

# A Conceptual Blending Approach to the Emotional Poetic Metaphors Related To Flowers in a Dream of Red Mansions

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## Abstract

This paper uses conceptual blending theory to study the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Exploration of how these emotional poetic metaphors are related to flowers in constructing meaning achieves the creative intention of the author. The proposal of this paper also reveals the "cognitive iceberg", which is hidden in the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions* so as to provide the readers with a wider range of reading horizons. Because human emotions are highly abstract, people tend to use metaphors to vividly express these abstract emotions. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the poet uses a lot of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to express the characters' various inner emotions, including sadness (including loneliness, worrying, longing, hopelessness, helplessness, despair, etc.), happiness, and pride. These emotional poetic metaphors are mainly constructed by using the images of appearances, characteristics, periods, colors, fragrances, and growth environments of flowers. Through this analysis we can understand the metaphorical process, which projects from the flowers to human beings, is actually a process of conceptual blending. Through the mechanism of conceptual blending, the poet projects the flower onto human beings, using the flower to metaphorize human beings, making the abstract things more concrete while making the strange things more familiar, so as to facilitate comprehension and offer a deep impression. In addition, every poetic metaphor should be rooted in a certain cognitive model and culture model. In the process of conceptual blending of poetic metaphor, cognitive models and culture models play very important roles. The cognitive model provides certain possibilities for the formation of poetic metaphor, and the culture model is the key factor which allows these possibilities to become a reality.

**Keywords:** Poetic metaphor; emotion; conceptual blending; *A Dream of Red Mansions*.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are 207 poems in *A Dream of Red Mansions* [1]. All of these poems can be divided into two categories. The first category, small in number, is written by the author as part of the author's own narration. The second category, greatly exceeding the first category, is written by the author through the characters' own perspective.

The poetry in *A Dream of Red Mansions* uses many poetic metaphors. Specifically, the poet uses numerous instantiations of flowers to construct emotional poetic metaphors. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author uses different flowers to metaphorize the beauties in the novel. For instance, Lin Daiyu is referred to as a hibiscus flower, Xue Baochai is referred to as a peony flower, Shi Xiangyun is referred to as a begonia flower, Miao Yu is referred to as a plum flower, Jia Yuanchun is referred to as a pomegranate flower, Jia Tanchun is referred to as an

apricot flower, Jia Yingchun is referred to as a water-caltrop flower, and Jia Xichun is referred to as a lotus flower. In order to understand the inner emotions of the characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, readers must know about a variety of flowers, of which the author (poet) gives rich and colorful depictions, as well as the emotional poetic metaphors related to these flowers.

With the rise and development of cognitive linguistics, people began to re-interpret metaphors in poetry, novels and other literary works. The researchers have found that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but also in thought and action. Furthermore, researchers have also found that our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature [2]. Additionally, metaphors are conceptual structures in general, and are not merely linguistic in nature despite being realized as linguistic structures [3]. In recent years, cognitive linguists often use the conceptual metaphor theory to study metaphors. In the

framework of conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphor is considered a systematic mapping from a concrete conceptual domain to an abstract conceptual domain [4]. In brief, conceptual metaphor theory mainly explores entrenched conceptual relationships.

However, Fauconnier and Turner have proposed the conceptual blending theory based on the mental space theory since the 1990s, proposing that semantic formation is a nonlinear process of integration. In 2002, Fauconnier and Turner firstly used the conceptual blending theory to study metaphors in their paper *Rethinking Metaphor* [5]. In the view of conceptual blending theory, the metaphor can be regarded as both a conventional concept and a novel concept. From the perspective of theoretical development, conceptual blending theory is the further development of conceptual metaphor theory. It solves the problem that has plagued many semanticists for a long time; that is, how meaning is constructed.

This paper uses conceptual blending theory to study the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*; exploring how these poetic metaphors related to flowers construct meaning so as to express the emotions of the characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Furthermore, this paper also reveals the "cognitive iceberg", which is hidden in the poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions* so as to provide the readers with a wider range of reading horizons.

### **Poetic metaphors related to flowers and the expression of the inner emotions of the characters in *A Dream of Red Mansions***

Emotion is an important part of humanity's experience of general life, and it is also an important part of people's cognition of life [6]. In daily life, people will be affected by various factors and will generate a variety of emotions, such as happiness, love, sadness, hate, pride, among others. Because human emotions are highly abstract, people tend to use metaphors to vividly express them. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, we find emotional poetic metaphors which are used to express different emotions throughout the text.

