Metaphor and Genre: The Presence and Role of Metaphor in the Building Review

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The present paper is concerned with metaphors used by architects as illustrated in the genre of the building review. The analysis is done on a corpus of 95 texts drawn from six architectural design magazines, and focuses on (a) the grammatical instantiation of the metaphors, (b) the locus of occurrence within the genre’s rhetorical structure, and (c) the purposes they fulfil in the genre. The conclusion is that architects make active use of both conceptual and image metaphors in order to fulfil the two defining purposes of the review genre, namely, describe and evaluate. In this sense, metaphor is regarded not only as a constitutive part of architects’ jargon, but also as an important rhetorical device at the service of the goals of that specific discourse interaction (covering issues of writer–reader relationship and textual coherence and cohesion). Finally, the discussion also addresses the knotty issue of metaphor classification, and proposes a combination of cognitive and discourse procedures in order to approach the differences between metaphor types.

INTRODUCTION

Some time ago, I had repairs done at home. While telling the workers what to do, I overheard the architect saying, ‘The worst part is to fix this wall . . . See how it bellies out’. I looked at the wall and there it was, it had a protruding bulge that resembled a belly. The expression brought to my mind two of the tenets in cognitive linguistics: the indispensability of metaphor in conceptualizing the world and our experience in it, and its ubiquity in all sorts of communicative situations.

Nevertheless, despite the vast amount of theoretical discussion on metaphor, there are still few studies that integrate insights from cognitive theory with discourse analytic procedures in order to explore its role in communication. Thus, many accounts of figurative schemas and language are still mainly concerned with: (a) what is conceptualized in terms of something else and how this process takes place; (b) cognitive rhetoric (continuing to explore literature as the default domain in metaphor research); and (c) the metaphorical motivation of decontextualized language items (e.g. proverbs, idioms, or prepositions). In short, the interest in unearthing the cognitive motivations and processes at work in metaphor has led to neglect of its linguistic realization and discourse role. This is unfortunate, given the stress laid by metaphor scholars in general on the crucial importance of metaphor in discourse interaction.
A shift in focus can be discerned in recent work by cognitive and applied linguists. This is illustrated by Gibbs's (1999: 151) remark that a true understanding of the relationship between conceptual schemas and linguistic expressions cannot be effected without considering ‘the cultural contexts in which conceptual metaphors arise and support particular uses of language’. Taking this premise as its starting point, this paper is concerned with exploring the kind of metaphors used by architects as they appear in one of the genres that articulate their discourse interactions, namely, the building review. This exploration implies studying figurative phenomena in their real context of occurrence as well as taking into account both the cognitive and linguistic schemas involved.

In this sense, the main objective is to draw attention to the rhetorical potential of metaphor framing it within such a purposeful and typified activity as genre. This aims to restore as the centre of attention the linguistic and textual aspect of metaphor as an instrument of both cognition and communication. At the same time, the ensuing discussion may lead to a reconsideration of some neglected aspects of metaphor description in mainstream cognitive linguistics, especially the categories into which metaphor has been classified within the theory.

A DISCOURSE APPROACH TO METAPHOR

Common ground to metaphor scholars—irrespective of their views on metaphor production and comprehension—is that human reasoning is essentially metaphorical. Yet, the attempts to re-establish the cognitive status of metaphor have, paradoxically, resulted in a diminished interest in its linguistic realization and syntax. This has led to a mismatch between the communicative significance attributed to figurative schemas and the number of approaches actually adopting a discursive standpoint in metaphor research. This situation has been criticized by several scholars on the grounds that, in order to reach a full understanding of metaphor, we need to approach the phenomenon taking into account the real communicative contexts in which it occurs—and which it helps to structure. Their views are fully voiced by Cameron:

What I’m arguing for . . . is the centrality of the contextual nature of language in use; the human and discourse context of language use is inherent in the joint construction of discourse goals and in the use of metaphor to achieve those goals. Processing metaphorical language takes place in context and draws on the discourse expectations of participants. It follows that the theoretical frameworks used to operationalise metaphor must do so too. (Cameron 1999: 25)

This perspective on metaphor involves dealing with two issues. The first concerns how to distinguish metaphor from non-metaphorical language in texts, an aspect usually understated within cognitive linguistics and critically
addressed by applied linguists, as illustrated by recent attempts to devise an
analytical procedure for metaphor identification (Steen 1999b, 2002). The
second issue involves deciding on what aspects of metaphor should be the
focus of study. Interesting insights into this can be drawn from the growing
body of research applying discourse analytical methods to exploring the role
of metaphor in communicative contexts, even if the different studies are still
far from representing a unified body of research working from similar
premises or focusing on similar aspects.

Thus, research on professional communication has started to pay attention
to the figurative language permeating the discourse of disciplines such as
Economics (Henderson 1994; Boers and Demecheleer 1997), Politics (Howe
1988; Winter 1989; Chilton 1996) or Medicine (Sontag 1979; Webber 1996).
The discussion has usually centred on the figurative motivation of their
specialized jargon (often considering further application to the LSP class-
room), as well as on the role of metaphor in persuasive practices like, for
instance, political argumentation (Voss et al. 1992) or advertising (Piller 1999).

In other words, research has mostly focused on the ideational and
interpersonal roles of metaphor, rather than on textual aspects such as its
contribution to textual cohesion or topic development. This is also the case in
the few studies devoted to architectural discourse (Medway 1999, 2000; Forty
2000; Markus and Cameron 2002), where metaphorical language has often
been explained as meeting disciplinary demands at critical moments of theory
formation (Forty 2000) as well as fulfilling architects’ communicative needs
when interacting with people outside the community who, as Ackerman and
Oates (1996: 92) put it, ‘don’t see . . . don’t think visually’.

The neglect of the textual role of metaphor is especially noticeable in those
cases that attempt to explore the import of figurative language in professional
communication, and usually do so from the perspective of a particular genre.
Given that the main assumption in genre research is that the textual
patterned of generic exemplars is constrained by and reflects ideational
(topic) and interpersonal factors (audience and genre’s goals), it seems odd
that the interest in how metaphor fulfills both aspects in specific genres has
not also provoked some reflection upon how metaphor actually appears
within their rhetorical structure.

