

LINGUOSTYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN W. SAROYAN'S *THE HUMAN COMEDY*

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Abstract: *This article offers an integrated linguostylistic and narrative analysis of William Saroyan's *The Human Comedy* (1943), exploring how the author's language choices shape meaning and evoke emotional resonance. The study argues that the apparent simplicity of Saroyan's prose conceals a subtle artistry: beneath the plain surface of his writing lies a carefully structured narrative voice that fuses language with emotion and deepens the reader's engagement. Adopting a qualitative linguostylistic approach, the research examines selected passages from the novel on three narrative levels: lexical, syntactic, and discourse, to reveal how stylistic patterns contribute to the text's overall aesthetic and thematic unity. The findings demonstrate that the linguistic and stylistic coherence of *The Human Comedy* reinforces Saroyan's enduring humanistic vision that "Life is good because it is life," highlighting the profound emotional and philosophical depth behind his seemingly simple style.*

Keywords: *W. Saroyan, *The Human Comedy*, linguostylistic analysis, narrative levels, narrative voice*

Introduction

William Saroyan's *The Human Comedy* (1943) is a lyrical testament to ordinary human goodness amid the hardships of war. The novel's power lies not only in its theme but also in its unique narrative voice, which blends simplicity, sincerity, humanity and emotional warmth. This study explores how Saroyan's linguistic and stylistic choices shape the mentioned qualities and the novel's narrative voice and moral tone at large.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the linguostylistic mechanisms, i.e., the interplay between language and style that organize and enrich the novel's narrative

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storytelling. Through examining lexical, syntactic, and discourse-level features, the paper aims to reveal how Saroyan's style constructs his humanistic vision.

The analysis is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Saroyan's linguistic features support the narrative structure of *The Human Comedy*?
2. What stylistic patterns define his narrative voice and emotional tone?
3. How do language and structure together express the author's worldview?

The study draws on insights from linguistic stylistics (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2014) and narrative theory (Genette, 1980; Chatman, 1981) to interpret how linguistic form, stylistic choices and narrative functions interact.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Scholars have long recognized William Saroyan's prose for its warmth, humanity, and emotional clarity. D. Kouymjian (2003, p. 47) emphasizes Saroyan's "childlike clarity" and moral optimism as central to his literary identity, depicting his works within a broader Armenian-American ethos of endurance and hope. Other critics have noted Saroyan's deliberate simplicity of language as a stylistic manifestation of his deeply humanistic worldview and his aesthetic choice that privileges sincerity and accessibility over ornate literary experimentation (Kouymjian, 2003, p. 52). Yet, despite such recognition, relatively few studies have explored *The Human Comedy* (1943) through a linguostylistic perspective, particularly regarding how Saroyan's linguistic choices generate emotional and moral meaning within the text's narrative fabric.

From a theoretical standpoint, linguostylistics occupies the intersection of linguistics and literary criticism, examining how the formal properties of language (lexis/vocabulary, syntax, and discourse) contribute to literary effect. G. Leech and M. Short (2007, p. 11) define stylistic study as involving both *description* (i.e., how a text functions linguistically), and *interpretation* (i.e., what those linguistic patterns imply in a given literary context). J. Sympon (2014, p. 63) further emphasizes the interrelatedness of linguostylistic choices with the interpretive subtlety of literary analysis, offering a balanced approach to textual meaning. To complement this, narratology provides a structural and conceptual framework for analyzing narrative form and perspective. G. Genette's (1980, pp. 186–189) model of focalization and temporal sequencing, alongside S. Chatman's (1981, p. 33) insights on story and discourse, allows for a precise investigation of how narrative voice and structure interact with stylistics to create meaning. Similarly, M. Bal's (1997) conception of focalization and narrative levels, S. Rimmon-Kenan's (1983)

structural approach to narrative coherence, and D. Herman's (2002) cognitive narratology all emphasize the interrelation between narrative form, perspective, and reader's interpretation. Integrating these linguostylistic and narratological methods enables this study to explore how Saroyan's apparent simplicity conceals intricate patterns of narrative coherence, emotional rhythm, and thematic resonance.

