



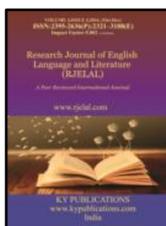
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY: COHESION AND COHERENCE IN TEXT, SOCIETY, AND NATURE

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### ABSTRACT

The possession of language has often been used as a means by which to distinguish human beings from all the others of God's creations. As a species, we have been referred to as "*homo sapiens*". This epithet claims that humans are marked off from all other creatures because they have wisdom. But some prefer the epithet "*homo loquens*", possibly because they realize that, while all people speak, not all of them are wise. One of the defining features of a piece of language used in communication, a text, is cohesion and coherence working together to convey meaning, to make sense in our verbal interaction with others. This is the basis on which communities thrive as they make requests, greet, argue and co-operate with each other, and so on. In this paper, I argue that this interrelatedness between and among the words and sentences we use in communication, namely cohesion and coherence, is replicated on other domains of our environment and lived reality. Just as it is the sine qua non of the integrity of texts, so it is of that of the various occupants of the universe, including the stratification in social organization and among the stars. When this cohesion and coherence is ignored or subverted, chaos ensues: "Oh when *degree* is shaken/Which is the ladder of all high designs/The enterprise is sick! (Troilus and Cressida: Act 1. Scene 3.)"

**KEY WORDS:** cohesion, coherence, degree, unity, diversity, deracination.

### 1.0 Introduction

When there is a thorn in the foot,  
the whole body has to stoop to pull it out (A  
Zulu proverb.).

On the basis of the nature of language texts, namely how groups of words, or even one word, must be placed in such a way that it functions in communication, in this paper I argue that in society and in the natural world generally, entities must be similarly placed in order for us to live as God intended at the Creation. For example, just as when we use words that clash in their meanings we fail to communicate, so when we violate social protocols, and when the seas invade human settlements,

abandoning their prescribed space, our lives are turned upside down. The first part of this paper is about the constitutive principles of textuality, those that serve to distinguish language texts from non-texts, that is, from nonsensical word combinations. The second one is about those cultural prescriptions and proscriptions that ensure the integrity of the social fabric, as well as about the prescribed interrelationships among natural phenomena which, when violated, lead to "*natural disasters*", such as tsunamis. I conclude, on the basis of the foregoing, that there is a continuity and uniformity of purpose among the ways in which language, society, and the natural world are organized.

## 2.0 Cohesion and coherence in language texts – definitions.

One of the responsibilities that have been assigned to me since I was first employed by the University of Botswana is to teach a course called Form Function and Variation in English. In teaching it, my concern has always been that our students should be able, when they graduate, to efficiently **process English texts** employed in the various contexts in which they will be expected to use the language to conduct the business of life beyond campus, both as producers of their own, and as consumers of texts constructed by their interlocutors, and both in the spoken and the written modes. By “English text” I mean any piece of English, spoken or written, of whatever size, which is employed in an act of communication, to paraphrase Halliday and Hasan (1979: pp.1 – 2).

Because of the ultimate goal outlined above, I consider some of the Linguistics courses, such as those on pronunciation, on how English words are structured, on the rules that we must follow in order to combine those words when we convey messages, and on meaning, as providing students with the building blocks for a communication machine. All these courses lay an essential foundation for students to benefit maximally from the text-based ones. In teaching the above-mentioned courses, we often use un-contextualized, isolated examples, such as Chomsky’s classical one, “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously” (1957: 15), to illustrate anomaly or discord among words in a sentence. This sentence is grammatically correct, but it contains words whose meanings clash. If something is colorless, how can it be green? If that something is ideas, how can ideas have the ability to sleep? And how can ideas have the capacity to be furious? Or we use a sentence such as, “If the child refuses to eat, put it in the fridge”, to illustrate a potentially dangerous ambiguity. This is also a grammatically correct sentence. But the mother who gives her baby minder such an instruction is exposing her child to danger. For she is leaving it to the baby minder to decide what should be put in the fridge, the food or the baby?

The other courses go by the learned names Stylistics, Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, and Sociolinguistics. Here students learn how texts are made and for what purposes, what some call the **constitutive** principles of textuality. Further, to paraphrase Dell Hymes’ (1972) words, they also learn “who says what, to whom, when, how, and why”, what he calls **communicative competence** and is otherwise known as “language manners”. Children who have not yet acquired communicative competence often say the wrong things in the wrong contexts. This is why we sometimes tell them to “Go and play outside”, when they embarrass us in the presence of visitors. The context in which a text presented for analysis may be explicitly stated as being that from the domain of law, religion, sports commentary, cookery, and so on. In analyzing such texts, my students get to know the linguistic causes of success or failure in communication. This they do by applying standard **evaluative** principles of textuality to the language configuration concerned, whether it is their own or it is produced by someone else, and whether it is written or spoken.

