



Science *and* Literature:
Imagination,
Medicine *and* Space

Edited by
Kostas Tampakis, George N. Vlahakis

Language editing and formatting
Evangelia Chordaki

DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS 07

ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ | ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH | NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Science *and* Literature: Imagination, Medicine *and* Space

Science *and* Literature:
Imagination, Medicine *and* Space

Edited by
Kostas Tampakis, George N. Vlahakis

Language editing and formatting
Evangelia Chordaki

Artistic Design and Layout
Christos Simatos, Marianna Poga
www.psdesign.gr

ISBN: 978-960-7905-78-9

© 2020 Institute of Historical Research
Section of Neohellenic Research
National Hellenic Research Foundation
48 Vassileos Constantinou Ave., 116 35 Athens, Greece
Tel. +302107273554, Fax +302107273629, ie@ie.gr
Institute of Historical Research Bookstore
<https://history-bookstore.iec.gr/en/>

The project entitled "ANAVATHMIS. Historical research and digital applications" (MIS 5002357) is implemented under the "Action for the Strategic Development on the Research and Technological Sector", funded by the Operational Programme "Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation" (NSRF 2014-2020) and co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Regional Development Fund).



Science *and* Literature: Imagination, Medicine *and* Space

Edited by.
Kostas Tampakis, George N. Vlahakis

Language editing and formatting
Evangelia Chordaki

DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS 07



ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ | ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH | NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION

ATHENS 2020

INTRODUCTION ON ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS

Kostas Tampakis

National Hellenic Research Foundation

George N. Vlahakis

Hellenic Open University

“For an answer which cannot be expressed, the question too cannot be expressed.” Thus urges us Ludwig Wittgenstein, in the famous 6.5 proposition of *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, first published in 1921, but translated in English in 1922. Far be it from us to try and explicate the meaning of this proposition in all its glory. A more modest use for the purposes of this introduction, however, would be to ponder a specific answer which cannot be easily expressed, and its accompanying, equally difficult, question: When can we say that an academic field is flourishing? And more specifically, how can we express in objective and unquestionable terms, the belief of the editors of the volume that the field of Science and Literature is flourishing?

Perhaps we should follow the later Wittgenstein and base our belief not in word but in action (Wittgenstein 1969). And indeed, it is hard to ignore how the field of Science and Literature has bloomed if one looks at the thriving journals, such as *Configurations* and the *Journal of Science and Literature*, the conferences from the British Society for Literature and Science, the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts and the Commission on Science and Literature of DHST/IUHPST and the many outstanding, and too numerous to mention, books that have been produced on the subject. Alternatively, we could focus on the various book series devoted on the subject by publishers and universities alike.

Or perhaps, we could narrow our focus even more, and look at the collection of papers in this volume “Science and Literature: Imagination, Medicine and Space” and in its sister volume, “Science and Literature: Poetry and Prose”. Collectively, these essays represent a range of scholars working in periods from the 18th century to the 20th, in spaces as far apart as Greece, Uruguay, Australia and Trinidad and in topics ranging from quantum physics to the plague. To do so, they bring to bear an equally varied set of methodologies and theoretical apparatus from literary studies, epistemology, philosophy of technology, history of science and psychoanalysis. If we were to use an admittedly biased and situated viewpoint based solely on these two volumes, we would have to conclude that Science and Literature is a vibrant, diverse field where scholars from different disciplines converge. This was certainly true for the first three International

Science and Literature Conferences of the Commission on Science and Literature of DHST/IUHPST, from 2014 onwards, which acted as the springboard for this collection. We expect it will also be true in the future.