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative linguostylistic approach focused on close textual analysis of selected passages from *The Human Comedy* (1943). The passages are chosen not for quantitative representativeness but for their thematic and structural significance. These are passages where language, form, and narrative perspective converge most vividly. The analysis operates on three interrelated levels: (1) lexical level, which examines vocabulary, figures of speech, and emotive diction to uncover W. Saroyan's humanistic tone; (2) syntactic level, which observes sentence coordination and simplicity as stylistic choices that support accessibility and sincerity; and (3) discursive level, which analyzes the author's narrative voice and cohesion devices to understand how the text constructs its moral and emotional universe.

The analytical procedure follows Leech and Short's (2007, pp. 60–75) stylistic framework, emphasizing linguistic description as a foundation for interpretive insight. Halliday's (1978, pp. 122–128) systemic-functional model of discourse further supports the investigation by linking grammatical choices with social and semantic functions. In this way, the study situates W. Saroyan's stylistic techniques within a broader linguistic and narratological framework, revealing how his prose style operates not merely as ornamentation but as an essential vehicle for his ethical and philosophical vision.

In light of the mentioned theoretical and methodological foundations, the following chapter is an attempt to apply linguostylistic and narratological tools outlined above, to *The Human Comedy*. By examining selected passages, the analysis seeks to uncover how Saroyan's linguistic simplicity and narrative structure intertwine to evoke emotion, shape character experience, and express his faith in humanity.

Linguostylistics and Narrative Voice in *The Human Comedy*

Every story carries its own voice. In *The Human Comedy*, William Saroyan speaks in a way that feels sincere and deeply human. At first glance, his language may seem unadorned, but this very simplicity gives the novel its emotional strength. Through everyday scenes and ordinary lives, Saroyan gently opens space for reflections on love, loss, courage, and hope.

To truly understand the depth of the novel, we need to look closely at how Saroyan uses language - how his choice of words, the flow of his sentences, and the overall movement of the narrative work together to create meaning. In this chapter, we therefore explore selected passages from *The Human Comedy* from a linguostylistic perspective, paying attention to how style shapes emotion.

By examining the text at the lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels, we can see how these elements blend into a single, harmonious voice. What appears effortless is in fact carefully balanced, and through this quiet artistry Saroyan expresses his enduring belief in the dignity and value of human life.

*Then Ulysses looked around. There it was, all around him, **funny and lonely** – the world of his life. The **strange, weed-infested, junky, wonderful, senseless yet beautiful** world. (p. 4)*

In the above two-sentence, supra-phrasal unity of Saroyan's diction fuses different adjectives (*funny, lonely, strange, junky, senseless, beautiful*, etc.) to mirror the paradoxical essence of human existence. The lexical field converges the degraded (*weed-infested, junky*) with the charming (*wonderful, beautiful*). The repetition of the word *world* reinforces the sense of belonging: even the imperfect world is ours.

Both sentences are short and paratactic, i.e., linked without subordination, thus producing a childlike rhythm that reflects Ulysses's youthful consciousness. The repetition of modifiers and the dash build a rhythmic accumulation, giving emotional, affective rather than logical argument. The simplicity enhances the immediacy of perception.

Narratively, the passage introduces the novel's central perspective which shows a child's pure, accepting gaze upon life. The omniscient voice gently merges with Ulysses's internal focalization, blending narrator and character empathy. The stylistic coherence between diction and rhythm conveys W. Saroyan's humanism: even imperfection belongs within beauty.

*Though he was moving along swiftly, Homer was not missing any of the charm of the region. 'Look at that!' he kept saying to himself of **earth and tree, sun and grass and cloud**. 'Look at that, will you?' He began to make decorations with the movements of his bike and, to accompany these ornaments of movement, he burst out with a shouting of music – **simple, lyrical and ridiculous**. (p. 7)*

The lexis is sensory (*earth, tree, sun, grass, cloud*), forming a natural semantic field that reflects harmony between human and environment. The adjectives (*simple, lyrical, ridiculous*) present W. Saroyan's tone: his style and lyricism coexist to express spontaneous vitality.

Coordinated clauses and parallel structures (*earth and tree, sun and grass and cloud*) create musical rhythm and balance, echoing Homer's mood through the epithet *shouting of music*. The sentence structure itself imitates motion, motion which is fluid, continuous, thus reflecting Homer's cycling and emotional energy.