Insights into the discourse management function of metaphor can be
drawn from Low (1997), Drew and Holt (1998), and Moon (1998). These
scholars discuss this management function with regard to two related
aspects. In the first place, they explore the contribution of metaphor to
introducing, changing, or closing the topic(s) discussed in a text, as
illustrated in the clustering of metaphorical expressions at specific loci
marking topic boundaries. The second focus of interest is the role of
metaphor in creating lexical cohesion networks throughout text, framing the
functional units of discourse. The unstated assumption is that investigating
metaphor in discourse involves exploring how people conceptualize and
verbalize their particular experience(s) in the world through metaphor
without losing sight of all the other factors shaping discourse interactions. This asks for attention to the grammatical form, location, and density of metaphor in texts, and relating these to the specific goals of the participants in the interaction under analysis.

In this connection, genre may provide a reasonable (and, at the same time, manageable) context which will allow for a shift in focus from the what towards the how and the why in metaphor research. The main reason for this rests upon the comprehensive nature of genre, defined by Devitt in the following terms:

Genre is patterns and relationships, essentially semiotic ones, that are constructed when writers and groups of writers identify different writing tasks as being similar. Genre constructs and responds to recurring situations, becoming visible through perceived patterns in the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of particular texts. Genre is truly, therefore, a maker of meaning. (Devitt 1993: 580)

In this respect, approaching metaphor from a genre vantage may be a way to go beyond the level of lexis (i.e. metaphor’s contribution to disciplinary jargon) to place the emphasis on how metaphor may reveal the world-view of a community, fulfil several rhetorical purposes, and contribute to the unfolding of text according to the genre’s conventions. The importance of this last aspect lies in the fact that the textual patterning of genres ultimately reflects such key factors shaping genre activity as audience and rhetorical goal(s). Accordingly, reflecting upon the location of metaphor within the rhetorical structure of texts may be a good source of information about all those other factors involved. This implies a view of metaphor as functionally constrained both at conceptual and discourse levels in contrast to a view of metaphor as an independent mechanism reflecting subjective authorial choices, which would make it unpredictable and textually unconstrained.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present discussion draws upon previous research on the metaphors used by architects in building reviews (Caballero 2001a). These are relatively short texts (from 500 to 1500 words plus a number of visuals) devoted to describing and evaluating a (usually outstanding) building for professional architects and, accordingly, distributed by magazines specifically targeted towards an expert, rather than a non-expert audience. The number of reviews per issue depends on the length of the reviews (which is affected by the amount of visual information provided with the main text) and topical issues such as whether the issue is organized according to a given topic (e.g. steel architecture) or focuses on a number of representative works by a well-known architect.

The genre was considered well suited to discussing both the ontology and rhetorical implications of metaphor in architectural discourse for two reasons.
The first of these is its quantitative import in the written bulk of architectural communication, for the building review amounts to one of the most frequently produced and distributed within the discourse practices of architects. The second reason concerns the comprehensive scope and informative potential of a genre characterized by addressing a large number of architectural issues as incorporated in the building(s) under review. Consequently, reviews are widely read by both practising architects who want to keep up with the latest information in the field, and by architecture students as part of their training (especially in the middle and final years of their degree). This was further confirmed by the results derived from a questionnaire distributed among 47 architects who were asked about their reading habits concerning (a) the magazines they regarded as most relevant in the field, and (b) the type of article(s) favoured within those—the review scoring 100 per cent among other genres such as editorials or texts dealing with new materials and/or techniques.

The analysis was done on a corpus of 95 texts selected at random from six architecture magazines devoted to architectural design, namely, *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Review*, *Architectural Design*, *Architecture Australia*, and *Architecture SOUTH* (all of them specifically addressed to professional architects). This corpus enabled the abstraction of the rhetorical structure of the building review, and provided the grounds to explore the grammatical form, locus of occurrence, and function of metaphor in this specific instance of architectural communication.

Finally, the research was informed by the cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor first expounded in Lakoff and Johnson (1980), but also drew useful insights from more applied approaches to figurative language (Goatly 1997; Cameron 1999; Steen 1999a). The analytical procedure rested upon two major steps, each responding to the aforementioned cognitive and applied trends of metaphor research. These are described in turn in the following sections.

**Metaphor identification and classification**

The first step concerned identifying the metaphorical expressions in the corpus, and classifying them into the metaphor types recognized in the cognitive literature. Expressions were tagged as metaphorical when they illustrated any domain incongruity in reference or attribution. Incongruity was taken as involving the understanding of and/or reference to an architectural entity, agent, or process in terms belonging to an experiential domain different from architecture, irrespective of the degree of innovation of the metaphorical expression. In this respect, conventional jargon terms (e.g. ‘wing’, ‘skin’, or ‘cladding’) were regarded as having the same metaphorical import as expressions referring to the architect’s process as ‘writing a sequel chapter’ in steel house design’ or similes involving the non-literal comparison of buildings or their parts to a very different entity (e.g. ‘a bonelike cage of steel
ribs, controlled by pneumatic struts, can open and close like an eyelid). Moreover, given that the identification of some such domain incongruities was subjective, in the sense that what constitutes a cross-domain mapping is often a matter of disagreement, numerous cases were discussed with six of the architects who filled in the aforementioned questionnaire. The resulting metaphorical expressions discussed in each section of this paper appear in italics within quoted examples and between inverted commas in the main text, whereas the metaphorical schemas underlying them appear in capital letters according to mainstream cognitive notation.