Each of the two volumes has been structured around specific themes that we believe link its papers. This was not a conscious decision made from the start, but rather the recognition of leitmotifs that we identified when the articles were placed side by side. For the first volume, the themes are “Imagination, Medicine and Space”. The fourteen papers have been thus grouped in three sections, each corresponding to one of the themes. The first, *Imagination*, is understood not only as an analytical category on its own right, but also as a way forward for the field as a whole. In a way that Wittgenstein himself would probably approve, the articles contained in the section seem to describe possible contours and directions of future research, rather than delineate a strict academic field. A telling example is the first paper by Pauline Choay-Lescar, which discusses exploration and its use in the scientific enterprise and the narratives offered by literary theory. Dustin Hellberg continues the border-straddling tone by examining how the thought of Pierce can bring science and literature to an epistemic concilience. The essay by Charalampos Kokkinos tackles the multifaceted concept of the technological artifact, and how it straddles narratives and fields. Tefkros Michaelides moves from imagination to inspiration, through his analysis of Gödel’s theorem as a source for literary production. The sixth and final paper of the *Imagination* section is by Marion Simonin, who appropriately examines intuition and imagination in the poetry of the Franco-Uruguayan poet Jules Supervielle (1884 - 1960), who was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature three times. A nominal opponent of automatic writing and surrealist poetry, Supervielle nevertheless adopted and contributed to much of the panoplia of modernist poetry.

Medicine is a tragically relevant topic in these pandemic times. That it would become such a notorious subject would have surprised us greatly four years ago, when the first papers under the homonymous second section were presented. Life imitates art, it is said, so perhaps Science and Literature can also appear prophetic. Lena Arampatzidou breaks new ground by promoting and delineating the term Medical Humanities, as a way that Medicine and Literature can ‘treat each other’. Aureo Lustosa Guerios discusses the archetypical plague, cholera, in the works of Poe and Pushkin. Denise Pereira examines Luís Cebola’s 1955 *Patografia De Antero De Quental* for a way that poetry can act as a source for psychiatric diagnosis, but also science can add to literary theory. Eleonora Ravizza carefully analyses V. S. Naipaul’s *A Way In The World* to bring to the fore the hybridity of medical and literary discourse, while the final sixth paper of the section by Cristina Vidruțiu and Radu Cucuteanu goes in the other temporal direction and examines how Audoin-Rouzeau, writing under the pseudonym Fred Vargas writes of the plague.

The third and concluding section is *Space*, appearing not only as a geographical denomination, but also as an imaginary *topos* and as the site of a specific activity. Polyxeni Giannakopoulou discusses Science and Literature in 19th century public space, a novel way of approaching their interaction. Panagiotis Lazos and George Vlahakis examine the Greek Philological Association of Constantinople as another site where scientific materiality, in the form of instruments, and public science interacted. The contributions of Rosemary Lucadou-Wells & John F. Bourke discuss the mystery drama film “Picnic at Hanging Rock” (1975) and interprets it as a literary text to discuss the interaction of science and literature. Finally Marion Roussel examines Cyberspace, perhaps the most literary and postmodern of spaces, to shed new light on what happens when “technology grabs cyberpunk”.

The range of essays collected here also presents a host of narrative styles and modes of academic expression. As editors, we made a conscious decision to include and welcome submissions of any length and style, from the most rigorously academic to the more experimental. The contributors to these two volumes hail not only from academia, but are also artists, independent scholars and passionate enthusiasts of local history and art. We believe that one of the strengths of the field of Science and Literature is its interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, or even, it’s a-disciplinary. In the future, it may be the case that it has acquired its own formal language and mode of expression. In the present tense, we feel its diversity should be celebrated.

If the reader, after perusing the two sister volumes of “Science and Literature”, identifies topics and themes that remain unexplored or only partially discussed, then this collection of essays has fulfilled one of its goals. Like some of our earlier attempts in navigating the Science and Literature scholarship, these essays are meant to act as a snapshot of the fruitfulness of the field and as a call to action for its still further development (Vlahakis, Skordoulis, Tampakis 2014). Or to go back to Wittgenstein: “Whereof one can speak, thereof one should not be silent”. Does that not entail that, if something is missing in the Science and Literature scholarship, we should strive to speak of it?

References

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1969. *On certainty*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Vlahakis, George N., Skordoulis Kostas & Kostas Tampakis. 2014. “Introduction: Science and Literature Special Issue.” *Science & Education*, 23.3: 521-526.