

***It's A Stray Dog's Life*, by Maximillian Sam. London: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2022, pp.60.
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Maximillian Sam's book for children, *It's A Stray Dog's Life* (2022, Austin Macauley Publishers), tells the story of the stray dogs in a seaside resort in western part of Turkey. We aren't told much about the setting except for details like the seaside, the bars in the seaside or the dogs' swimming experiences. The time is not specified but from the details like the cars, TV, accessibility of vet facilities, we infer that it is late 20th or early 21st century. There are three interlocked episodes which are narrated by three intradiegetic dog narrators. The episodes are short and convey descriptive accounts of these dogs' lives with an Englishman called Ollie who provides food, shelter and cuddle for these dogs. The narration is not anthropocentric but it cannot help being anthropomorphic as the dogs perform the human norms and morality like respect for others, a willingness to share their food, being friendly to the neighbours, etc. Their feelings are given in human terms, too. They feel angry when Ollie goes away for a while, for example. On this point Princess says: "Whilst tickling my tummy he explained he'd been to see his brother in a faraway country and wasn't allowed to take me with him. When I understood I stopped being angry but did make sure I got extra treats for a few days" (Sam, 2022, p.13).

As stated above, the narration is not human centred but due to its anthropomorphism, it is not animal centred either. Focalization can be taken as dog-human centred as the events are told by a consciousness which integrates dog and human sensibilities. In this sense the narrative voice can be taken as a posthuman consciousness. These voices in the episodes seem to be beyond the traditional boundaries of a dog or a human being but they embody elements from both and the result is an amalgamation of both consciousnesses.

Ollie, the human character who welcomes these dogs into his house on an egalitarian principle, seems to acknowledge the agency and the site of existence of these dogs. He gives them their basic needs and love but he doesn't impose himself on these dogs. He sets them free if they need, or if they violate his domestic rules he manages to look at the issue from their perspective. The dogs are aware that there are good and bad humans just like there are good and bad dogs: "I've lived around

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here for a long time so I've seen lots of humans come and go. Most are nice, but some are horrible. A bit like dogs really. I suppose not everyone can be nice. In all that time I've seen lots of houses built but I've had to wait for Ollie to be given one of my own. Ollie lives there too although he knows it's my house really. He's very nice to share a house with and he's made sure I have my bed outside in the shade and a rug inside for me to lie on rather than the slippy cold tiles on the floor" (Sam, 2022, p.11). In the small universe of the dogs, the human is not the measure of everything. In fact, Princess the first dog narrator goes as far as to state about the relation between herself and Ollie as follows: "I think he thinks I'm his dog but he doesn't realise he's actually my human" (Sam, 2022, p.11).

Ollie, the English man, has his human friends as he is part of a social network but spends a considerable amount of his time with these dogs. The dogs are more than happy to receive his cuddles and love, but they don't take him as an authority figure. He is far from a master with these dogs and all of them contribute to the dynamics of this intersubjectivity in their own way.

In the first episode, the dog narrator is called Princess, who regards herself as the royalty in the street. The implied reader is expected to give the centerpiece to Princess in the world she depicts. She enjoys a narcissistic kind of omnipotence in the way she relates to others. She is the first dog Ollie accommodates in his house, later on there are others including the dog narrators of the following episodes, Buster and Snowy. Princess can speak both Turkish and English, knows the ways in which Ollie treats the others and regulates his house. Princess has been with Ollie since the beginning of the narration till the end. However, Bunker leaves for another city as he is adopted by a family who spend their summer in the resort.

Although there is no hierarchy between humans and animals, or among animals in the traditional sense, there is still a sense of continuity in the relationship between Princess and Ollie. She feels empowered in this relationship and she introduces herself as follows: "I'm Turkish but, and only my best human friend knows this, I also speak English. ... Every morning after my breakfast of eggs and milk, I go for a walk to see my other human friends that all seem to love me" (Sam, 2022, p.10). In fact, as she translates not only expressions but also feelings between Ollie and the other dogs, Princess seems to be the stabilizer in all these interactions. Hers is not only a linguistic translation but also a cognitive one as it is her duty to tell Ollie's ways of being to the other dogs who have not met such a human before. She looks at herself through their gaze: "They should love me too. I didn't choose my name but Princess works as I'm the royalty in this little street. Everyone knows this is my space and only my friends can come into my street. I do have lots of friends" (Sam, 2022, p.10). She depicts her feelings in the way the humans do: "I love to swim. It keeps me cool and it's such a fun being pushed around by the waves. The bit I don't like is getting covered in wet sand when I get out. It's itchy and takes ages to get off. In the winter, when the beach is empty, I go swimming as much as possible. It's why

I look like a puppy still rather than being 10 years old. A girl has to look after herself after all” (Sam, 2022, pp.10-11).

She is aware of her privileges in the street: “I’ve always been lucky because humans like me and that means I get a lot of food and water. The one thing I never had or knew about, until I met my best human friend, was cuddles. I love cuddles and having my tummy tickled. ... He makes me laugh and my back starts running because I can’t control it. He’d do anything for me, including giving me my nice warm soft bed to sleep in. We’ve had some amazing adventures and played so many games.... I don’t mind him giving my other friends cuddles and I try not to get jealous, but sometimes I can’t help it and I have to run over to him and get cuddles too” (Sam, 2022, p.11).

We are given insight into their psychology when the narrators tell us in a descriptive frame about their past, how they met Ollie and the other dogs. There is no conflict, suspense or tension in their narration(s) but the necessary textual clues for possible conflicts or tension are embedded in their accounts. Therefore, this book inspires in us the feeling that there will be a sequel to this one in near future. It creates curiosity in us about the future adventures of these dogs and makes us want to learn more about them.