The expressions were then classified into conceptual and image metaphors according to the distinction made in cognitive linguistics between the conceptual vs. visual quality of the knowledge involved in their respective mapping processes. Conceptual metaphors are described as concerning the mapping of conceptual knowledge, the amount and quality of which enables further classification of conceptual mappings into two sub-types. The first concerns ontological metaphors, whereby we view events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substances (e.g. BUILDINGS ARE MUSICAL PIECES). On the other hand, we have structural metaphors, whereby the projection of a richer set of elements allows for the structuring of a concept in terms of another (e.g. in DESIGNING A BUILDING IS WRITING writers project onto architects; texts onto buildings; vocabulary, grammar, and other conventional writing elements onto architectural elements and conventions, and so on). Finally, image metaphors are described as mapping conventional mental images onto other conventional mental images by virtue of their similar appearance (e.g. ‘The building is a jagged fan of five overscaled concrete fins webbed together’).

Nevertheless, this clear-cut distinction between conceptual and image metaphor proved to be especially troublesome when applied to architecture texts due to the visual and aesthetic constraints of the discipline. Moreover, the fuzzy boundaries between visual and conceptual knowledge and, accordingly, between a number of metaphorical expressions are especially noticeable when these are seen in their context of occurrence. In order to describe some of the difficulties, let us consider a few examples from the corpus.

One of the domains providing architectural metaphors is that of textiles, as illustrated by such entrenched terms as ‘curtain wall’, ‘fabric’, or ‘cladding’. Yet, although textile metaphors generally highlight the highly structured nature of built space (either by focusing on the underlying arrangement as in ‘the grain of the building/city’ or on the architects’ doings through verbs like ‘stitch’ or ‘weave’), when discussing some of the examples with the informants, all of them acknowledged that the expressions also involved a visual description. Consider the following:

1 The architect cut a hole measuring 80 feet wide . . . and wove the building back through it.
2 The decision to air-condition lower-floor public spaces required ingenious weaving of ductwork in the ceiling.

3 Although the theatre respects the scale of its surroundings, it is a bold and conspicuously contemporary addition to the urban fabric.

Example 1 illustrates the recurrent metaphor ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE IS MAKING CLOTH (in this case, WEAVING). This is repeated in example 2, yet, here ‘weaving’ appears to carry a visual flavour focusing on how the necessary ducts and cables in buildings are arranged and visually perceived like threads in a pattern. Finally, when asked to interpret ‘urban fabric’ in example 3, the informants did so in graphic form, and compared the urban layout to the prototypical sackcloth pattern.

A different problem concerns all those cases where the expression has two different (even if related) senses:

4 His courtyards are an introverted response to a campus where parking lots are as prominently sited as buildings. Legorreta oriented his most articulate facade away from the academic core, but his center may become more integral to the college when its second phase is built . . .

The term ‘articulate’ is etymologically related to Latin ‘articulatus’ originally meaning ‘jointed’, that is, consisting of segments united by joints, and later also referring to the ability of expressing oneself readily, clearly, or effectively. These two senses suit the needs of architects to describe the organized and expressive properties of built artefacts; yet, the expression may be analysed differently according to whether we regard ‘articulate’ as drawing upon a PART–WHOLE image schema (Johnson 1987) or, rather, as activating a language metaphor. Choosing the first option may be further argued as highlighting the visual, Meccano-like effect of the façade, whereas opting for a language metaphor implies considering the mapping as involving conceptual rather than visual information. The problem may be solved by taking into account the textual rather than the cognitive-only aspects of metaphor. Thus, if we pay attention to the co-text of ‘articulate’ we may conclude that it is the expressive (i.e. language) property of the façade that is highlighted here.

Finally, the corpus yields numerous examples portraying buildings as malleable solids susceptible to adopting different forms according to the architects’ intervention upon them. In principle, the expressions may be regarded as instantiating the conceptual metaphor BUILDINGS ARE MALLEABLE ENTITIES, which focuses on craftsmanship and skill, emphasizing architects’ active intervention upon buildings (somehow regarded as raw matter). Nevertheless, when seen in context the expressions suggest that it is the visual component of that craftsmanship that is under focus:

5 Instead of stacking the building blocks wedding cake-style, de Portzamparc chamfered them, pinched them, skewed them, and sloped them, discovering a few tricks along the way.
The extract illustrates a very vivid description of a spatial arrangement through verbs nevertheless focusing on the architect’s actions to achieve it. Moreover, the expressive force of the extract derives from the combination of the imagistic quality of the verbs involved and textual techniques such as parataxis and juxtaposition.

All these examples point to the difficulties derived from attempting to classify metaphorical expressions into types along a cognitive-only parameter in the first place, as well as from using decontextualized (and usually unproblematic) examples illustrating the types described. Concerning the first issue, attention should be paid to whether a neat distinction between images and concepts actually reflects how information is organized in the human mind since it might be the case that this organization and processing of data is basically imagistic. If this is the case, concepts and situations would also be accessed by mentally ‘visualizing’ them, which does not invalidate the conceptual status of the whole process. This leads to considering whether conceptual and image are felicitous labels to distinguish between metaphor types, or informative enough as to the nature of their differences—however relevant these may be for discussing architectural metaphors.

In my view, the problems derive from the image–concept opposition, which creates a polarity that not only seems to run counter to work on prototypes and the existence of fuzzy boundaries in cognitive linguistics, but also stands in clear contrast with what seems to happen in actual texts. Thus, as pointed out above, continuity is far more salient in corpus data than has been acknowledged in mainstream cognitive thinking. This requires attention to the discourse community making use of the metaphors, and to the discourse contexts where the expressions actually occur. Furthermore, it also implies considering the advantages of adopting a prototypical approach to metaphor classification and, accordingly, allowing for fuzziness within a metaphoricity cline.

Bearing all these issues in mind, the distinction between image and conceptual metaphor and the corresponding labels was maintained for the sake of description. The classification of expressions was effected upon the aforementioned cline, the extremes of which were occupied by prototypically graphic metaphors (‘the basic parti of the bank building is a three-sided doughnut’) and prototypically non-graphic metaphors (‘under its skin the library is a great machine’). Fuzzy cases were classified taking into account (a) their textual context, and (b) the informants’ interpretation.

