makes all sort of things happen.

July 2015

Newcastle Airport: Rossella gets sent to the WRONG gate and risks missing the flight to Paris...

Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport: Rossella lands and goes to security checks to board on an Alitalia's Flight to Milan. The security stops Rossella accusing her to be carrying explosives. Rossella's bags are emptied and she is fully scanned electronically, nothing is found. The airport security apologizes but they have caused a serious delay. When Rossella reaches her flight, gates are about to close, the Italians let her in but she gets a wonderful seat by the toilet at the end of the plane. Also, there is no room for her hand baggage anywhere as all the other Italians on board are travelling with style (many suitcases).



August 2016

Rossella, from now on known as “me”, is travelling by car so she expects everything to run more smoothly.

Lauder (Scottish Borders), August 11, next destination Harrogate (North Yorkshire) – The suitcase’s handle breaks down, it had lasted for years and underwent multiple moves. I fix it thanks to my braiding skills and I begin moving southwards

Harrogate (North Yorkshire), August 12, next destination Lower Halstow (Kent) – This journey was supposed to last about 4 hours, it took almost 8 and not because I was stopping to pee against every tree. More simply I got stuck in traffic and I moved southwards very slowly. In the meantime, there were almost no cars heading to “The North”... How come that on the Glorious 12 everyone goes south? I still can’t understand

Lower Halstow (Kent), August 13, next destination Folkstone (Kent) – Re-organizing my things I realized that my Italian sim (phone) card has disappeared. I placed it a safe place, I clearly remembered where, I checked but... it was gone. I have

no Idea of where it is now, I wish it could be somewhere nice on the moors. So... well, I had quite a panic attack realizing I no longer had an Italian phone number I could use while driving back home... and once at home!

Lower Halstow (Kent) August 14, next destination Folkestone (Kent) – It is eight something AM and my local British friends noticed something weird on my car. The windscreen gasket is now sitting on the car's roof. I have no idea of how it moved there but we managed to fix it: the windscreen is fine, at least it seems so.

Folkestone (Kent), August 14, next destination Schwarzenberg (Switzerland) – 10 AM – My Eurotunnel train... is being Re-programmed... and it is late...

Somewhere in Nord Pas de Calais (France), August 14 – 1 PM – I am happily driving on an empty motorway when I hear something weird, I then see something weird. A black snake is bumping on my windscreen and there is no place I can stop the car, of course. I move to the right line (the one for slow vehicles on the Continent) until I find a "aire" (parking area): the windscreen gasket is out of place again, I take it away, end of the story...

Somewhere Alsace (France), August 14 – 5 PM – I am happy, I had a stop in Champagne to feed the car and got a chance to enter the service station with Briony. It was 29°C outside so I asked:

"Est ce-que le chien peut entrer?" (Can the dog come in?)

"Est il petit?" (Is it a small dog?)

"Moyenne" (Medium)...

