



Doggie bags

W1 The dog has long enjoyed an exalted position as man's best friend. But the tide of feminism seems to have washed away even this kennel of old-fashioned maleness. In increasing numbers, young independent women are taking up with young thoroughly dependent dogs.

And why are they doing this? Some have suggested that it is just another instance of feminine contrariness – a deliberate challenge to the adage that owners come to resemble their pets.

Centuries might pass before Rebecca Hossack (below), the towering beauty and gallery owner, could assume the distinctive physiognomy of either of her squat, flat-featured bulldogs (Moon and Stella). And the elegant stylist Lucy Potts (above), still looks as unlike her bull terrier, Bandage, as is humanly possible.

Others contend that the roots of the fashion can be traced

back to the scarcity of presentable men. Dogs, being loyal, stupid, foul-smelling and domestically inept, are often thought of as surrogate males. But even this, it appears, is too picayune a construction. 'I see men as surrogate dogs rather than the other way around,' explains Lucy Potts.

Ratty, the shambling poodle-alsatian cross belonging to artist Sue MacCartney-Snape, is a relentless matchmaker, forever introducing his mistress to young men in Holland Park.

Nor, it appears, are the social skills of a canine companion confined to the park. Sarah Long, who presides over the Long & Ryle Gallery with a Cavalier King Charles spaniel called Chloe, says: 'Chloe tends to attack poor art students carrying portfolios, but she sucks up to anyone in a suit.'

Not all dogs are so nice in their manners. Bandage has acquired such a reputation for riotous jinks that his mistress, when visiting friends, always takes a T-shirt emblazoned with the legend: 'We apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused by our dog's behaviour.'

Nevertheless all owners make high claims for their pedigree chums, saying that they *do* provide affection, loyalty, companionship, amusement, protection and even poetry.

With mistresses so sensitive to their charms and needs, a dog's life may never have been so sweet. *Matthew Sturgis*