**Metaphor and genre**

The second step in the research consisted in two sub-steps. First, metaphorical expressions were grouped according to the diverse grammatical patterns at word, group and clause levels in which they appeared within the texts in the corpus (Caballero 2002). This was the springboard for exploring their distribution and role in the building review. As discussed elsewhere (Caballero
2001a, 2001b), its exemplars are organized in a global three-part structure of Introduction, Description, and Closing Evaluation. Each of these parts is further structured in recognizable textual sequences (moves) which are, in turn, organized along a number of steps and sub-steps within them, that is, options open to authors to accomplish rhetorical goals (Swales 1990). This is schematized in Figure 1.

| Move 1: Creating Context | Step 1: Building a situation  
Generalisations  
Background information  
Description  
Other (narrative, anecdote)  
Step 2: Evaluating the situation  
Problem spotting  
Claiming importance  
Step 2: Positioning the building in the previous context  
Step 2: Highlighting a specific trait of the building  
Step 3: Introducing the building |
| Move 2: Introducing building |
| Move 3: Providing first evaluation of building |

| Move 1: Providing technical details of building | Step 1: Sitting details  
Step 2: Information on budget and/or construction |
| Move 2: Outlining the general organisation/appearance of building (overall plan) |
| Move 3: Describing the parts/components of building |
| Move 4: Highlighting parts of the building |

| Move 1: Providing closing evaluation of building |

**Figure 1: Rhetorical structure of the building review**

The prototypical structure of the building review reflects the two goals of the genre, starting with the first evaluation effected in Titles and Leads which, in many cases, anticipates the assessment provided in the moves and steps specifically focusing on evaluation. In this respect, the building review is reminiscent of other review genres such as, for instance, the book review, described in Motta-Roth (1998), and constrained by similar goals while differing in terms of topic, audience and, due to the visual and verbal component of architectural discourse, number of illustrations accompanying the text. The multi-modal quality of the discipline led to regarding the graphic components of the genre and their corresponding captions as structurally relevant. The importance of this visual information is such that scholars dealing with architectural discourse have asked ‘are these images read as illustrations of the linguistic text, or is the text a commentary on the images? . . . do words and images converge towards similar meanings . . . or diverge?’ (Markus and Cameron 2002: 151). Finally, the highly technical quality of many of the visuals in the texts of the corpus (e.g. plans, diagrams, or
isometric and axonometric perspectives) may be regarded as a distinctive trait of the building review in professional publications versus reviews in upmarket newspapers or style magazines targeted towards a general audience.

The second sub-step in the analysis focused on the function of metaphor in the genre, that is, it attempted to determine whether metaphor occurrence was influenced by and/or illustrated the rhetorical goals of the building review. This involved spotting metaphorical instances within the rhetorical structure of the texts in the corpus in the first place, as well as interpreting their role in terms of the aforementioned descriptive or evaluative goals of the genre. This is discussed further below. The main assumption was that both location and role would be related. In other words, metaphors focusing on description were expected to occur at clearly descriptive loci and the same should happen with evaluative metaphors. This functional distinction was adopted in order to analyse how metaphor may contribute to accomplishing generic goals rather than a clear-cut distinction between communicative purposes.

Indeed, drawing the line between what is clearly descriptive or evaluative is difficult since choosing a particular expression from the linguistic repertoire often entails conscious or unconscious evaluation and subjective positioning, as work on evaluation has extensively discussed (see, for example, the collection of papers in Hunston and Thompson 2000). In this respect, all the metaphorical cases falling within architectural jargon were classified as descriptive, and all those involving cultural sources (e.g. architects’ names) were regarded as intrinsically evaluative because of the cultural values and judgements inherent within them. The expressions falling between these two extremes were analysed and classified in relation to their textual occurrence.

METAPHOR OCCURRENCE IN BUILDING REVIEWS

Metaphor types

Architectural metaphors draw upon diverse experiential domains, among which the most recurrent are those of language, music, textiles, spatial mechanics, and physiology. These yield conceptual and image metaphors, which appear evenly distributed in the corpus. Thus, conceptual metaphors represent 54 per cent in the corpus and image metaphors 46 per cent.

Concerning conceptual metaphors, it was observed that most expressions within a single domain ultimately pointed at the existence of an overarching structural metaphor subsuming several ontological metaphors. This is the case with BUILDINGS ARE CLOTH/TEXTS/MUSICAL PIECES, all of which belong to the structural metaphors ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE IS MAKING CLOTH/LINGUISTIC PRACTICE/MUSIC.² The different parts (i.e. metaphors) into which they can be decomposed are, accordingly, coherent among themselves, and highlight different aspects of the architectural targets. They can also co-occur in the same textual stretch, reinforcing each other:
Like a Renaissance architect, Holl studies architecture’s rhetoric; he uses typological conventions and elements to create new meanings. In the Cranbrook science center, Holl begins with the basic vocabulary of foursquare enclosures infiltrated by oblique angles at facade openings.

The bridge is, says Couvelas, ‘a thread darning the hole caused by the excavation’, and, in the darning, the pattern of the old weave of the city has been brought to the surface to take part in the modern tapestry.

In general, textile, music, and language metaphors highlight the structured quality of built artefacts, each metaphor focusing on different aspects. The expressions that present buildings as texts or musical pieces specifically focus on the products of architectural activity, whereas the expressions involving verbal processes such as ‘stitch’, ‘orchestrate’, or ‘edit’ refer to the architect’s creative role of thinking up and making a building, highlighting the procedural aspects of his arranging parts into a whole according to a set of conventions.

One of the richest set of metaphors draws upon biology, most of which may be formalized as BUILDINGS ARE LIVING ORGANISMS, as explicitly illustrated in example 8 below:

The top-to-bottom renovation of Baker House, which culminated in a rededication ceremony last October, has breathed new life into a still-vital organism rather than mothballing a hallowed artefact.

In accordance with this organic view of buildings, we find metaphorical expressions referring to some aspects of built space in the following terms:

Royally renewed Stockholm’s Royal Library has had one of its periodic spurts of growth.