These judgments are made possible by them having recourse to their prior knowledge of linguistic structures taught in the supportive sub-disciplines of the subject mentioned earlier. This, in turn, is only possible if the students do not compartmentalize the knowledge which they acquired in the theoretical linguistics disciplines. The attitude that one aspect of the subject is needed for first, second, third, or fourth year only, or only for lecturer X, is intimately linked to one which sees them selling their current textbooks at the end of a semester, and then later buying those for the following one. It also accounts for their inability to correctly describe the structure of English using grammatically correct sentences.

We need to emphasize the unitary character of the language system, even as we inevitably present it in accordance with the so-called “levels of linguistic analysis”, or as topics in linguistics or in literature. The knowledge of phonetics, the sound systems of languages, is essential even for literary stylistic criticism. Otherwise, how else would one respond to the alliteration being exploited in an advertisement such

as “Koko ke koko ka peri-peri”, “Chicken is chicken because of peri-peri”, without pointing to the series of exploding voiceless consonants at the beginning of the first syllable in each of the six words? For these explosives are meant to recreate the exploding noises of a seasoned chicken being immersed into a pan of boiling oil at Nando’s. Similarly, how does one respond to the deceptively cynical hyperbole of “Professors are people who are paid in peanuts and pennies” without accounting for the series of exploding sounds therein that are meant to express frustration with an apparently unresponsive employer? This unitary, cohesive and coherent nature of the language system once inspired the founding fathers of the modern discipline to couch it in metaphorical discourse, but here only with particular reference to the phonological process of assimilation. The American linguist Edward Sapir (1933) explained the phonological processes of contrast and assimilation which are triggered by individual sounds when we combine them to build syllables and words by inviting us to think of the “tangibly distinct entities or notes” which together make up the symphony that is spoken language. Thinking along the same lines, Bolinger asked of such combinations, “Do they keep their identities intact like a row of bullets set end to end?” (1968: 43). And, on the same theme, Gimson advised us, “If ... the utterance is analyzed in terms of a sequence of phonemes, account must be taken of the phonetic continuity and merging of qualities by describing *the mutual influence which contiguous elements exert upon each other*; in other words, tendencies towards assimilation or co-articulation have to be noted” (1994: pp.254 – 255) (emphasis added). So a sound such as “l”, which we pronounce sideways, comes to the ear as such, “l”, but only when we pronounce it alone, in isolation from other sounds with which we normally use it. To say only “l” does not communicate. And so we use it with other sounds in English as in “kettle”, “little”, “clean”, “please”, and so on, and in Setswana as in “kebatla”, “botloko”, and even in names such as “Pathlakwe”, “Mathlabapiri”, “Thlokweg”, and so on. In both these languages, and in all natural human languages where “l” is pronounced right after “t” in the same syllable, it changes its quality to

“t”, just as the “l” itself causes the “t” to be pronounced sideways. For this reason, we say, metaphorically, that “Sounds are influenced by the company they keep.”

This mutual influence of one sound on another is natural and inevitable. We do not decide, when we speak, which variant of /l/ to pronounce in “dumela” as opposed to that in “Thlokweg”, which comes out as [t̪], and we would sound funny if we pronounced “Thlokweg” with the /l/ of “dumela”, thus “Thllokweg” and “dumela” as “dumetla”. If we do not attempt to speak in these impossible ways, we achieve cohesion and coherence in communication. Our speech resonates with our listeners’ in-built knowledge of the language system. Just as the sounds of language are affected and molded by the company which they keep, so are we affected and molded by the social structures into which we are born and live in. And, let us not forget that language is the defining endowment which distinguishes human beings from all other animals in Noah’s ark. In recognition of this fact, the Romans had an expression for naming a human being, “homo loquens”, “mankind, the speaking creature”.

### 2.1 Cohesion and coherence beyond language texts.

These mechanisms which enable us to communicate cohesively and coherently using language have opened up for me a new, may be also esoteric, perspective of natural human language. From that perspective, I view the language system as being parallel and maybe even inseparable from systems in all other institutions that regulate our lives and make it possible for each one of us citizens of this God-created world to function. This perspective of the way aspects of our universe are organized and relate to each other is also reflected in <sup>1</sup>Robert Faraday’s (1845) letter to one Schoenbein. He wrote,

You can hardly imagine how I am struggling to exert my poetic ideas just now for the discovery of analogies and remote figures respecting the earth, sun and all sorts of things – for I think that is the true way (corrected by judgment)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Clive Sutton (1992: v): *Words, science and learning*.

to work out a discovery.

