

SIGNS

CONTENTS

system
EIGHT TEXTS 5

concept
EXPRESSING SAUSSURE 15

sequence
SPOKEN AND WRITTEN 27

SYSTEM

EIGHT TEXTS

THREE KEY IDEAS

NO EXIT

SYMMETRY

FIELD FORCES

FROM "A TOMB FOR ANATOLE"

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

CITIES AND EYES

LENTILS WITH SPINACH AND LEMON

JEAN PIAGET
THREE KEY IDEAS

AS A FIRST APPROXIMATION, we may say that a structure is a system of transformations. Inasmuch as it is a system and not a mere collection of elements and their properties, these transformations involve laws: the structure is preserved or enriched by the interplay of its transformation laws, which never yield results external to the system nor employ elements that are external to it. In short, the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas;

the idea of *wholeness*,
the idea of *transformation*,
the idea of *self-regulation*.

JEAN PAUL SARTRE
NO EXIT

GARCIN This bronze. yes, now's the moment; I'm looking at this thing on the mantelpiece, and I understand that I'm in hell. I tell you, everything's been thought out beforehand. They knew I'd stand at the fireplace stroking this thing of bronze, with all those eyes intent on me. *Devouring me*. What? Only two of you? I thought there were more; many more. So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the "burning marl." Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot poker.
Hell is—other people

ESTELLE My darling! Please-

GARCIN No, let me be. She is between us. I cannot love you when she's watching.

ESTELLE Right! In that case, I'll stop her watching.
(She picks up the paper knife and stabs Inez several times.)

INEZ But, you crazy creature, what do you think you're doing?
You know quite well I'm dead.

ESTELLE Dead?

INEZ *Dead! Dead! Dead!* Knives, poison, ropes—useless. It has happened already, do you understand? Once and for all. *So* here we are, forever.

ESTELLE Forever. My God, how funny! *Forever*.

GARCIN For ever, and ever, and ever.
(A long silence.)

GARCIN Well, well, let's get on with it...

MATILA GHYLA
SYMMETRY

...“SYMMETRY” as defined by Greek and Roman architects as well as Gothic master builders, and by the architects and painters of the Renaissance, from Leonardo to Palladio, is quite different from our modern term symmetry (bi-lateral symmetry). We cannot do better than to give the definition of Vitruvius: “Symmetry resides in the *correlation* by measurement between the various elements of the plan, and between each of these elements and the whole...As in the human body... it proceeds from proportion the proportion—the Greeks called *analogia*—and achieves *consonance* between every part and the whole...When every important part of the building is thus conveniently set in *proportion* by the right correlation between height and width, between width and depth, and when all these parts also have their place in the total symmetry of the building, we obtain *eurhythmy*.”

Rhythm is in time what symmetry is in space.

WALTER THIRRING AND JOSEPH NEEDHAM
FIELD FORCES

MODERN THEORETICAL PHYSICS...has put our thinking about the essence of matter in a different context. It has taken our gaze from the visible—the particles—to the underlying entity, the field. The presence of matter is merely a disturbance of the perfect state of the field at that place; something accidental, one could almost say, merely a blemish. Accordingly, there are no simple laws describing the forces between elementary particles...Order and symmetry must be sought in the underlying field.

The Chinese physical universe in ancient and medieval times was a perfectly continuous whole. Ch'i condensed in palpable matter was not particulate in any important sense, but individual objects acted and reacted with all other objects in the world... in a wavelike or vibratory manner dependent, in the last resort, on the rhythmic alternation at all levels of the two fundamental forces, the yin and the yang. Individual objects thus had their intrinsic rhythms. And these were integrated...into the general pattern of the harmony of the world.

STEPHANE MALARMÉ
FROM "A TOMB FOR ANATOLE"

O EARTH—YOU DO NOT
GROW ANYTHING
—pointless
—I who
honor you—
bouquets
vain beauty

child sprung from
the two of us—showing
us our ideal, the way
—ours! father
and mother who
sadly existing
survive him as
the two extremes—
badly coupled in him
and sundered
—from whence his death—o-
bliterating this little child "self"

FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

LANGUAGE AND WRITING are two different systems of signs;
the only purpose of the latter is to represent the former.
Linguistics is not concerned
with the connection between the written and spoken word—
its sole object is the latter: the spoken word.
~~But the written word is so closely bound up with the spoken,
whose image it is, that it is increasingly arrogating
the main role to itself/
Ultimately the point is reached
where more importance is attached to representation
of the spoken sign than to this sign itself.
It's like thinking that to know someone,
It is better to look at his photograph than his face.~~