[A new square] offered Smirke’s building breathing space and would have produced a significant new public meeting place for London, but was abandoned with the rising tide of conservation.

Within biological metaphors, we find a large set specifically equating buildings to human beings. Together with meeting authorial demands related to genre issues (discussed in section 4.2.3), personification cases appear to highlight the social aspect of buildings. This not only concerns the functional demands imposed on them by society as a whole, but also aesthetic issues involving the difficulties encountered by architects when new buildings must co-exist with older ones in urban contexts. Both are illustrated below:

The structure also reinforces the so-called Bilbao effect, which has expanded expectations about how a building can exceed its immediate job to assume an important civic role.

Despite its size and location, the building doesn’t engage its neighbors; rather, it politely turns its back to them.

The second large set of expressions activates image metaphors. The image
sources mapped onto architectural targets are of different sorts and can be grouped into (a) animate sources, and (b) inanimate sources. Among the former the most recurrent come from the biological domain, and concern human and animal body parts, like ‘eye’, ‘finger bone’, ‘cage of ribs’, ‘hand’, ‘wing’, or ‘fin’, followed by plant terms such as ‘pod’, ‘tree trunk’, or ‘onion’. Inanimate sources comprise geometrical shapes, food, mechanical artefacts, and entities belonging to the spatial domain itself—either geological or built space. Some examples include:

13 But the complex really makes its mark because all this rather mundane stuff is surmounted by a most extraordinary roof. *A couple of squashed zeppelins* hover over the solid structures.

14 The residential wing . . . subdivides into three dormitory *pods* along a west-facing veranda, with east-facing verandas between each *pod*.

15 Fixed glass skylights span each of the side arches; beneath those, *a bonelike cage of steel ribs*, controlled by pneumatic struts, can open and close *like an eyelid*, revealing the sunken, tile-encrusted *orb* of the IMAX to the outdoors.

16 Glazed walls and doors dividing the living areas from the sun balconies would be backed by a vertical layer of sand-coloured terracotta *‘baguettes’* (bars measuring about 1200 × 40 × 40mm) set apart in a 50 percent transparent pattern intended to increase privacy.

Verbs and adjectives realize image metaphors in interesting and suggestive ways. Many image-metaphoric verbs depict the illusion of movement as suggested by the way buildings are sited. Halliday’s Functional Grammar explains the use of material processes in relational circumstantial patterns as *colouring* devices open to authors in order to endow texts with a certain *tone* (Thompson 1996: 79–116; Martin et al. 1997: 100 ff.). The position sustained in the present work coincides with that of cognitive linguistics in that the phenomenon is the result of metaphorical mappings. Nevertheless, in my view, the verbs do not instantiate a conceptual mapping (formalized as FORM IS MOTION by cognitive linguists) but rather, as many image metaphors as sources are imagistically mapped onto spatial arrangements. In other words, the information involved in the mapping is the shape (image) suggested by the different types of movement encapsulated by the verbs in the expressions. The image metaphors can be further grouped as resulting from two different mappings, namely, FORM IS MOTION and MOTION IS FORM.

Thus, whenever the source involved in the mapping includes motion within its semantics (e.g. ‘step’, ‘crouch’, ‘hug’, ‘meander’, hover’, ‘surge’, or stretch’) the metaphors illustrate the mapping FORM IS MOTION, whereby particular layouts or appearances (i.e. the targets in the mapping) are seen as reminiscent of the kind of movement encapsulated by the metaphorical sources. This is illustrated in the following examples:

17 Not only do the masonry blocks *inch* out from the vertical plane as they
rise, but the courses—exposed on the interiors and exteriors—are laid at an angle to the floor, recalling rock strata that have shifted over time.  

18 The wall enclosing the flats meanders like a snake and the doorway to each flat is extruded slightly to create a series of cuboid forms projecting from the curved surface.  

19 Large departments embrace two atria and each atrium can be enlarged to form nodes for collective student activity that punctuate the campus.

On the other hand, whenever the source mapped involves an essentially static entity we get the metaphor MOTION IS FORM (e.g. de-nominal verbs such as ‘rake’, ‘bunch’, ‘ramp’, ‘cascade’, ‘scissor’, ‘funnel’, ‘line’, ‘fan’, ‘triangulate’, or ‘corbel’). In these cases, the sense of movement is provided by adverbs, which are also responsible for the change of nouns into verbs in the expressions:

20 The circuit of shoppers’ movements generated the form of the entrance hall: Customers descend to the store from the parking levels by elevators or by stairs that scissor down through the three-story space.  

21 Dating from 1954, the Price House has concrete-block walls that corbel out as they rise and an expansive roof that seems to float above bands of glass.  

22 The drainage slopes of the parking lot indicate an amphitheater-like arrangement that fans out from the base of the Umbrella.

A second set of recurrent image realizations concerns adjectives describing buildings or their parts as ‘boomerang-shaped’, ‘wedge-shaped’, ‘pod-shaped’, ‘lozenge-like’, ‘wedge-like’, ‘boxlike’, or ‘reptilian’, to list but a few. Among these, derived adjectives incorporating the names of architects are especially interesting and characteristic of architectural discourse (e.g. terms such as ‘Mesian’, ‘Wrightian’, ‘Reptonian’, ‘Corbusian’, ‘Chiricoesque’, ‘Gaudiesque’). Two of these are illustrated in the example below:

23 Barkow Leibinger subtly manipulate the straightforward conventions of the Mesian grid, starting with the plan (below), a Wrightian pinwheel with four two-story blocks flanking a double-height machine hall.

Both verbal and adjectival patterns seem to be frequently used by architects and, therefore, suggest a certain grammatical systematicity in this type of metaphor (often regarded as an ad-hoc construction and, accordingly, highly unpredictable) as well as the metaphorical motivation of processes of word formation involving suffixes like ‘-shaped’ or ‘-like’.

