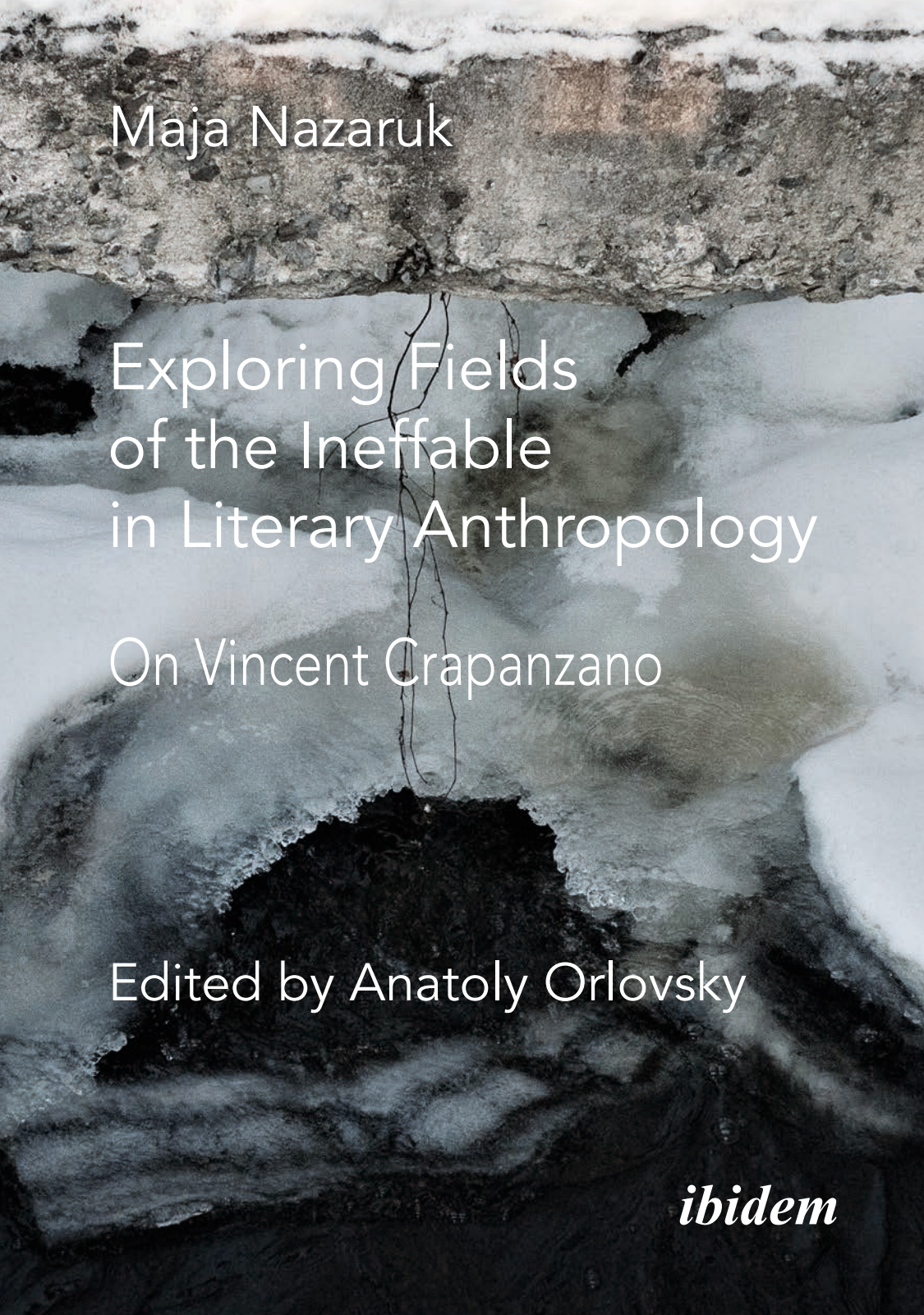




Maja Nazaruk

Exploring Fields
of the Ineffable
in Literary Anthropology

On Vincent Crapanzano

Edited by Anatoly Orlovsky

ibidem

Maja Nazaruk

Exploring Fields of the Ineffable in Literary Anthropology

On Vincent Crapanzano

Edited by Anatoly Orlovsky

Maja Nazaruk

**EXPLORING FIELDS OF THE
INEFFABLE IN
LITERARY ANTHROPOLOGY**

On Vincent Crapanzano

Edited by Anatoly Orlovsky

ibidem
Verlag 

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Cover picture: © copyright 2023 by Anatoly Orlovsky