More recently, Noam Chomsky, the doyen of modern Linguistics, has become almost as renowned for his writings on international affairs as he did for his pioneering work on human language. We flourish when there is rhythm in our interactions with each other and with our natural environment; but we struggle and stumble, and even perish, when there is discord from whatever source. This holds true at the personal and the family, the societal, the national, regional, and at the international levels.

## 2.2 <sup>2</sup>'The music of the spheres.'

Focusing on Psalm 104, I shall take into account the view of life expressed by the ancient Jewish poets. In that Psalm, God comes across as a virtuoso orchestral composer and conductor, who ensures that each instrument player strikes the right note at the right time, just as the co-referential cohesive ties of text must agree in terms of number and gender in order to give sense to it:

19. You created the moon to mark the months; the sun knows the time to set.

20. You made the night, and in the darkness all wild animals come out.

21. The young lions roar while they hunt, looking for the food that God provides.

22. When the sun rises, they go back and lie down in their dens.

23. Then people go out to do their work and keep working until evening.

24. LORD, you have made so many things, How wisely you made them all!

The animals, including even the serpent, go "looking for the food that God provides", and when night comes, they return to "their dens", which are theirs only because God created them for the animals, while post-lapsarian "people go out to do their work and keep working until evening", sweating for their food, because of the original sin Adam and Eve committed. In other words, the food becomes theirs only after they have labored and sweated for it, because they committed a transgression against

<sup>2</sup> "An ancient philosophical concept that regards proportions in movements of celestial bodies – the sun, moon, planets – as a form of musica": [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/musica\\_universalis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/musica_universalis) 14/03/17.

God's original plan for humankind by introducing discord into His symphonic creation.

## 2.2.1 Cohesion and coherence in texts and in nature

So in this paper I am talking about cohesion and coherence in text and in God-created nature. I define "text", borrowing from Halliday and Hasan, as any piece of language, of whatever size, employed in an act of communication between speakers of a language within any of the various locations in which they live and work. It is not the size of the piece of language that matters, but its meaning (1979: pp.1 – 2), while the size ranges from a traffic sign that says STOP, to the whole Bible, in which God speaks to us about His eternal Kingdom, or a text can be as long as the Encyclopedia Britannica, which represents an attempt by us human beings to record all that is known about the God-created world we live in. This is parallel to each human being, as one of God's creations and irrespective of shape, size, or color, having a pre-ordained place and playing a role, in the overall scheme of things. Similarly the planets, namely this earth, and the sun, moon, and other stars, as they rotate around the sun: "The heavens themselves/Observe degree, priority, and place, .../And therefore is the glorious Sol/In noble eminence enthroned/Amidst the other."

In Shakespeare's words, the sun does not merely occupy space, but is "enthroned", while the rest, observing protocol, play their part, rotating round it and following their prescribed paths.

What are cohesion and coherence in text? What are the implications of their absence? Similarly, what is cohesion and coherence in social institutions? And what are the implications of their absence? Consider the following utterance:

- "She has arrived", made by someone who has just walked into your office.

Your natural reaction would be, "Who?" The statement, "She has arrived", is grammatically correct, but it is unplaced, unconnected. It lacks cohesion and coherence. There must be prior mention in the same discourse of a female person to whom the pronoun "she" refers. That is to say, the person to whom the "she" refers must have been explicitly previously mentioned close to the point at

which her name can be replaced by “she”, as in the following:

A: **Malebogo** is taking too long to return from the shops.

B: But **she** has just walked in. That’s **her** singing in the kitchen.

The “she” and “her” are well placed this time round. They and the name Malebogo refer to the same person who had gone to the shops and is now back singing in the kitchen.

Otherwise, the person must be about to be mentioned:

A: **She** is taking too long to return from the shops.

B: But **Maleboko** has just walked in.

This enters the two expressions, **Malebogo** and **she**, into an observable relay-relationship, similar to that between team-mates in a relay race. One sprinter cannot do without the other. We observe this cooperation, this relatedness between the expressions on the SURFACE of things. This is connectivity, this is cohesion.

What is coherence in text? What are the implications of its absence? Consider the following statement:

- My friends were at the party and the Equator is exactly half way between the North and the South Poles.

There is discord here, even though, once again, the utterance is grammatically correct. The listener has to ask, “What is the connection between the two statements linked by ‘and’ in this utterance?” The listener asks this because there is no logical connection between the statements so violently linked by “and” in the utterance. That is the essence of coherence. There must be a connection, a resonance between what the text says and our knowledge of the world, that is to say, between text-presented knowledge and the knowledge of the world which we bring to the interpretation of the text. The connector “and” works like “as well as”, “not only, ..., but also”, “both ... and”, “in addition”, etc. They are called “additive conjunctions”, as in “I bought oranges, biscuits, sugar, **and** bread”, additive because, if you look into the speaker’s shopping basket, these items are all packed one on top of the other, together. Each of the items is of equal rank;

they are all groceries and can be bought, one after the other. So it makes sense to name and thus link them one after the other using “and” in the utterance. On the other hand, partying and the geographical fact of the Equator being equidistant from the Poles are unlinkable. Where there is coherence, there must be logic; there is a connectedness, an underlying relatedness of elements in a theme. The content of the text resonates with the reader’s or listener’s knowledge of the world from prior and current experience. Text receivers do not come to the text empty headed. Their knowledge of life enables them to make sense of the text, reacting to it with delight, shock, appreciation, suspicion, disgust, and so on, depending on what knowledge of life they have brought to the context of communication.