Metaphor is the mechanism of knowing and understanding one thing through another thing based on similarity [7]. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author combines his own emotional experience and cognitive experience with his observations of the entire world so as to form the emotional poetic metaphor through the mechanism of metaphor. In doing so, the author transforms abstract emotions into concrete things, achieving the purpose of vividly expressing emotions. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author uses a lot of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to achieve the purpose of expressing characters' inner emotions.

In the living environment, the flower is the closest natural aesthetic object to the human. The beautiful appearance of flowers and the life process of flowers became the favorite lyrical object of poets. In China, flowers became the most common lyrical image in Chinese poetry because poets were impressed by the flowers' pretty posture, gorgeous colors, and intoxicating fragrance.

The flowers consistently carry deep human emotions and become the deep cultural memory and accumulation of the Chinese Nation. Through the description of the flower Chinese poets personate the flowers and let flowers have the same emotions with humans, so as to express human's inner emotions [8]. In the creation of poetry, the image of flower is the lyrical image of the poet as it carries the poet's inner emotions and spirit. Peoples' emotions, such as happiness, love, hate, sadness, amongst others, all can be represented by flowers. All of the images, such as the appearance of flowers, the characteristics of flowers, the living environments of flowers (cold, hot, etc.), the colors of flowers (white, red, yellow, pink, etc.), the growing process of flowers (sprout, blossom, wither), the use of flowers (medical, ornamental), and the period of flowers, are all used to construct poetic metaphors by Chinese poets.

Through statistics, we found that there are 107 poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*; and the flowers, which are used to construct poetic metaphors, include chrysanthemums, plum flowers, peony flowers, hibiscus flowers, begonia flowers, peach flowers, pomegranate flowers, apricot flowers, water-caltrop flowers, lotuses, and others.

### **The Projection from Flowers to Humans**

The construction of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers is a process of conceptual projection from flowers to humans. Through this process, through cognitive experience, the poets project human attributes as well as their emotions onto the flowers; thereby making the flowers have the same life and emotional experience with humans. Therefore, the flowers have the life experiences of birth, sick, death, etc. and also have the emotional experiences of happiness, sadness, pride, love, hate, etc.

The projection between different mental spaces is based on similarity and imagination. The establishment of such relationship requires the poet to experience, to imagine, and to create, in order to construct the cross-space projection. This is not the same as the conventional metaphors that we live by. Conventional metaphors are the relatively fixed cross-domain mappings, such as "Happy is up", "Love is a journey", "Argument is war", etc. Their source and target domains are relatively fixed and conventionalized. However, through the process of

constructing poetic metaphors poets need to give full play to their own delicate observations and rich imagination so as to discover or create similarities between entities. In doing so, they can construct poetic metaphors, publicize the newly discovered or created similarities between entities, and provide readers with a new vision or insight to understand these entities.

Before the formation of a metaphor we are often lost because that we cannot find similarity or correlation between entities; the construction of metaphor is often the process that we take to make contact between entities. In these cases, it is to say that metaphor creates the similarity or correlation between entities instead of the expression of similarity or correlation which already exists between entities [9]. Therefore, the creation of the poetic metaphor, which is constructed by the poets through keen observation and imagination, can provide some similarities or correlations between entities which people had not previously known so as to rebuild people's cognition world to a certain extent. Our world is a world, which is described in a certain perspective; therefore, some metaphors can allow us to know about some other aspects of reality, and these aspects of reality are precisely constructed by the metaphors [10]. All in all, the poetic metaphor, as a conceptual structure and as a means of poetic cognition and conceptualization, can provide us some new observable perspectives through creation of the similarities or correlations between entities. New metaphors can have the power to define reality; they do this through a coherent network of entailments that highlight some features of reality and hide others. The acceptance of the metaphor which forces us to focus only on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being true – such "truths" may be true [2].

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the poet projects his own cognitive and emotional experiences onto the flower. Through the various perspectives of flowers, the poet constructs a variety of emotional poetic metaphors based on cross-space projection, so as to express characters' different inner emotions. For the same entity, the poet selected different aspects of the flower to construct emotional poetic metaphors so as to express different emotional contents, such as happiness, sadness, resentment, hopeless, depressed, worry, lonely, miss, despair, pride, hatred, amongst others based on various cognitive experiences and cognitive perspectives.