ISBN (Print): 978-3-8382-2050-5

ISBN (E-Book [PDF]): 978-3-8382-8050-9

© *ibidem*-Verlag, Hannover • Stuttgart 2026

Leuschnerstraße 40
30457 Hannover
Germany / Deutschland
info@ibidem.eu

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlags unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who commits any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in the EU

Publisher's Info

Maja Nazaruk offers a panoramic view of Vincent Crapanzano's anthropologically-poetic thinking about the ineffable aspects of life such as otherness, the outer limits of the body, and chthonic pain. In her view, the signature summation of Crapanzano's work is to be found in his spell-working ethnographies from Morocco, South Africa, France and the United States of America. By parsing the first sections of his opus on imaginary horizons, the Polish scholar unveils the anthropologist's impulse to resort to the rhetorical device of literary slippage—shifting meaning and the indeterminacy of meaning, in his intention to convey the “irreality of the (native's) imaginary.” Slippage is the pivot that makes Crapanzano switch between alterity (how the native feels foreign) and the themes of the body and trauma (that are coincidentally perceived as being foreign even to the persons to whom they belong). By bringing them to the common denominator of inquiry-driven prose poetry that underscores cultural critique and literary anthropology, Crapanzano offers a contemplation of the undefined nature of human existence. Delving into the problem of signification and of substance in the works of Judith Butler, Cathy Caruth, Elaine Scarry, Talal Assad, Mariella Pandolfi, Terence Turner, Johannes Herder, and Lacan, takes on special relevance.

A Polish national from Warsaw, Maja Nazaruk defended a doctoral dissertation at the University of Montreal about epistemology in the works of the founder of modern anthropology—Bronisław Malinowski. After novice trials with German, Russian, and Farsi, her interest in comparative literature drove her to successfully pursue the study of Italian literature in the original (not via translation) at Middlebury College in Vermont, the Ukrainian language at Harvard and the University of Greifswald, as well as the Lithuanian language at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. As an interdisciplinary researcher, she was a visiting professor of Québécois studies at the Federale Universidade in Brazil in 2011. Her recent articles about Vincent Crapanzano found a home in the

Ethnographic Review of the N.N. Miklouho-Maklay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (named after a 19th century explorer of Papua New Guinea known to every child in Moscow) at the Russian Academy of Sciences and the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*.

Preface

My book unveils how Vincent Crapanzano draws, “without *partis pris*, on a variety of modern critical traditions including psychoanalysis (Lacan), existentialism, and semiology” just like he did first back in 1981, when he wrote *Tuhami* (a fictionalised account of his non-structured interviews with a Moroccan day-labourer in a small tile factory).

Inspired by comparative literature, the montage shows how anthropologists deconstruct “overdetermined ethnographic encounters” by playing the therapeutic role and encouraging a “confessional discourse” concerning pain as the origin of language (Herder), pain being as vast as the remote cosmology of Seyfert Galaxies (Elaine Scarry), non-binary identity (Judith Butler), the body as a site of inscription (Mariella Pandolfi), the notion of speaking from the site of trauma (Cathy Caruth), composite bodies crashing to the floor like percussion instruments in an analysis of Körperdance (Sasha Waltz), asceticism (Talal Assad), the child, the mirror and the *semblable* (Lacan), the drive circuit, the *réel* (Lacan) and others.