### 2.2.2 Metaphor links different domains of experience

In all this, metaphor is a sine qua non, a can’t-do-without, in our use of language to communicate with each other. Its most basic definition is that metaphor is a linguistic strategy by which we come to understand, to assimilate an idea or some knowledge, by the common features which it shares with something else ordinarily unrelated to it. It works primarily because there is some unarticulated interrelatedness between and among all of God’s creatures, human and other. Consider the statement,

- Enraged, Tshepo was now **chewing barbed wire**.

On the surface, there is discord between what we know and what has been said. This discord comes from the incongruous juxtaposition of the verb “chewing” with the object “barbed wire”, instead of that verb being placed next to one for some item of food. This way of speaking helps the listener to conceptualize the enormity of the danger to which those to whom Tshepo’s rage was directed were exposed. In my mother-tongue, the equivalent would be:

- Tshepo akanga odyava gava: Tshepo was now eating the aloe.

The aloe, as we know, is very bitter and has sharp thorns, which makes it unsuitable for human consumption. It is used to cure chickens suffering

from bird flu. Sometimes we say of a man that he is a lion at fighting. We say this even when we are aware of the physical differences between man and lion. In our minds, in order to understand what has been said, the man seems to take on lion characteristics, when this is said of him, while the lion also begins to take on those of the man. Somewhere between these two extremes we see a hybrid creature, one which is a compromise of human civility and intelligence on the one hand, and lion brutality and bestiality, on the other. We dare not provoke such a man. So, metaphor enables us to “see” one object in terms of another in order to make sense of that object. Even here, we are using terms from different, even hostile but also sometimes complementary, domains of God’s creation in order to make sense of our lives: between the lion, which comes out of its den at night to hunt, and a person, who comes out of his/her house at day break to go to work.

We also exploit this trans-species interrelatedness in proverbs, as in Shona “Mwana wenyoka/innyoka”: “The child of a snake is a snake”, used to explain why a person poses a threat to the well-being of others, just like his parents are known for doing. The Shona also warn their fellow citizens against persistently engaging in antisocial behavior when they say “Tsuru haipone rutsva kaviri”: “A rabbit does not survive a veldt fire twice.” Both these sayings work because those who use them see continuity and coherence between human behavior and that of animals.

### 2.2.3 The recreation of cohesion and coherence in fiction

In a different but related domain of our lives, an understanding of one of an author’s works leads us to understanding his/her other works. We speak of being familiar with the author’s style, their literary “finger print”. All the works in question came from the hand of this one author. When we are favorably impressed by their style and message, we unconsciously but sometimes deliberately emulate their style in our own writing and speaking. We even quote them in order to put the plausibility of our argument beyond question: “The evil that men do lives after them/the good is oft interred with their bones”, we say, when all that people

remember about the departed is the grudges which they had with them. We want to become an author. In relatively more recent times, authors of stories have come to be known as Creative Writers. They write what is called “fiction”. This word comes from the Latin verb “fingo”, which inflects like this: fingo ~ fingere ~ finxi ~ fictum, and it means “to form, shape, make; to mould, model” with the fingers and, in relation to speech or the mind, it means “to imagine, to invent, to fabricate”. God created Adam and Eve by molding clay with His fingers and then breathing life into it.

Sometimes creativity lies in using language in unusual ways, in breaking the rules, in departing from the trodden path. It is as if the writer or speaker is saying, “The ordinary is not adequate, so I must recreate language to equip it with the means to articulate novel experience”. They create a world ex vacuo, from nothing, and then they populate their stories with flesh and blood characters living their lives in contexts where they interact with others in natural environments. Using words, they breathe life into their human creations, just as Adam and Eve were created by God. Writers of fiction instill ambition and motives into their characters. They also endow them with capacities to do virtuous deeds and to commit the most dastardly evil. Many creative writers have produced stories that have found their way into their national literary treasury and beyond, partly because they have assumed the role of teacher-philosopher, standing back, as it were, to reflect on life. And they do so partly by exploiting metaphors which depend on their meaning on similarities between human experience and nature. Listen to John Steinbeck speaking to his readers in the suggestively titled novel, *East of Eden*:

... there is one story in the world, and only one, that has frightened and inspired us ... *Human beings are caught* in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, in their kindness and generosity too – in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feeling and intelligence. *Virtue and vice*

*were warp and woof of our first consciousness, and they will be the fabric of our last, and this despite changes we may impose on field and river and mountain, on economy and manners ... And it occurs to me that evil must constantly re-spawn, while good, while virtue, is immortal. Vice has always a new fresh young face, while virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world.* (1952: pp.391, 393).

