In this paper, I examine interactions between literature and science through the emergence of an epistemological shift associated with the discovery of electromagnetism. As this discovery was revolutionizing physics, it offered a new material foundation to re-conceptualize modes of poetic communication that could operate beyond mimesis. In his study on André Breton’s Surrealism, Julien Gracq links electromagnetism with what he called the “volatile imagination.” Through a literary and scientific genealogy of the “volatile imagination,” and through examples from authors such as Francis Ponge and Gaston Bachelard, I argue that electromagnetic phenomena contributed to legitimizing a rapprochement between science and literature that hinged on the rehabilitation of the creative and scientific value of analogical thinking based on metonymic association.

**Keywords:** Francis Ponge, Gaston Bachelard, Julien Gracq, Electromagnetism, Metonymy.