
Brad Pasanek. *Metaphors of Mind: An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2015. Pp. xv, 382. US\$49.95.

Now *this* is an impressive book. And it's only half the story. For ten years, Brad Pasanek has been trawling online repositories of eighteenth-century writing and assembling his own database of metaphors along the way. Starting with a small group of keywords related to the mind, he uses search technology to locate metaphorical "collocates," words from other semantic domains used by eighteenth-century writers to describe the mind. He's been busy. His database contains more than ten thousand quotations from the long eighteenth century, sorted into a range of categories. The entire database is available to view and download on his website (see "About," *The Mind is a Metaphor*). Users can sift through metaphors by publication date, the author's gender or political affiliation, or type of metaphor (is the mind a government, a room, or a fettered slave?). This book is a companion to the website, an analytic introduction to this fascinating work-in-progress.

Pasanek has aptly subtitled the text "An Eighteenth-Century Dictionary." It is not simply a dictionary of eighteenth-century metaphors—it is a very *eighteenth-century* dictionary. Pasanek calls himself a "desultory reader" (15) and describes his vast database as a "commonplace book" (1). He argues that the old eighteenth-century practice of commonplacing should be revived in the age of the online database—how Dr. Johnson would have loved a search engine to help him browse! Pasanek's argument is timely. In the decade-and-a-half since Franco Moretti's mischievous call for a new kind of "distant reading" (Moretti 15), debates about reading and computers have often descended into polemical name-calling. Pasanek humorously defuses this conflict with his image of the desultory reader, who reads neither closely nor distantly but browses the great unread with amiable curiosity. This does not rule out other kinds of reading, and one can read "at a variety of scales" throughout the book, zooming in to examine particular examples and out to observe broad trends (Pasanek 16).

The results are captivating. In eleven thought-provoking chapters, Pasanek introduces eleven different fields of metaphor. Eighteenth-century minds are

compared to animals, coinage, courts, empires, impressions, fetters, inhabitants, metal, mirrors, rooms, and writing. Readers probably know M. H. Abrams' classic argument that the eighteenth century saw the mind as a passive mirror, while the Romantics saw it as an active lamp. Pasanek paints a rather different picture, and his evidence is overwhelming. Only 2.4% of his eighteenth-century metaphors call the mind a mirror, while light metaphors are two-and-a-half times more frequent, at 6.1% (Pasanek 332, n. 1). By far the most numerous are metaphors that call the mind a government: more than 18% (296, n. 1). Governments may be many things, but they aren't Abrams' passive receivers.

As he proceeds, Pasanek develops a range of arguments about the nature of metaphor and eighteenth-century concepts of mind. His approach has many striking aspects, but two stand out. First, he shows how "alterable and adaptable" metaphors are: "[T]hey need not determine the uses to which they are put" (60). Iron and steel might be hard and strong. But writers can describe iron hearts in different ways: hearts and minds might be "*steeled* by courage, love, principles, and maxims, or rancor, habit, scorn and revenge" (186; emphasis in original). Second, Pasanek draws insightful links between developments in metaphor and developments in society. Coinage metaphors are linked to the recoinage after the Restoration (55–59). Images of the mind as a "room" have complex relationships with real "bourgeois interiors" and older aristocratic or monastic places where people think (206).

Pasanek frames the book as a "work of reference" (249) and a "portal" to the website (259). He writes for desultory readers like himself. And indeed, the experience of reading it through was at times disorienting. Pasanek has an awful lot to say, and the book teems with examples and insights. It would have been helpful if he had engaged in a little more distant reading to draw it all together, but he is reluctant to do so. At the beginning of each chapter, he lists the "Collected Keywords" and "Count of Metaphors in Database": the 329 "fetters" metaphors, for instance, include the keywords "bond," "chain," "fetter," "iron," and "shackle." But he performs little further quantitative analysis, except for a few comments relegated to the endnotes. He makes little of the three rather interesting graphs he does provide (12, 93, 188). Perhaps this stems from anxieties about his sampling method. On the website, he writes that he "would be more confident in presenting a statistical picture of eighteenth-century discourse" if he had a computerised method for collecting metaphors for the database ("About"). But there is no reason to think that his desultory method should produce an unrepresentative sample. Indeed, his first graph (12) demonstrates that his sample includes a balanced range of examples from every decade of the eighteenth century and every major

genre. His website shows that his sample includes authors of various genders, nationalities, and political persuasions. And metaphor is probably not the ideal context for machine-learning anyway. As he observes, “[t]he metaphor appears only in analysis” (220). Readers must interpret subtle signs to determine whether language is literal or figurative, and present-day computers make poor interpreters.

These are quibbles. Readers who want statistics can easily download the whole database as a .csv file from the website and analyse it themselves. The website is in fact one of the book’s most attractive elements. Pasanek has made it possible for his readers to criticise or complete any aspect of his argument with ease.

Pasanek describes his book as a “dictionary,” but I think another analogy is just as appropriate. He is an eighteenth-century popular antiquarian of the type so memorably described by Marilyn Butler (Butler 123–61). His database is like Strawberry Hill, the gothic mansion Horace Walpole stuffed with eccentrically-arranged curiosities. In his Waiting Room, John Dryden’s head jostled with a Gothic altar and some antique bellows. In Pasanek’s gothic mansion, the lofty Neo-Platonist Ralph Cudworth jostles against a popular story from the *Lady’s Magazine* (199). Pasanek’s book is like one of Walpole’s catalogues, guiding the curious and open-minded in their rambles through his cabinet of curiosities. It’s certainly worth the effort.

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Works Cited

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