Finally, the names of well-known architects also used straightforwardly in order to qualify built space:

24 Myers’ design thus is a multiple hybrid of Eames and Kahn.  

25 The effect is Piranesi without the menace.

As is also the case with adjectives involving the names of architects, the examples above point at the cultural aspect briefly alluded to in the
introduction of this paper, highlighting the role of disciplinary background knowledge in metaphor interpretation. In other words, in order to understand these comparisons one must take into account not only the physical appearance of such constructs, but also the body of knowledge informing them, the corpus of practices they encapsulate, and the implications for the community of architects in terms of status and value. In this respect, together with filling what could be a lexical gap both expressively and economically, the metaphorical expressions may be regarded as playing an interpersonal function. Thus, by their discipline-specific nature, they reinforce the sense of community between reviewer and audience by activating information that those outside the profession may not understand easily. The status of the architects whose names are subjected to derivation also add an extra value component to the architectural target thus qualified.

The role of metaphor in the genre

Both quantitative and qualitative aspects affect the occurrence and function of metaphor in the building review. Thus, metaphors tend to cluster in certain textual stretches, some of which are both concerned with introducing and summarizing a topic, and closely related to the descriptive and evaluative purposes of the genre (e.g. titles and headlines both introduce and provide a first evaluation of the building under review). The ensuing sections describe the occurrence and function of both types of metaphor, in specific steps and/or moves within the rhetorical structure of the reviews in the corpus, according to the genre’s constraints, and also to their own specifics.

Metaphor and description

In general, both image and conceptual metaphors fulfil, first and foremost, an informational function in the genre, sometimes providing the lexical means to refer to certain building elements or to the way buildings are spatially located, and other times furnishing further qualification of the entities described (especially the different realizations of image metaphor). This informational ‘macrofunction’ is closely related to the descriptive goal of the review, even if each metaphor type accomplishes it in a different way. Thus, whenever the description focuses on the external appearance of the building, image metaphors are preferred to conceptual ones. This is illustrated in the example below, where the only conceptual metaphor is the textile one realized in ‘weaves off’, and even this may be seen as trying to portray some sort of visual effect:

26 Fuksas’s new building shares the same plan discipline as the surrounding concrete ones: it rigidly follows the grid and is rigorously oblong. Yet it is quite a different affair. . . . A huge green parallelepiped initially appears to be almost inviolate, except for a deep horizontal slot which runs round the whole box, about two-thirds of the way up. . . . Fuksas weaves off a
surprising variety of spaces. The largest is the theatre (or rather the salle
de spectacle), a black box which occupies the whole south end of the rectangle and can accommodate an audience of 350 in different
configurations. . . . A smaller black box is between the entrance and the
main volume; it can be thrown together with the main space when
occasion demands.

The example also shows architects’ characteristic use of image metaphor to
shift from two-dimensional to three-dimensional descriptions of built space.
Here the reviewer starts by describing the building as ‘oblong’, keeping this
two-dimensional quality in its further reference as ‘a huge green parallele-
piped’. The shift towards three-dimensionality is marked by subsequent
references to it as a ‘box’ or as a ‘green prism’ (the latter belonging to the
caption of one of the photographs accompanying the text). The whole is
finally referred to as a two-dimensional ‘rectangle’.

Metaphor interplay may, thus, be explained as also reflecting the architects’
constant handling of different dimensions or perspectives. This is more
evident if we relate the expressions in the main text to those in the captions of
the photographs (highlighting different perspectives according to the
reviewer’s needs), and the visuals themselves. This is the case of example
27 below where the reference to the reviewed building as a two-dimensional
‘slab’ in the caption of a photograph showing a front view departs from its
consistent reference as a three-dimensional ‘box’ in the main text. Similarly,
the description of a crèche’s plan as ‘tadpole-like’ is only fully appreciated in
the plan provided beside the text:

27 The building is a simple two-storey box 1 40m long by 25m wide with its
long axis running north-south. . . . The box is punctured by two covered
passages which separate the functional components of the building. . . .
While the box is conventional, the cladding is not. The winery appears as
an introverted, geometric slab. [photograph caption]

28 As a free-standing element, it needed to be curved for stability, and the
curve chosen prompted the development of a tadpole-like plan with
entrance and social centre in the head.

Conceptual metaphors also fulfil an ideational (informational) function in the
reviews, usually providing the lexical means to refer to certain building
elements (e.g. textile and biological instances in architectural jargon like
‘skin’, ‘rib’, ‘spine’, or ‘cladding’) and to the processes concerned with
structural arrangement of buildings (e.g. verbs from the textiles, music,
language, and experiment domains). Yet, contrary to the case of image
metaphors, they do not function as extra specification devices, their role being
primarily referential rather than attributive. The primary focus here is on the
internal organization and function of buildings. Among the metaphors mainly
used in description we find those coming from the motion, textiles, machine,
and experiment domains:
29 Under its *skin* the library is a great *machine*, and a High-Tech architect could have had a field day with its *mechanisms*, but Wilson rightly chose not to play up this aspect.

30 ‘From one building to another, you’re experiencing movement as part of a journey’, claims the architect, who always deploys *orientation devices—views*, openings, corridors—to make the *path* of the constantly changing *officescape* self-guiding and cogent.

Finally, metaphorical expressions with a descriptive role also tend to occur in captions. These usually relate to those in the main text along repetition (example 31) and rewording patterns. The latter comprise cases of synonymy (example 32), explication (example 33), and change of word class (example 34), as illustrated below:

31 A huge prismatic *monolith* is supposed to have emerged. The *monolith* emerges [caption]

32 De Portzamparc *choreographed* an elegant promenade into the space. De Portzamparc *orchestrated* a sweeping entry promenade from elevators that open onto an elliptical mezzanine, down a curving stair. [caption]

33 The complex is surmounted by a most extraordinary roof. *A couple of squashed zeppelins* . . . roofs resemble bellies of squashed zeppelins [caption]

34 The largest is a long, *pod-shaped form* housing an exhibition space [text] the exhibition pod [caption]

Metaphor and evaluation

Image and conceptual metaphors also fulfil the evaluative rhetorical goal of the genre and, hence, can be found in critical evaluative loci within its rhetorical structure. As is the case with description, the focus of evaluation is different in each type. Thus, image metaphors evaluate external appearance according to the visual and aesthetic concerns of the discipline, as illustrated below where two image metaphors provide a negative and positive evaluation of a building context:

35 Diverting the Turia solved Valencia’s flooding troubles, but its riverbed left *an unsightly brown gash* through the city’s stately fabric. Valencia has spent the past 40 years transforming the dry riverbed into *a continuous swath of parkland*.