ITALO CALVINO

CITIES AND EYES

WHEN YOU HAVE FORDED THE RIVER, when you have crossed
the mountain pass, you suddenly find before you the
city of Moriana, its alabaster gates *transparent* in the sun-
light, its coral columns supporting pediments encrusted
with serpentine, its villas all of glass like aquariums where
the shadows of dancing girls with silvery scales swim be-
neath the medusa-shaped chandeliers. This is not your first
journey, you already know that cities like this have an obverse:
You have only to walk in a semicircle and you will come
into view of Moriana's *hidden* face, an expanse of rusting
sheet metal, sackcloth, planks bristling with spikes, pipes
black with soot, piles of tins, blind walls with *fading*
signs, frames of staved-in straw chairs, ropes good only for
hanging oneself from a rotten beam.

From one part to the other, the city seems to continue, in per-
spective, multiplying its repertory of images: but instead it has
no thickness, it consists only of a face and an obverse, like a
sheet of paper, with a figure on either side, which can neither
be separated nor look at each other.

PAULA WOLFERT

LENTILS WITH SPINACH AND LEMON

INGREDIENTS $\frac{1}{2}$ pound lentils
1 cup sliced onions
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh coriander
10 ounces frozen spinach leaves, completely thawed
and roughly chopped
2 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice, or more to taste
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

EQUIPMENT Saucepan with cover
Large stainless steel or
enameled casserole

WORKING TIME 15 minutes

COOKING TIME 1 hour 20 minutes

Serves six

Wash and pick over lentils. Place in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil. Cook, covered, about 20 minutes.

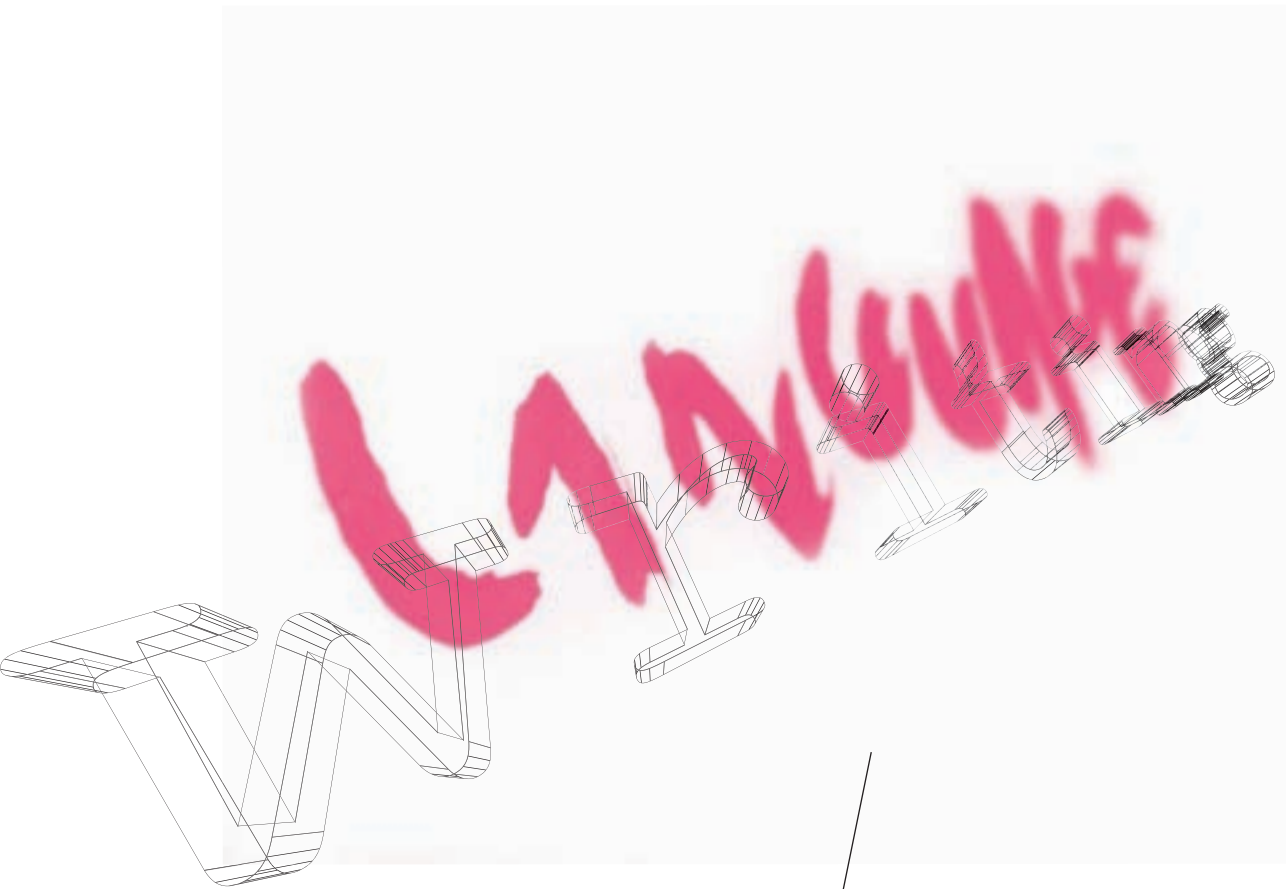
Meanwhile, in a large casserole, brown the onions in oil. Stir in the garlic and coriander. Add the spinach and sauté 5 to 6 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the potatoes, lentils, and enough lentil cooking liquid to cover. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, lower the heat, and simmer 1 hour or until thick and soupy.