Chronicling Crapanzano’s work, I emphasise how the literary anthropologist “constantly confronts a confusion of reality and fiction, truth and hallucination.” I share the apprehension that “the notion of realism” and objectivity in anthropological science are “sharply revealed as a Western convention.”

My analysis of Crapanzano’s references, which I explore like a graduate student equipped with an academic reader (compendium of articles), casts light on the “disturbing dream-like quality to his texts – rapid shifts of scene, tone, and perspective challenging the reader to accept a situation in which the real was a metaphor for the truth – not identical with it.” I go to the source, research the multiple academic leads and combine field-facts with philosophy.

Crapanzano “does not openly concoct a version of reality in collaboration with his informants but interprets to his readers (and

to himself in his role as author),” an equivalent to Bronisław Malinowski’s depiction of the “Trobriand point of view.”

Imagined Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology negotiates “a shared version of reality” of modern man and his “psychic world” with all the implicit “partial understandings, stop-gaps against confusions and anxieties elicited by the research situation.”

My non-linear and meandering montage is based on the comparative literature approach, which I complete with a systematic elucidation of Crapanzano’s fieldworks.

The citations in this preface are borrowed from James Clifford’s thrilling book review of Crapanzano’s psychological masterwork *Tuhami* (about a Moroccan man possessed by demons). James Clifford, who also wrote the blurb on the jacket of my work, published this afore-mentioned article on the 23rd of January 1981 in the journal *American Anthropologist*. May both my intellectual mentors find health and peace in old age—God bless.

During the making of this book, I received, most importantly, the invaluable support of the kind-hearted poetry editor of the University of Montreal socio-literary review *Possibles* Anatoly Orlovsky, whose stylistic recommendations and encyclopedic knowledge inspired all the twists and turns in my prose. I acknowledge his erudite translations of Paul Celan cited in the incipit of the introduction and conclusion of my work. My colleague inspired my work due to his creativity which he demonstrates in the field of data architecture, music composition, and photography. I wanted to create, through this book of literary anthropology, my own interdisciplinary universe just like Anatoly Orlovsky invents breathtaking musical scores (in the classical contemporary style) for piano, violin, flute, cello, and voice as well as languages that program the life of computers.

I am deeply grateful to Jeremiah Wallace for his final proof-reading of the manuscript, in addition to Anatoly’s wonderful contribution. My sincere thanks also go to Mouloud Belabdi for his invaluable assistance with the Harki file and to Dr. Melissa Park for collegially sharing resources related to narratives in medical anthropology and Jean-Luc Nancy’s singular-plural pronouns.

The physical preparation of the manuscript would have been impossible without the caring assistance of Wassif Cheikh. I would not forget Jakob Horstmann who first recommended my book to Christoph Ohlwärther at *ibidem* Press.

Table of Contents

Publisher's Info.....	1
Preface.....	7
Imagination and the ineffable in Vincent Crapanzano's	
anthropology	15
Before the word, there was the native	19
I. The native, being	27
The backdrop.....	28
Self-reflexivity	30
Pronouns.....	31
Objectivity.....	37
The problem of representation.....	38
Temporal relegation	39
The thesis of Crapanzano's Imaginative Horizons	40
Slippage.....	42
Imperfect approach	43
Neutralizing slippage.....	45
A solution to the problem of signification.....	49
Newly coined concepts and a new literary language	49
My theory is based on three points	50
How text-play applies to Crapanzano	52
Second case of native subjects: The Apache.....	52
Postulating non-being (silence) to create full-being (plenitude)	58
Conclusions about the deconstruction of the Navajo and Apache noble savage myth	59
Imaginative horizons like the immaterial breath of God	60