In this one paragraph, Steinbeck has deployed **five metaphors** in order to shock us into a new consciousness about our lives. These metaphors serve to vividly portray humanity's quandary post the Fall in the Garden of Eden: "*human beings are caught in a net of good and evil*", like flies; "*virtue and vice were warp and woof of our first consciousness*"; "*[virtue and vice] will be the fabric of our last [consciousness]*"; "*evil must always re-spawn*", and "*vice has always a new fresh young face*". Those three adjectives, "new fresh young", used by Steinberg to describe the face of vice, are not separated by punctuation. Thereby, the author paints that face with one brush which permanently etches those otherwise complementary qualities on vice, except that it is vice. Those adjectives serve to remind us that vice is alluring.

Even in our daily use of our language, we unconsciously employ metaphor. I am not aware of any statistical study of this practice in an African language. But for English, Pollio et al (1977) are quoted in Danesi as having reported that "... speakers of English utter, on average, three thousand novel metaphors and seven thousand idioms per week." (1993: 122). Many times we also use hyperbole, a kind of metaphor, a language tool which we employ for exaggerating the content of our message in order to ensure that it is not lost on the listener or reader. From all the reading that I have done as a student of English and Linguistics with a knowledge of Latin acquired in High School and slightly beyond, I have become convinced that there is no hyperbole as spectacular as the one employed by the Roman poet Virgil to describe the heroic exploits of his hero, Aeneas, in the thick of battle:

experto credite quantus in clipeum adsurgat: believe it, from one who has experience, how giant his might, as he leaps up behind his shield.

This is, Jackson Knight says, "... as if the shield were dashing ahead and he, Aeneas, leapt/jumped to overtake it". (1966: 32). This line portrays the spectacle of a soldier whose speed in battle is such that it creates in his comrades the belief, nay the conviction that he is capable of reaching his adversary before the "bullet" that he has just fired.

How have succeeding generations of thinkers viewed cohesion and coherence, in texts, as well as in our lives outside texts, if the latter is conceivable? The second part of this question, "if the latter is conceivable", is appropriate because our lives would be undifferentiated from those of the flora and fauna in our ecosystem if we were not endowed with the capacity of speaking and writing, in texts, and of listening to and reading texts. So we really have no lives outside language texts.

### 3.0 Two conceptions of cohesion and coherence

Unity of purpose is as quintessential in all human endeavors as it is among parts of texts, as we saw in relation to "Malebogo" and "She" in the examples which I used earlier in reference to cohesion and coherence. Here I discuss how St Paul and Shakespeare view them.

### 3.1 Cohesion and coherence in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians

In his first letter to the Corinthians (12: 12 – 31), St Paul was concerned to instill an appreciation of unity of purpose in his fellow disciples. He saw that unity as essential for the work of the Church. It was a system to be anchored on cohesion and coherence serving as social lubricants among different members of Christ's Church. In order to drive his message home, he resorted to metaphor when he turned for authority to God's design of the human body. I quote from the King James translation of a New Testament text that is reminiscent of a Zulu proverb:

12. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,

whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14. For the body is not one member, but many

15. If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore

not of the body?

.....

.....

19. And if they were all one member, where were the body?

Before commenting on St Paul’s metaphor, allow me to digress a little. Without giving much thought to what we do, on a daily basis in our waking lives, we actuate the interdependence among the various parts of our bodies when we walk. The left arm swings forward while the right one swings backward, the right leg goes with the left arm, and the left with the right arm, creating a rhythm in our movement. But when we want onlookers to laugh, we move both left arm and left leg forward simultaneously. The other reason why we might walk in that way would be if we had been in an accident and we couldn’t help ourselves but limp. The Zulu have a proverb inspired by their observation of this interdependence among the parts of the human body, among people, and between people and the natural world. On the latter, when there is a forest fire or a tsunami, people’s lives are endangered. The Zulu quote this proverb in order to remind themselves of the essence of cohesion and coherence in human affairs:

When there is a thorn in the foot,  
the whole body has to stoop to pull it out.