Stir in the lemon juice.

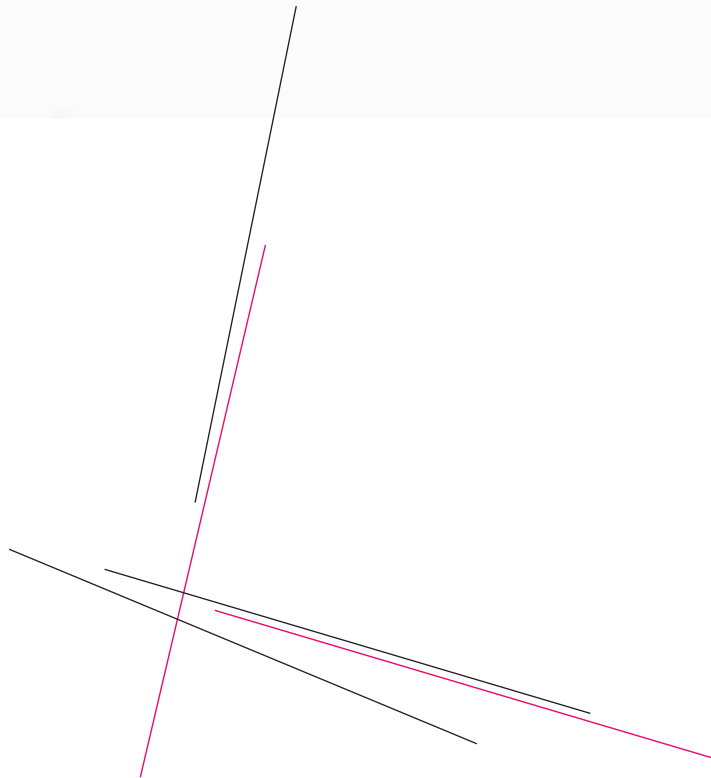
CONCEPT

EXPRESSING DE SAUSSURE

EXTRACTING MEANING FROM SPOKEN AND WRITTEN



systemofsigns



Linguistics

IS NOT CONCERNED WITH THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD-

spoken

ITS SOLE OBJECT IS THE LETTER: THE SPOKEN WORD.

representation of the spoken sign

this sign itself



Language and writing are two different systems of signs; the only purpose of the latter is to represent the former. Linguistics is not concerned with the connection between the written and spoken word—its sole object is the latter: the spoken word. But the written word is so closely bound up with the spoken, whose image it is, that it is increasingly arrogating the main role to itself/ Ultimately the point is reached where more importance is attached to representation of the spoken sign than to this sign itself. It's like thinking that to know someone, It is better to look at his photograph than his face.

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SEQUENCE

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

DE SAUSSURE SO VALUED SPEAKING
OVER WRITING THAT HE DESTROYED HIS
LECTURE NOTES. THE PARTS OF THE
TEXT REFERRING TO THE WRITTEN ARE
THEREFORE STRUCK THROUGH IN
THE VERSION FINISHED.

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PHOTOGRAPH

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*ghazaleh
etezal*

FEBRUARY 2007
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