II. Literary Anthropology, abstract embroidery	63
Summary of the argument up-to-date	63
Less accessible	64
Criteria for assessing works of anthropology	66
III. Body, being	69
First premise – The body cannot be fixed.....	70
Second premise – The primary elements of the body.....	71
Introducing the subject I – Terence Turner on failing to define the body	72
Introducing the subject II – The body and the Vitruvian template of world order.....	73
The Sara people of Southern Chad.....	74
On gender theory – Making sense of Judith Butler’s heterosexual matrix and non-binary identity	77
On gender theory – Bodies playing (performance) & Bodies creating a meaningful story (discursive performativity)	78
On gender theory – Body as a situation (position, place or seat) of change: de Beauvoir.....	79
On gender theory – Stabilisation of identity into boy and girl.....	80
On gender theory – Legality of gender, stabilised or not.....	82
On gender theory – Homogeneous (purified) identities and disruptive identities	83
On gender theory – Only linguistically speaking, bodies that do not matter are abject.....	84
On gender theory – The body as site of inscription.....	85
On gender theory – How bodies come to matter	86
On gender theory – Social conventions naturalise sex	88
On gender theory – The source of social convention: citing the man-woman scene.....	89

On gender theory – One’s history of accumulated experiences acts like a filter that shapes gender behaviour ...	90
On the connection to otherness – Body is non-representable like the native	91
Beyond gender – Dance	92
Beyond gender – Direct experience: the only domain of the authentic	93
Beyond gender – The child, the mirror and the <i>semblable</i>	95
Beyond gender – <i>La petite mort</i> , or the little death.....	96
Parting remarks about the body	98
IV. Pain.....	99
A comment about writing, the undefined nature of pain and its mastery	99
About the presumed objectlessness of pain	101
Semiotics of pain.....	104
Pain as the origin of language.....	105
About how Crapanzano frames his reference to Herder in the chapter on pain	109
Language and pain are in an impossible relationship.....	111
Eros and Thanatos: on desire and self-projection by the human who loves himself like Narcissus.....	115
Cry and echo: sympathy	118
Pain flows like the eddies of sound in a fast violent river, or falls heavily like a stone thrown inside a well	119
Bakhtin’s grotesque & the modern body.....	120
Pain sometimes has an ugly head	121
Pain like Seyfert galaxies	123
“The larger the prisoner’s pain, the larger the torturer’s power”	126
Pandolfi and direct inscriptions in the body.....	128
Subverting from the roots up	130

Caruth and the radical disruption of buried trauma	132
How to bridge the hiddenness of trauma	135
Fate and the wound of repetition compulsion: Tasso, Freud, Caruth	137
Talal Asad's world: pain as discipline	140
Trial by ordeal and judicial torture	143
Asceticism	147
Penance	148
V. Trauma.....	151
"Man is sick at the source" and trauma occurs when our defences are punctured like a vesicle.....	151
Fantasy	153
Pain's true cause is not obvious.....	156
The drive circuit.....	159
The réel.....	161
VI. Footnote to ethnographies	165
The Hamadsha	165
Tuhami	166
Waiting in South Africa	174
Harkis	181
Interpretation	189
Bibliography.....	201
Index	209

Imagination and the ineffable in Vincent Crapanzano's anthropology

Stumme Herbstgerüche. Die
Sternblume, ungeknickt, ging
zwischen Heimat und Abgrund durch
dein Gedächtnis.

Eine fremde Verlorenheit war
gestalthaft zugegen,
du hättest
beinah gelebt.

Mute autumn smells. The
starflower, unbroken, passed
between home and chasm through
your memory.

A strange lostness was
palpably present, almost
you would
have lived.

Paul Celan, translated by
Anatoly Orlovsky

Crapanzano unmasks in *Imaginative Horizons* the impulse to describe ineffable aspects of life such as alterity and the adjacent problem of stereotype, issues related to an anthropological understanding of the body and how the latter suffers through chthonic pain and trauma. I intend to flesh out the content of his work related to the above existential and romantic themes, incarnated by the Chinese, Japanese, and Muslim concepts of *qi* (vital force and breath), *ma* (emptiness or space), and *barzakh* (the space between the living and the dead). The intention is to reveal the making of a paean dedicated to untangling the ritual madness and paradoxical ecstasy of holy mysteries and toils including transgression, remembrance, and world ending. Expressing the ineffable and unnameable aspects of human experience, in as many meandering ways as possible, despite resistance from the grammar, narration and word choice of ordinary language, forms the nucleus of this manuscript. Crapanzano celebrates the fertility of language in its ability to provide a subjective escape when all else fails, including analytical thinking.