On a wider plane, when there is discord, when there is a disruption to the Creator’s original design, both in society and in Nature, we know that things have fallen apart, and we hear of or witness murder and even massacre, war, rape, floods and tsunamis. The expression “Things fall apart” comes from W. B. Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming”, which was inspired by the horrors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, when

“the enterprise” of living our normal lives became sick. As in all wars, the leaders of the world had failed us. Referring to them, Yeats wrote that “The best lack all conviction/The worst are full of passionate intensity.”

With reference to St Paul’s metaphor, let us not forget that the Authorized Version, the King James Bible translation, itself came from a collaborative endeavor, with some of the most learned citizens of England working under the supervision of their equally erudite King. It is the product of the cohesive and coherent efforts of a team. Allow me to domesticate St Paul’s words further in this way: if a Mongwatho were to say, “I am not a Mongwaketse, therefore I am not a Motswana”, is such a person therefore not a Motswana? There is a deceptively small word in St Paul’s sermon, the dynamic preposition “into”, in “[we] have all been made to drink into one spirit”. According to St Paul’s metaphor, when they were baptized, all of Christ’s followers had drunk from a cup whose content, the Spirit, simultaneously with that act of drinking, enveloped their whole being, so that they each became a new creature that was imbued with distinctive qualities, but whose value resided in its actions having resonance with those of the others in Christ’s Church. That is why, commenting on the metaphor of “the Body of Christ”, Paul Brand, a Christian and world-acclaimed surgeon and leprosy specialist, wrote that, “The basis of our unity within Christ’s Body begins not with our similarity but with our diversity. ... [The Church] is like the body, composed of cells, most striking in their diversity but most effective in their mutuality.” (2004: pp.49, 57).

The experience of being “baptized into one spirit” should have reconstituted Christ’s disciples into a new community of like-minded “brethren in Christ”. The various but complementary gifts of the Spirit, namely prophecy, healing, teaching, preaching through the interpretation of scriptures, and so on, may today be seen, mundanely, as parallel to the different and distinctive culturally definitive music and dance types, culinary specialties and dress codes that each tribal group contributes to the equally distinctive pool of a country’s CULTURAL body. Each of the members of this body

has a bounden duty to make a unique contribution, according to their God-given talents, towards the maintenance of a peaceable social equilibrium under which all may flourish.

These thoughts resonate with the notion of functionalism in the language and social science disciplines. The point to make here, though, is that I doubt that linguists and social scientists realize that they are plagiarizing St Paul's metaphor when they expound on functionalism. According to functionalism, a society, an institution, or indeed a government, is a system with a structure. To paraphrase Jansen, the survival of the structure depends on its different parts constantly and successfully fulfilling their respective functions. She writes that

A properly functioning system is in a state of balance or equilibrium.

Some functionalists maintain that the state of the equilibrium is not fixed and static but moving. The system adjusts and readjusts the equilibrium according to circumstances and in relation to the ways and extent to which each part fulfills its prescribed function. (1989: p.19).

However, care must be taken by those running the system not to allow a spanner insinuating itself into the workings of the system. Any factor that makes a negative contribution interferes with the normal working of the system and is thereby dysfunctional. In addition, according to Jansen, what we in Botswana may call "dead wood" must be identified for making no contribution at all and, in Jansen's words, "may as well be discarded". My light-hearted reference to some scholars plagiarizing St Paul comes from what Paul Brand says about the Christ's Body metaphor. He writes that

The analogy conveys a more precise meaning to me because though the hand or the foot or ear cannot have a life separate from the body, a cell does have that potential. It can be part of the body as a loyalist, or it can cling to its own life. Some cells do choose to live in the body, sharing its benefits while maintaining complete independence – they

become parasites or cancer cells. (2004: p.36).

The latter part of Brand's comment says that individuals who live their lives on the periphery of the community in which they were born pose a danger to its integrity.

In Christianity, we accept that language was there at the beginning of things. The book of Genesis begins with God speaking with Adam and Eve to convey his plans for humanity. And He does so in cohesive and coherent text. It is language whose nature and functions linguists over the centuries have sought to understand and explain. I argue in this paper that this cohesion and coherence in language texts can be extrapolated to the cohesion and coherence which the Creator intended should prevail in human affairs. One writer on the phonological, that is, the sound systems of languages, the American Edward Sapir saw the rhythmical functioning of the sounds of language as equivalent to those of the musical notes of a symphony when he wrote that

Even the most resplendent and dynamic symphony is built up of tangibly distinct entities or notes which, in the physical world, flow into each other in an indefinite continuum but which, in the world of aesthetic composition and appreciation, are definitely bounded off against each other, so that they may enter into an intricate mathematics of significant relationships. (1933, in Mandelbaum, 1985: p.155),

It is the absence of this "intricate mathematics of significant relationships" which has inspired the Shona people to characterize the behavior of some among them as "bhora musango" people – "those who kick the football into the bush". That is, they are known for deliberately kicking the ball out of play in the middle of a match, when their team's defeat seems imminent. When a team scores a goal, its members and their fans celebrate that achievement as the culmination and consummation of a coordinated and determined team effort by all the eleven players. Therefore, a player who deliberately kicks the ball out of play represents the betrayal and negation of the same, just like the sprinter who, in a relay race, runs into the bush with

the baton instead of passing it on to his teammate. All societies have characters who maliciously subvert the rhythmical flow of life for their own selfish ends.