On the other hand, conceptual metaphors are mainly concerned with assessing the architects’ skill and the *performance* of buildings after construction. The latter is the main focus of biology, machine, and motion metaphors, the first two sets regarding performance in human or mechanic terms, and motion metaphors highlighting the illusion of motion created by architectural form and space. Finally, metaphors drawing upon the language domain combine a focus on skill with an interest in the expressive properties of built
space. This is illustrated below, where an extended language metaphor evaluates a private house by addressing disciplinary concerns that go beyond its final external appearance:

36 Atkinson’s exceptional house exemplifies a problem endemic to modern architecture: The architects’ beloved vernacular [building type] is not a blank slate. The laypeople who build dogtrot and barns are far from noble savages living in a cultural vacuum, and these buildings are imbued with meaning for them. Atkinson has equally strong feelings. As a child, he spent many summer nights on this property, in just such a shed, and his love of the type is written all over the new house. It’s a shame not everyone reads it the same way.

The broader scope of conceptual metaphor might explain its frequent occurrence at explicitly evaluative textual stretches (26.9 per cent of conceptual metaphors) and, hence, their higher evaluative potential versus the lower presence of image metaphors (8.5 per cent). These evaluative loci concern (a) titles and leads, (b) problem spotting and first evaluation in introductions, (c) the move in Description concerned with highlighting specific aspects of a building, and (d) the Closing Evaluation of the reviews. In this respect, it is often the case that the same metaphor re-appears at various loci, thus creating a figurative frame for the whole text. Consider the following example:

37 PASTORAL IDYLL A new gallery for paintings and sculpture is a harmonious addition to a sculpture park set in the grounds of Roche Court, an English country house. [lead]

A graceful, harmonious addition to the place, it steps up the slope of the garden from the east side of the house to a small orangery on the east. [first evaluation]

Harmony is an increasingly rare commodity these days when architectural discord is in fashion. The architect’s interpretation of the spirit of the place is restrained and lyrical, and the delicacy with which he has stitched the new to the old recalls Foster’s work at the Royal Academy [Closing Evaluation]

The example shows how a musical frame is created in the Lead and is repeated in the First and Closing Evaluations of the review. Nevertheless, musical metaphors co-occur with instances activating a language metaphor that highlights the intellectual and artistic process of making a building (‘interpretation’, ‘lyrical’), and a textile metaphor that focuses on the combinatory skills involved (‘stitched the new to the old’), both metaphors somehow reinforcing each other.

In this connection, it must be noted that the creation of metaphorical frames (functioning as a sort of backbone along which the reviews develop) does not only involve metaphor repetition patterns but, usually, the co-occurrence of metaphors from different domains. The most recurrent patterns of metaphorical interplay in the corpus are diversification (i.e. different
metaphorical sources refer to and highlight various aspects of the same target), *extension* (i.e. semantically-related sources are mapped onto semantically-related targets), and *compounding* (i.e. the source of a metaphor previously established becomes the target in a new metaphor). Their specific workings are illustrated by examples from the corpus:

38 Hecker’s buildings are richly *layered compositions of metaphor and masculine form*, and the Duisburg Jewish Cultural Center (JCC) is no exception. It is a *jagged fan of five overscaled concrete fins webbed together* by an entrance lobby, synagogue, and multipurpose hall, as well as less public spaces like classrooms, kitchens, and residences for a rabbi and caretaker. The architect likens the building to *an open book, the five pages of which—the concrete fins*—represent significant events in the history of Duisburg’s Jewish population. One of the ‘*pages*’ for instance, points directly at the site where the town’s former synagogue stood before it was destroyed by the Nazis. 

Along the park, the *pages of Hecker’s book* are heroically scaled, but as it butts up against the older houses, the building *steps down* around an intimate, irregular courtyard that creates a *quiet*, domestically scaled entrance. . . . The synagogue proper, a *truncated star* with a blocky ark . . . is finished almost crudely. . . .

Architect Zvi Hecker likens Jewish cultural Center’s oversize concrete *fins to open hand or pages of book*. [caption]

Example 38 illustrates metaphor diversification. Here we have various metaphors explicitly used to describe a cultural complex in a German town. After stating the metaphorical quality of the architect’s body of work, the reviewer describes the whole as a ‘jagged fan’, and its different components as ‘fins webbed together’. Later, the same whole is compared to an ‘open book’, and its elements to ‘pages’, although this time the comparison is attributed to the architect—the link between both images being effected through the apposition ‘fins’ referring to ‘pages’ (these illustrating metaphor compounding). The reviewer keeps the architect’s metaphor in the ensuing text and in one of the captions of the visuals, and shifts towards a two-dimensional description by qualifying the synagogue as ‘a truncated star’ (best appreciated in plan).

39 Alluding to organic geometry and primordial building traditions, this little *crèche in Bremen* has a surprising formal and material richness. [lead]

As a free-standing element, it needed to be curved for stability, and the curve chosen prompted the development of a *tadpole-like* plan with entrance and social centre in *the head*. In the developing narrative *between architect and client* about the building the *serpentine wall doubled as a city-wall and as the remains of an imagined fossil creature*—the Urtier.

The spatial organization presented to a small child could scarcely be
simpler: from a distance the building is a kind of mound or crouching creature with very low eaves to bring the scale down. . . . The combination of radial and linear principles in the plan allows transition between centrality in the head and a route distributing to either side in the tail. . . . The thick, solid brick wall is visibly the spine of the whole, emerging naked externally in the tail.