My manuscript is a walk through the gallery of Crapanzano's anthropologically-poetic vignettes about the imaginative horizons that make up the body, otherness and pain, culminating in a signature summation of his spell-working ethnographies in Morocco, South Africa, France and the United States of America. Crapanzano's intention is to convey the "irreality of the [native's] imaginary" by listening to every man's passionate lament, the common existential denominator to which the native is also reduced through philosophical language.

The first section about the native is primordial because it is the defining characteristic of anthropology, the field in which Crapanzano specialises. By bursting open the problems related to intolerance, discrimination, racism, and the impossibility to offer a fair understanding to the native against the sincere imperative that the researcher gives himself in wanting to be well-meaning, Crapanzano positions himself as a philosopher of a discipline thoroughly aware of its inherent structural problems, notably of a temporal nature (we discuss here so-called structural problems of

time), in addition to structural problems related to the set of procedures available for the study of alterity that curb the *apriori* noble intentions of science.

I will discuss in my work his winks (similar to Clifford Geertz's winks in *Interpretation of Cultures*) made to the classic in this field, the work of Polish-born Johannes Fabian in his acclaimed book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, in which the latter anthropologist uses the umbrella-term *schizogenic visualism* to discuss the multiple ways in which the native is temporally relegated by those who study him. Stereotype-making will be fleshed out in detail as a consequence of the systemic framework disclosing how anthropology is delivered.

In the name of an overt reference to Johannes Fabian, it suffices to say that the main problem of interpersonal research lies in how we make out the Other with eyesight and how we perceive him sentimentally – the crux lies with a problem of vision, – of skewed vision.

Reality is more precisely apprehended, according to Alfred Korzybski, thanks to perception which is a conduit for abstractions that build themselves indefinitely into a structural differential through the stages of object level experience, the descriptive levels, inference and generalisation, as students of Gad Horowitz learned in the class entitled *Spirit of Democratic Citizenship* at the University of Toronto. This ties in with the research of Edward Said who speaks of the orientalising ways in which Westerners capture the essence of alterity in the Middle East. Particularly so when the native is named by Émile Benveniste, in his linguistics of dialogue, by recourse to the third-person subject pronoun (or even worse: the third-person object pronoun), which excludes him out of the conversation about himself by the simple arithmetic of language. On a similar note, Maurice Merleau-Ponty holds the view that the veracity and certainty of thoughts is dependent on perception as the kernel of the human psyche.

Informed by the above research, Crapanzano stands out as head of an anthropological school physically situated in New York with extensions, through the work of his graduate students and

perhaps maenads (wild female followers of Dionysius), in research satellites around the world on the grounds of his first-hand experience with the Navajo, the Apache, South-Africans, Harkis, etc.

He has been there—in the savannah, in the church and in the classroom: the primordial fields where he observed the human subject. It augurs well that the literary approach lets him celebrate spring and renewal after a life of ceaselessly practicing the science of anthropology.

A career in culture studies influences him to turn to the boon of language in order to alleviate systemic problems that plague investigations. He is not a writer aspiring to do research with natives because he is naively fascinated with otherness. He is a sober scientist who finds no way other than through the merit of language to cut open the scars that research leaves in the minds of every observed subject like Tuhami, as well as the scars that research leaves in the minds of anxious scientists who cannot repair the ill-doings of their own methods paradoxically destined to improve the relationship between self and Other. He is bedeviled by the cicatrix in the mind of existentialism and psychoanalysis to the point of eulogizing Freud and Lacan, and making frequent references in his writings about the body, pain, and trauma.