The narration oscillates between external description and interior monologue, allowing readers to experience the world through Homer's eyes and imaginative perception. The scene's linguistic playfulness mirrors Saroyan's philosophy that joy and art are born from ordinary human existence. The discourse mode thus turns everyday action into a symbol of creative life.

*Now suddenly she began to **sob, holding** herself in as if **weeping** were a **disgrace**. Homer wanted to get up and run but he knew he would **stay**... 'What can I do? **What the hell** can I do? I'm only the messenger.'* (pp. 26-27)

The scene of change is expressed through emotionally charged verbs (*sob, holding, weeping, stay*) and colloquial diction (*what the hell*) which emphasize sincerity and helpless compassion. The contrast between polite restraint (*holding herself in*) and emotional stress (*sob, disgrace*) highlights human vulnerability. The word *messenger* carries symbolic meaning, rather – burden: Homer as messenger of bad news and bearer of human suffering.

Long sentences, punctuated by abrupt self-questioning, reproduce the rhythm of inner struggle, both the woman and Homer's. The alternation between narration and inner speech blurs the line between thought and narration, enhancing realism and empathy. The repeated usage of *What can I do?* mirrors despair, somehow stifled despair.

The whole passage epitomizes Saroyan's moral humanism: the inability to *correct what could not be corrected* has become an acceptance of powerlessness, a recognition of helplessness. The narrative voice "sounds" compassionate, thoughtful, not judgmental, and portrays the moral and emotional growth of the young man. The discourse pattern fuses narrative realism with ethical reflection.

*In a democratic state every man is the **equal** of every other man up to the point of exertion. Whether one of my children is **rich** or **poor**, **Catholic** or **Protestant** or **Jew**, **white** or **black** or **yellow** if he has a heart – if he **loves truth** and **honor** – if he **respects** his inferiors and loves his superiors.* (p. 71)

Lexically, the passage is extremely abstract and moral. It centers on concepts such as *equal, truth, honor, respect, love*. The terms referring to social (*equal*), material (*rich, poor*), racial and religious (*Catholic, Protestant, Jew, white, black, yellow*) categories, position morality as the essence of human universal culture and identity. Saroyan avoids political speech and vocabulary, he invokes timeless ethical and emotional values instead. This inclusion of *white or black or yellow* and *Catholic or Protestant or Jew* foregrounds universality through repetition, emphasizing that there are no boundaries between race and faith. In addition, the repeated conditional *if* establishes virtue as unique evidence of equality. The underlying truth is that worthy are not the qualities that are inherited or legislated but earned through inner goodness characteristics. The lexical field thus reflects an idealistic humanism grounded in compassion and conscience, and defines democracy not as a political system but as a way of being.

Syntactically, the passage relies on coordination and rhythmic repetition. The extended sequence of conditional clauses (*if he has a heart – if he loves truth and honor – if he respects his inferiors and loves his superiors*) creates a cumulative structure that is typical of oratory. The syntax mirrors religious or moral values through repetition that serves to both persuade and inspire. Each clause produces a syntactic equality that echoes the democratic ideal. The absence of subordination ensures that no single moral quality dominates; instead, all virtues coexist on the same syntactic plane. The balance between clauses points out the principle of equality that is defended by the narrator. The coordination also contributes to rhythm and emphasis, making the prose both memorable and performative.

On the discourse level, the passage is a moral claim or declaration. The speaker's voice expands beyond personal, religious or racial reflection into a collective appeal, into a move from one's own children to each and every other man. This transition discloses the focus from individualism and family to all human beings, to humanity at large, suggesting that moral responsibility does not know private boundaries. The passage fuses narrative and philosophy: the fictional context gives way to a discourse of values and ideals. By blending emotional intimacy with public responsibility, Saroyan transforms storytelling into moral discourse. This way, his language becomes an instrument of democratic empathy, stating that equality is not only legal but also spiritual. The discourse thus reflects an insistence on moral worth which is rather measured by compassion, respect and love, than by social distinction or material success.