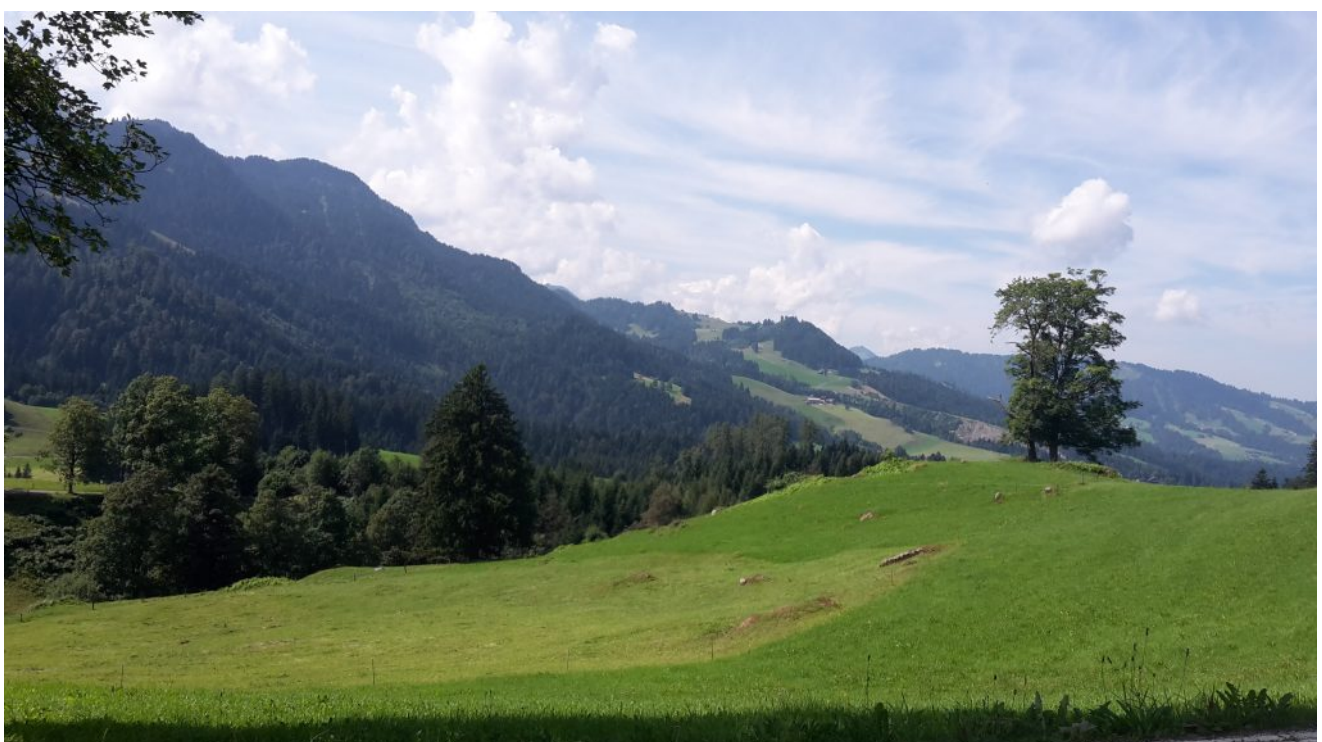
"Umm... ok!"...

So, I was happy to be back in dog friendly France when.... Wow, another noise, from the right side of the car (passenger seat

for us). Ohhh WOW the mirror! That's quite a long story. In July I was driving along a NARROW Yorkshire road and a truck hit my mirror. The driver was named Adam, he was young and cute indeed, but still he had broken my mirror and insisted I was in the middle of the road. It was early in the morning so everything could be, but I was driving at snail speed when his truck hit my mirror at full speed. So... Not sure to be the guilty one, but that could have been difficult to determine. The mirror needed a replacement, but I was moving from place to place it was impossible to order one, a mechanic fixed it and her (yes a she, I got a blonde female mechanic!) fix worked wonderfully until I tried to go back to Italy.

Deeming a bumpy mirror to be dangerous (if it had decided to "go" it could have killed some other drivers), I desperately started looking for a place to stop. When I finally found a service station, after miles at slow speed, there were no mechanics on duty so, classing myself as "smart" I wrapped it into a black rubbish bag and which was later blocked by the car's window. As soon as I started moving, some hair inflated the bag creating a cushion around the mirror.

Problem solved but Universe still setting roadblocks.



Schwarzenberg (Swiss Alps)

Schwarzenberg (Switzerland), August 14, next destination home (Italy) 9 PM– As soon as I stop the car, after a 12 hours drive and after having dealt with 4 languages in the last couple of hours, a wonderful Swiss “lady” runs towards me yelling that it was her private parking. She was about to call the police... Not sure they would have sent me back to Britain though. A couple of Swiss-Vikings-Like beings, though, came and rescued the tiny Italian.... Thank, thanks M. & F., that was an amazing rescue!

Switzerland & Italy, August 15– The Universe seems about to give up, the Milan bypass is empty (I love national holidays!), so the motorways, but I still can't find my Italian sim card. My chronic shoulder blade pain (never felt it in the UK), resurfaces at the last roundabout before home.

Italy, August 16 – After 2 hours spent visiting four shops, it seems I might have my Italian phone number back... and, sadly, I will soon have to say goodbye to my British one, if the Universe allows...



Waiting for the Italian phone number....