### 3.2 Cohesion and coherence in <sup>3</sup>Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

One of the leading characters in *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses, makes one of the most famous political speeches in all of Shakespeare on the importance of what he calls "degree", actually "rank" or "status". He paints a horrific picture of what would happen if rank were to be sabotaged, for whatever reason. All peace-loving societies across the world value the recognition of, and respect for rank. This is one of the cornerstones of Botho in our part of the world. We recognize that our societies would crumble if we did not extend respect due to our seniors in age and to those in positions of authority. For Shakespeare's Ulysses, respect of "degree" is the glue which holds society together. He sees the consequences attendant upon the undermining of rank, of degree, in metaphorical terms. This enables us to appreciate the horror of what we would face in the absence of degree. And his metaphor works precisely because he anchors it on a comparison between the chaos in a society that ignores degree, that is, rank, on the one hand, and the chaos in a God-created universe in which His creatures, both human and other, began to strive for equality and sameness. Shakespeare's hero asks,

When that the general is not like the hive  
To whom the foragers shall all repair,  
What honey is expected?

This literally says that there can be no honey if the bees do not each take the nectar which they collect back to the beehive. In other words, what chances of success does an army have, going into battle while some or most of the soldiers ignore the orders of their commanding General? Ulysses continues,

Degree being vizarded,

Th' unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask. In other words, when "degree" is unclear, when there is confusion about who is in charge of what, even the lowliest soldier can assume command in his own corner of the battlefield, creating an anarchic scenario. Such a soldier is said to be

<sup>3</sup> This text was also used in Pongweni (2017). Vide References.

wearing a mask, to be "vizarded", because he is attempting to assume a role that does not rightly belong to him. Then, in words that echo Psalm 104, Verse 24, Ulysses invites us to understand that the order and peaceable co-existence which come from our respect for degree in human society is parallel to that in God-created nature, when he says,

The heavens themselves, the planets, and  
this centre,  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office, and custom, in all line of order;  
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol  
In noble eminence enthroned and sphered  
Amidst the other; whose medicinable eye  
Corrects the influence of evil planets,  
And posts, like the commandment of a king,  
Sans check to good and bad.

As I have said, these lines from Shakespeare are reminiscent of Psalm 104: 24:

LORD, you have made so many things,  
How wisely you have made them all.

These lines come after the psalmist has enumerated God's various but interrelated creations, both animate and inanimate, each of them "wisely" placed, what Ulysses calls "insisture", in its own domain, and each one crucially dependent on the Creator's bounteous munificence (Forgive the tautology in "bounteous munificence", but it sounds pleasant to the ear). The neo-Classicists spoke of "the music of the spheres", to refer to the planets orbiting the earth, "this centre", each following its own pre-ordained path, thereby avoiding catastrophes that could arise from them colliding. Shakespeare's simile/metaphor celebrates the wisdom of observing the God-created protocols relating to the respect that is due to age, position, status, and territory in human affairs, respect that functions to buttress that harmony which comes only from societal cohesion and coherence. According to Psalm 104: 5 – 9, God "set the earth firmly on its foundations, /and it will never be moved." God then "placed the ocean over it like a robe,/and the waters covered the mountains". This was work in progress, executed almost playfully. For when God apparently realized that to have the waters covering the mountains would be awkward,

He “rebuked” the waters for covering the mountains, which waters then “fled”: “they rushed away when they heard your shout of command ... to the place you had made for them.” Apparently, the Creator had already made a place for the waters! For, it says that He “rebuked” them for doing what He had not intended them to do. Are the waters the first of God’s creations to disobey Him, rather than Adam and Eve? Be that as it may, Verse 9 is outstandingly chastising to humanity:

You set a boundary they can never pass,  
to keep them from covering the earth again.

Today scientists attribute the rampant cyclones and tsunamis which periodically devastate many parts of the earth to environmental degradation caused by ourselves as we “exploit” the world’s God-given resources in our “development projects”. In the words of Shakespeare’s hero, we unwittingly cause the planets “In evil mixture to disorder wander”, with horrendous repercussions:

But when the planets  
In evil mixture to disorder wander,  
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,

What raging of the sea, shaking of the earth,  
Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,  
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate  
The unity and married calm of states  
Quite from their fixture!