All of this converges to one point: the narrative poem about the native is the opening move of Crapanzano's literary peregrination into the human soul. A section unique in its style discusses, through the pen of Keith Basso, the concept of speaking-with-place-names in the Apache tradition, suggesting archetypes of homeland and belonging in the oral tradition. Although Crapanzano develops the themes of body, pain, trauma, hope, and the erotic in later stages of the work that carries the adjectival description "imaginative" in its name, the native unveils the clash inherent in the problem of alterity and the never-ending story of we-they cleavages, here present in the research situation.

Before turning inward to discuss the underpinnings of the inwards of the human condition—body, pain and trauma, Crapanzano asserts himself as an anthropologist. His professional oath calls for him to acknowledge the Other first. The work is a

speculation about man's rapport with the Other. All subsequent chapters of the essay on imaginative horizons outside of the chapter on the Navajo and the Apache are about an introspective *rêverie* pondering the sense of life including nihilistic despair. The staunch practitioner of anthropology (man of science) becomes a philosopher (man of letters).

The book marks a union of science and language (literarity to be more precise) that is an outcome of being a narrator first. To graduate from the (antonymous) ordeal and suaveness of lived reality, the anthropologist becomes an author when making his final report about the field situation; Clifford Geertz summed it in the title of his masterpiece—*Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as author*.

Crapanzano's final anthropological report expresses the enduring and endearing importance of the word in the discipline.

Before the word, there was the native

So the native starts the story — Crapanzano's first chapters (just like mine mirroring his own) are dedicated to the native before he opens up the discussion for the themes that ground human experience common to all men like the body, pain, and trauma.

In the end, it is shown that man looks inside himself trying to uncover his position vis-à-vis this unsung interlocutor that throws him on an imaginative roller-coaster (British English: *big dipper*) of self-discovery.

The perennial attempt at conveying the native's reality represents the first horizon that cannot be subsumed within the word. I identify the structural problem of time evoked above as one which leads writers to inevitably practise semiotic slippage; imperfect mimetic representation because signification is fissured. Slippage "points to the phenomenon where interpretations of a text or discourse diverge or 'slip' away from the intended or original meaning, leading to a range of possible understandings."

Slippage means mistakenly cross-posting inaccurate signifieds for particular signifiers due to the polysemic nature of language, which miscasts the subject and his concerns in a narrative

leading to possible caricatures, which belittle him or his interests because they are named, but their meaning is undercut. The disadvantage is writ large in the insufficiency of language leading to misinterpretation at the cost of simplifications, mimicry, and the proliferation of garbled information that paralyze the pen's rightness. In contrast to "the stability of the relationship between signifier and signified in Saussure's structuralist conception of language, as Lacan puts it, there is 'an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier:' a signifier leads only to another signifier, never to a signified." Derrida addresses this as the problem of the "inherent indeterminacy of meaning (see *différance*)."

It is nevertheless understood that sanity and communication are bound by the provisional illusion of the stability of meaning.

The myth of the noble savage is cited, through the allegory of the peasant, as one example of slippage; an instance of the creation of a monograph preceded by journaling where language distorts the truth to discriminate unwillingly by casting the subjects seized by the pen as Other since existing in a divergent foreign and perhaps exotic time frame. I am making allusions to the eternal aforementioned problem of time explicated by Fabian. In the case of the myth of the noble savage, which wrote in stone characteristics of the Other as a stock character, the contingent nature of interpretation allowed a more nuanced and open approach to engage with alterity. Meaning was shifted according to cultural references brought into play from outside to debunk stereotypes. In a Derridean sense, fixed and stable meanings were undercut due to the presence of ambiguity, paradoxes, and "undecidability" within texts. Perhaps inspired by the Russian formalist Shklovsky, current practice by anthropologists like Crapanzano defamiliarises the preconceived notions and expectations related to the noble savage myth by recourse to figurative language, poetic devices, and unconventional narrative techniques (like the one used on Crapanzano's monograph on South Africa).

Crapanzano calls his followers to neutralise slippage by engaging in the good fortune of a poetry that offers justice and consolation. His inclusive work reconnects through the philosophical