Curved forms evoke organic associations. [caption] Timber absorbs the complexities of the geometry and gives the interior a warm, womb-like dimension. [caption]

Example 39 illustrates metaphor extension. Here, the description follows the organic associations already anticipated in the lead of a review suggestively titled ‘Lyrical Geometry’. Thus, after describing the plan as ‘tadpole-like’, the reviewer refers to its two furthermost extremes as the ‘head’ and ‘tail’ respectively, and to the space linking both as a ‘spine’ emerging ‘naked’—marking, at the same time, a shift towards three-dimensionality. Other images aiding in the description are the comparison to ‘a crouching creature’ co-occurring with the more architectural image ‘mound’ (both, nevertheless, hedged by ‘a kind of’) plus the qualification of the interior as ‘womb-like’, or the explicit reference to the figurative quality of the whole description in two of the captions accompanying the text.

In sum, the diverse patterns of metaphor interplay found in the corpus seem to meet two main concerns. First, they may be explained according to the need of architects to provide an accurate description of built form, a description that, more often than not, involves different perspectives and dimensions. Image metaphors are prototypically used for this purpose. The second concern relates to the need to refer to different aspects related to buildings within the same textual stretch, from the process followed by architects (e.g. textile, musical, and language metaphors) to the functioning of the resulting building (e.g. machine or biological metaphors).

Metaphor and authorial commentary

An account of the metaphors used by architects in building reviews would not be complete without discussing the frequent occurrence of personification in the corpus. Thus, as happens with several academic genres, the expressions with buildings as the agents of mental processes mostly occur either at the beginning or the end of texts. Within the specific structure of the review, the preferred loci are the Lead, Introduction (especially stretches describing the goals of the project) and Closing Evaluation. The specific purpose of these loci also appears to further constrain the verbal process in the personifications. For instance, whereas ‘aim’, ‘attempt’, or ‘draw’ usually appear in Leads and Introductions (example 40), Closing Evaluations (example 41) favour verbs like ‘succeed’ or ‘demonstrate’:

40 Such dwellings tend to be conservative in form, as well as modest in
spatial and economic terms, but a new sheltered housing block in Paris by
Architecture Studio attempts to challenge such stereotypes and enliven both
the public and private realm.

As Zapata’s building demonstrates, the city’s love of novelty is thriving, as is
its tradition of serious architectural invention.

The role of expressions like these is twofold. First, there is a shift of focus from
the architect towards his/her finished product which is presented as if having
a life of its own, as somehow consistent with the genre’s major concern with
constructive detail. On the other hand, personification helps conceal the
presence of the reviewer and, with it, any authorial responsibility for the
views sustained towards the buildings—at best, it is the architect meto-
ynymically lying behind the building who is responsible for failure or success.

This second role of personification is further suggested by the recurrent
absence of an authorial first person in all the reviews despite the fact that all
are signed by their respective authors. Personification might thus be regarded
as an avoidance strategy related to issues of face and objectivity within the
specific context of the building review. That is to say, although the review
ultimately illustrates the subjective views of an architect on a given artefact
for his/her peers, it is designed to appear as objective as possible in order to
project its author as a neutral expert and not one who is biased either in
favour of or against the particular architectural solution under review. In this
respect, personification is a useful device for covert authorial comment.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has briefly discussed some of the metaphors used by architects in
order to describe and evaluate their practice in building reviews. Metaphor
has been described as covering the ideational, textual, and interpersonal needs
of architects according to the specific demands of the discourse context under
analysis. Thus, their referential and attributive needs are variously covered by
metaphorically motivated jargon, and by the diverse grammatical forms in
which conceptual and image metaphors can be instantiated. Second, metaphors
also contribute to creating textual cohesion through a number of
patterns and frames created as the texts unfold (e.g. repetition, diversification,
or extension), and also weave intra-textual relationships between the main
text and the captions of the visuals provided with it. Third, personification
cases have been discussed as effective avoidance strategies helping authors to
apparently disengage from the claims sustained in the texts, to create the
illusion of objectivity in a nevertheless intrinsically subjective genre, and to
shift the focus towards the reviewed buildings rather than to their own selves.

Finally, the discussion of the research method has hinted at several flaws in
the view held of both image and conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics.
This suggests that it is necessary to combine both a cognitive and a discourse
perspective on metaphor if reliable insights are to be gained. In this sense, the
valuable taxonomic work carried out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff and Turner (1989) or Grady (1999) may be enriched by the evidence offered by a discourse approach. Nevertheless, the basic cognitive premise on the relationship between thought and language that has informed the analysis carried out has, itself, made these insights possible. In this sense, the bottom-up approach of cognitive linguistics may also enrich the top-down procedures of Discourse Analysis, to yield richer views of the shared cultural and cognitive schemas of particular discourse communities.

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NOTES

1 Building reviews can appear under diverse names within the publications devoted to architectural design or, simply, be grouped according to whether their main focus is on design or technical issues in corresponding sections of the magazines. Thus, whereas the British publication Architectural Review does not classify the articles according to text type (even if the magazine’s title acknowledges the review quality of these), other magazines such as Architecture present the texts as features.

2 These metaphors are low-level realizations of the more general metaphorical schema ORGANISATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE (Grady, 1997), itself recruiting structure from the even more basic WHOLE–PART image-schema (Johnson, 1987).

3 A different question is whether these verbs may also indirectly trigger another—conceptual—metaphor related to the entities prototypically associated with the different verbal processes like, for instance, ‘step’, ‘clamber’, or ‘crouch’ as related to living organisms, ‘meander’ to fluid entities, or ‘hover’ to self-propelled artefacts.

4 In true experientialist terms, although the examples are image metaphors, they are metonymically motivated in the sense that it is all those visual characteristics of a given architectural style that stand for the whole building while also being referred to by the name of the agent. Nevertheless, a thorough discussion on the specifics of such metaphors falls beyond the scope of the present paper. For those interested in the relationship between metaphor and metonymy, a good collection of papers can be found in Barcelona (2000).

5 See Low (1999) for a discussion on personification in academic texts.

REFERENCES


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