*The world is an incomprehensibly **beautiful** place, and every day it is made **more beautiful** by the fact that so many people in it go about their lives **quietly doing good** for others. (p. 189)*

The passage reveals Saroyan's belief in everyday human goodness. The diction is made expressive through the adjectives *beautiful*, *more beautiful*, *quietly*, *good* which evoke moral radiance and highness. Unlike traditional depictions of wartime heroism, Saroyan shifts attention to the ordinary acts that sustain human dignity and thoughtfulness. His lexis depicts daily kindness as the noblest of acts.

The one sentence can be uttered and read in a single breath. However, its rhythm unfolds gradually, creating a sense of wonder. The repeated use of *beautiful* in different degrees opens an optimistic view of the world, its renewal after the end of war. There is no climax, just his vision of goodness as something expected and constant.

The discourse of the sentence expresses Saroyan's faith in universal, collective virtue. Saroyan's philosophy unfolds in his belief both in moral goodness within the individual self and in collective humanity through simple human action. The author's language acts as a means of affirming that even in wartime, human decency endures.

*I am **proud** that I am **servicing** my **country** – which to me is Ithaca, our **home**, and all of **the Macauleys**. I do not recognize any **enemy** which is **human**. My **quarrel** is not with him, but with that in him which I seek to destroy in **myself** first. (p. 252)*

The passage expresses one of Saroyan's most spiritual approaches: words like *country*, *home*, *the Macauleys*, *human*, *myself* define his patriotism not as blind loyalty to a nation but as love for one's country, home, roots and humanity. The choice of words such as *proud* and *servicing* evoke responsibility, duty and devotion, yet without war and enmity, without external victory towards anybody.

It is this moral clarity that is further expressed syntactically. The repetition of *I* tends to affirm the narrator's truth to himself. The antithesis *not with him... but with that in him* does not tend to divide people into "us" vs "them" but just unify human beings that will strive to overcome the bad within themselves.

Broadly, Saroyan's discourse consistently elevates individual perception and experience into reflections on universal human values. Across the examples - from Homer's lyrical engagement with the natural world, to his moral confrontation as a messenger, to the democratic and ethical assertions of civic equality, and finally to the recognition of quiet daily goodness - Saroyan transforms ordinary moments and human responses into symbols of moral and creative life. His language, often

marked by parataxis, repetition, and fragmentary syntax, bridges the personal and the collective, capturing both immediacy and ethical reflection. The discourse alternates between lyrical celebration, ethical introspection revealing Saroyan's enduring faith in human compassion, moral responsibility, and the potential for individuals to effect positive change. In this way, the novel consistently merges personal insight with universal significance, suggesting that awareness, empathy, and simple acts of goodness constitute the true meaning and beauty of life.

Throughout these examples, William Saroyan writes with a simplicity that feels natural rather than complicated. His clear language, smooth sentence flow, and gentle warmth create a narrative voice that speaks directly to the reader's emotions while carrying moral depth. Instead of relying on structural complexity, he builds his work balance and harmony. The plainness of his words, the steady rhythm of his syntax, and his ethical discourse work together to express a sincere belief in the values of human life - not as something defined by sorrow or contradiction, but as something inherently meaningful and beautiful simply because it exists.

Summing up, we can see that Saroyan's lexical simplicity, syntactic clarity, and discursive warmth combine to form a narrative voice which is emotionally transparent and morally profound. Saroyan's narrative structure relies on stylistic harmony rather than complexity. His plain, comprehensible words, the rhythmic syntax, and ethical discourse come together to express the author's faith in human life not as sorrow and contradiction but as an inherently beautiful existence. The overall linguostylistic harmony of the novel aligns narrative structure with stylistic features, juxtaposes language and emotion, affirms moral optimism, and backs William Saroyan's humanistic message that "Life is good because it is life."

Conclusion

The linguostylistic analysis of William Saroyan's *The Human Comedy* demonstrates that the novel's linguostylistic choices and narrative voice are inseparable. Saroyan's artistry lies not only in what he says but in how he says it. Through the deliberate use of repetition, balanced syntax, and a fluid narrative perspective, he shapes a narrative voice that feels both intimately personal and profoundly universal. His stylistic simplicity marked by clear diction, rhythmic phrasing, and a consistently sincere tone, becomes a vehicle for expressing the shared values, emotions, and vulnerabilities that define human experience.

