

The Limits of Expression

Taking as its starting point what is sometimes called ‘the prison house of language’ – the widespread feeling that language falls terribly short when it comes to articulating the rich and disparate contents of the human mental tapestry – this book sets out a radically new view of the interplay between language, literature and mind. Shifting the focus from the literary text itself to literature as a case of human agency, it reconsiders a wide range of interdisciplinary issues including the move from World to Mind, the existence or otherwise of a property of literariness or essence of art, the nature of literature as a unique output of human cognition and the possible distinctiveness of the mind that creates it. In constant dialogue with philosophy, linguistics and the cognitive sciences, it offers an invaluable new treatment of literature and literary language and sketches novel directions for literary study in the twenty-first century.

PATRICIA KOLAITI is a lecturer at New York College, Athens. From 2011 to 2014, she was an associate researcher with the Balzan project on ‘Literature as an Object of Knowledge’ based at St John’s College Research Centre, Oxford. She is a published poet, and her collection *Celesteia* (2007) was nominated for the 2008 First Book Diavazo Award in Greece.

The Limits of Expression

Language, Literature, Mind

Patricia Kolaiti

New York College, Athens



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-40629-1 — The Limits of Expression
Patricia Kolaiti
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108406291

DOI: 10.1017/9781108290746

© Patricia Kolaiti 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

First paperback edition 2021

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Names: Kolaiti, Patricia, 1976- author.

Title: The limits of expression : language, literature, mind / Patricia Kolaiti.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018034114 | ISBN 9781108418669 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Psycholinguistics. | Literature—Psychology.

Classification: LCC P37 .K5928 2019 | DDC 401—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018034114>

ISBN 978-1-108-41866-9 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-40629-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page vi</i>
Introduction	1
1 The Question of Expressibility or How Far It Is Possible to Speak Our Mind	5
2 Language, World and Mind	14
3 The Curse of the Phenomenal: A Case from Kinaesthesia	28
4 After Structural Essentialism What? Implications for the Inadequacy of Language Thesis	46
5 Literature as Artefact versus Literature as a Cognitive Object: Implications for Linguistic Pessimism	57
6 Literature as Meaning versus Literature as Experience	76
7 Interdisciplinarity, Theory and the Sciences of Mind	95
<i>Afterword</i>	130
<i>References</i>	132
<i>Index</i>	143

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Deirdre Wilson, for being the brilliant thinker she is, a constant source of inspiration and support – moral, intellectual and financial – throughout the five years of my PhD and such great fun to work with. Also, many thanks to my great friend Tim Wharton without whom this book would have never come out. Many thanks to my second PhD supervisor, Robyn Carston, for her very constructive input and to Billy Clark, Anne Furlong and Alan Durant for insightful comments and suggestions for development of my arguments; to Dan Sperber and Francois Recanati for their suggestions during the ‘International Workshop on Word Meaning, Concepts and Communication, Cumberland Lodge, London, 2005’; to the participants in the ‘International Workshop in Poetic Effects, Paris, 2006’ – and particularly Adrian Pilkington, Elizabeth Camp, Diane Blakemore and Robyn Carston for the long discussion on ‘phenomena’; to Christina Kolaiti for our occasional discussions on visual art; to Valeria Medkova for our discussions during the six months I was working on this book at the island of Amorgos; to the audience of the ‘Dasein Lectures in Philosophy, Athens, 2008’ for the long, challenging discussion after my talk on ‘Art as an Action’; to Terence Cave and the participants of the Balzan project on ‘Literature as an Object of Knowledge’ and particularly the participants of the Balzan workshop on ‘Concepts, St John’s College, Oxford, 2011’ and the Colloquium on ‘Thinking with Literature’, Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature, Oslo, 2013 for the stimulating discussions on literature as a cognitive object; to the poets participating in the Vortex Studio round table discussions, Athens, 2014–2016 and particularly, to my friends, poets Katerina Iliopoulou and Iana Bukova for our frequent stimulating discussions; to Louis de Saussure and the students of the MA in Cognitive Science and MA in Language and Communication, The Cognitive Institute, University of Neuchatel, Switzerland, 2015 for the clever questions they raised after my talk ‘Literature as a Cognitive Object’; to my friend and colleague Anna Hatzidaki for the electronic books she resourced for me during the final revision of this book and also to my students and colleagues in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National and

Kapodistrian University of Athens for valuable discussions. Also, many thanks to Patrick Colm Hogan for his constructive comments in the final revision of this book; to my sponsors, the Lilian Voudouri Public Benefit Foundation, the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the UCL Graduate School for funding my MA and doctoral studies and to New York College, Athens for its support in completing this book. Finally, I would like to thank my ex-partner for being a constant source of intellectual, moral and financial support throughout my academic studies.

An earlier version of Chapter 3 appeared as 'The curse of the perceptual: a case from kinaesthesia' in the *Journal of Literary Semantics* 46, 1 (2017): 47–65; an early version of Chapter 7 appeared as 'The Naturalist turn in literary and art study: two-way interdisciplinarity and the sciences of Mind' in *Studies in English Language Teaching* 5, 2 (2017): 277–294.