When I first came across the verb “deracinate” I was an undergraduate student of English. As if I needed to, having come a long way from being a village herd-boy to being enrolled on an English Honors degree program of the University of London, I felt even more reassured that I was well on my way to becoming really educated. That verb belongs to the class of English words which we called “jaw-breakers”, known only by those who had drunk English from the source. DERACINATE! But this verb means “to tear up by the roots, to eradicate”. In Ulysses’ speech it comes coupled with, in fact preceded by the verb “rend”, which means “to violently tear apart”. This is what happens to a society from which cohesion and coherence have been exiled.

The skeletal structure of Ulysses’ periodic-cum-cumulative sentence

Subject	Verb	Object	Adverbial
(when) planets	wander		to disorder
<b>(what) plagues</b>			
<b>portents</b>			
<b>mutiny</b>			
<b>raging of the sea</b>	<b>divert and crack</b>	<b>the unity of states</b>	<b>quite from their fixture</b>
<b>(what) shaking of the earth</b>	<b>rend and deracinate</b>	<b>(the) married calm of states</b>	
<b>commotion in the winds</b>			
<b>frights</b>			
<b>changes</b>			
<b>horrors</b>			

As the table above indicates, Ulysses’ speech comprises an avalanche of subjects, followed by another of verbs, which are in turn followed by the objects, and lastly the adverbials indicating the extent of the damage caused by the failure to observe degree. And all these are used in one sentence, a structure deliberately constructed by Shakespeare in order to convey, to reflect, and

thereby to foreground the multiplicity and simultaneity of the actions of “deracination”.

The nouns and noun phrases employed in these lines elicit and recreate in our minds the images that today have become all too familiar when one part of the world or other is struck by a cyclone: “plagues and ... portents”, “mutiny”, that is, pandemonium, “raging of the sea”, “shaking of the earth”, “commotion in the winds”, “frights”,

“changes”, “horrors”. The verbs are of the dynamic transitive type; they name actions performed on things and people: “divert and crack”, “rend and deracinate”. These actions are perpetrated on “The unity and married calm of states”, that is, on people living their lives in peace and harmony. They are the objects. Their lives are left “Quite from their fixture”, as the planets irreversibly “wander to disorder”. That is to say, the people’s lives are deformed beyond recognition, which is conveyed by the adverbials. It is as if a plague has devastated a community:

O, when degree is shaken,  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick!

When there is no respect for authority, society is afflicted by a terminal illness. “The enterprise is sick”, that is, the business of living is in the sick bay.

In such a society, Shakespeare’s hero asks:

How could communities,

Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,  
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

It has to be pointed out that Shakespeare’s conception of a peaceful and prosperous society is premised on the system being a just and equitable one. The critic in Sparknotes (<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/troilus/section2.rhtml>) comments that “The speech is a perfect encapsulation of conservative politics, and it also touches on themes that Shakespeare develops in tragedies like *Macbeth* and (especially) *King Lear*, in which the death or failure of a monarch results in the triumph of evil”, what Ulysses in this speech calls the triumph of the “universal wolf” in the human heart. In *Julius Caesar*, the portent which predicts Caesar’s assassination is a violent storm on the Ides of March, an instance of nature foreshadowing the assassination of a head of state and the ensuing deracination of society.

On the matter of conservative politics, in some societies, justice and equity have been victimized by those entrusted with the authority and

means to ensure their observance, leaving “the unworthing” with no choice but to sabotage degree.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The concern with threats to the natural order of things as created by God has been the inspiration of writers through the ages, as all the above attests to. Because of disagreements between and among people and nations today, some of which have led to interminable wars across the globe, diplomats and armies from various governments and international organizations are employed on permanent and pensionable terms as they strive to restore cohesion and coherence. All those engaged in these disagreements and clashes have language, that is, they are each “homo loquens” but not “homo sapiens”. They all speak, but without the wisdom to see that each one of them has a God-given place in the scheme of things. The argument of this paper is that the mutual dependence of the various parts of language which enables us to communicate, as well as the protocol that sees the planets orbiting around the sun, with each one of them maintaining a respectful distance from the others, constitutes a system which can be extrapolated to the domain of human existence. Shakespeare’s Ulysses has been quoted as placing a premium on the importance of observing “degree” in human affairs, just as the planets do, in order to avoid discord and catastrophe. Similarly, the apostle St Paul used the human body metaphor in teaching his fellows how to relate to each other in their mission to convert non-believers to Christianity. Observing degree seems to be so commonsensical that even people as far removed in time and place from Shakespeare and St Paul as the Zulu nation, have aphorisms which place value on mutuality in spite of difference. If language had only nouns, how would we communicate; if all human beings were kings, what value would royalty have; if all planets had one path, would their collision not lead to a cataclysmic deracination of life as we know it?

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