On the lexical level, Saroyan's preference for plain, everyday language reflects his democratic vision of humanity, while his use of contrast and subtle metaphor reveals the coexistence of life's fragility and beauty. His syntactic

patterns, especially his reliance on coordination and rhythmic repetition, create a musicality that mirrors the emotional ebb and flow of the story. On a broader discursive level, the compassionate narrative voice functions as a moral and emotional bridge, transforming the individual struggles of the characters into a collective meditation on human connection, loss, and endurance. Taken together, the stylistic and narrative dimensions form a prose that is profound and grounded in everyday reality. Saroyan's work affirms that simplicity in language, when guided by empathy and moral conviction, can achieve an artistry as powerful as any complex or ornate style. Ultimately, *The Human Comedy* illustrates how language, imbued with ethical awareness and emotional sincerity, can transcend mere storytelling to become a celebration of life itself.

Future research might further investigate how Saroyan's stylistic techniques are preserved, adapted, or transformed in translation, as well as how his narrative voice aligns or contrasts with those of other mid-twentieth-century American writers who sought to capture the moral and emotional dimensions of ordinary life.

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Ջ. Անտոնյան – Վ. Սարոյանի «Մարդկային կատակերգություն» վեպի լեզվաբանական վերլուծություն. – Հոդվածը ներկայացնում է Վիլյամ Սարոյանի «Մարդկային կատակերգություն» (1943) վեպի լեզվաբանական առանձնահատ-

կությունների և շարադրանքի վերլուծություն՝ բացահայտելով, թե ինչպես է հեղինակի լեզվական միավորների ընտրությունը ձևավորում իմաստ և առաջացնում հուզական արձագանք: Մարոյանի արձակի ակնհայտ պարզությունը թաքցնում է նուրբ արվեստ. նրա գրվածքի պարզ մակերեսի տակ թաքնված է խնամքով կառուցված հեղինակային ձայն, որը միաձուլում է լեզուն հույզերի հետ և խորացնում ընթերցողի ներգրավվածությունը: Վեպից ընտրված հատվածները քննվում են երեք մակարդակներում՝ բառապաշարային, շարահյուսական և դիսկուրսային, բացահայտելու համար, թե ինչպես են ոճական օրինաչափությունները նպաստում տեքստի ընդհանուր գեղագիտական և թեմատիկ միասնությանը: Արդյունքները ցույց են տալիս, որ «Մարդկային կատակերգություն» վեպի լեզվական և ոճական ներդաշնակությունը հաստատում է Մարոյանի հետևյալ հումանիստական տեսլականը՝ «Կյանքը լավն է, որովհետև այն կյանքն է», որն էլ կարևորում է առաջին հայացքից պարզ թվացող ոճի հիմքում ընկած հուզական և փիլիսոփայական մտածողությունը:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Վ. Մարոյան, «Մարդկային կատակերգություն», լեզվաոճական վերլուծություն, շարադրանքի մակարդակներ, հեղինակային ձայն

3. Антоянн – Лингвистический анализ повествовательной структуры романа У. Сарояна «Человеческая комедия». – В данной статье представлен комплексный лингвостилистический и нарративный анализ романа Уильяма Сарояна «Человеческая комедия» (1943), в котором исследуется, как языковые средства автора формируют смысл и вызывают эмоциональный отклик у читателя. В работе утверждается, что кажущаяся простота прозы Сарояна скрывает тонкое художественное мастерство: за внешне непритязательным стилем стоит тщательно организованный повествовательный голос. Исследование рассматривает отдельные фрагменты романа на трёх уровнях повествовательной организации – лексическом, синтаксическом и дискурсивном – с целью показать каким образом стилистические модели способствуют эстетическому и тематическому единству текста. Результаты анализа демонстрируют, что лингвистическая и стилистическая целостность романа поддерживает гуманистическое мировоззрение Сарояна – идею о том, что „жизнь хороша уже потому, что она жизнь“, – подчёркивая глубокую эмоциональную и философскую насыщенность, скрытую за, казалось бы, простым стилем автора.

Ключевые слова: У. Сароян, «Человеческая комедия», лингвостилистический анализ, повествовательные уровни, нарративный голос