#### **The various emotions expressed by the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions***

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the poet constructs a lot of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to express the inner emotions of the characters. In this section, we will discuss in detail which

emotional poetic metaphors the poet constructs related to flowers and how these metaphors express the inner emotions of the characters, as well as how these emotions are expressed by emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers.

#### **Sadness**

As a novel of love tragedy, *A Dream of Red Mansions* has a large number of emotional poetic metaphors expressing sad emotions. Among the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers, the poet uses different aspects of the flowers to construct various emotional poetic metaphors so as to express the characters' different inner sad emotions. Let us look at the following examples:

In the verse “花容月貌为谁妍. (Wasted, their beauty fair as flowers and the moon)”, the poet points out that even if females have the beautiful appearance like flowers if nobody appreciates and loves them, they can not gain happiness and will feel lonely.

In the poem *White Begonia Chant*, which is written by the author [9] through the perspective of Lin Daiyu, the poet uses the character of the White Begonia to metaphorize Lin Daiyu, expressing her inner sadness. This poem is a typical case of using a flower's color (white) and character as well as growing environment to metaphorize a person's character. In the poem, the poet uses the white jade basin, ice cubes and the white flower to metaphorize the noble character of Lin Daiyu so as to reflect the moral gentleman feature of Lin Daiyu. At that time, Lin Daiyu was mourning her father so she wore white clothes. The poet combined the reality and fantasy in the poem and blended the white of the begonia flowers with the white of the clothes. Through the image of a sad girl in boudoir using the white gown of the goddess to wipe tears, the poet vividly presents Lin Daiyu's inner sadness due to the loss of parents which makes her feel lonely.

Another example comes from the poem *Song of the Burial of Flowers*, which is written by the author [11] through the perspective of Lin Daiyu. In this poem, the poet uses the characteristic of flowers and period of flowers to metaphorize the character and unfortunate fate of Lin Daiyu. In the second line “红消香断有谁怜? (Who pities the faded red, the scent that has been?)”, while the author literally writes about the fading of the flower and lack of compassion; however, the poet actually uses the falling flowers to metaphorize Lin Daiyu. Lin Daiyu's mother died when she was very young, so she feels like falling flowers – lonely and with nobody showing concern. Furthermore, the line “柳丝榆荚自芳菲, 不管桃飘与李飞. (Willows and elms, fresh and verdant, care not if peach and plum blossom drift away)” metaphorizes the inconstancy of society and the indifference of humans. Additionally, in the line “一年三百六十日, 风刀霜剑严相逼. (Each year for three hundred and sixty days, the cutting wind

and biting frost contend)", literally expresses that the flowers bear the destruction of wind and frost; however, the poet uses the "cutting wind" and "biting frost" to metaphorize the dangerous environment that Lin Daiyu live in. Living in Grand View Garden, Lin Daiyu feels that she lives in an environment which is full of cutting wind and biting frost. In this grim reality, she suffers devastation and torment, and every day is full of apprehension. Finally in the line "独倚花锄泪暗洒, 洒上空枝见血痕. (Alone, her hoe in hand, her secret tears; falling like drops of blood on each bare bough)", the poet uses the "blood" and "tears" on the flowers to metaphorize extreme hopelessness and grief for Lin Daiyu. At the end of the poem, the poet uses the images of "spring drawing to a close", "flowers falling", "beauty ebbs and fades", "fallen blossom", and "dead maid" to metaphorize the lonely and miserable situation of Lin Daiyu. The poetic metaphors throughout this poem show a kind of strong negative decadent and sad emotions, such as worry, hopelessness, longing, loneliness, etc.

In the Judgment of Xiangling, the poet uses the water-caltrop flower encountering snow to metaphorize the unfortunate life of Xiangling. The "water-caltrop flower", which was born in the summer, and "snow", which emerges in the winter, cannot encounter each other in reality. However, in this poem in the imagination space of poetry, the "water-caltrop flower" encounters "snow". The poet uses the image of the "water-caltrop flower" encountering "snow" to metaphorize that Xiangling's born was untimely, that she will have a life without fortunate, and that she can not have a happy love life. Furthermore, that the great wealth and status for Xiangling will become naught with the "extinguish of smoke fire" is full of sadness.

Additionally, in the poem Peach blossom, which is a poem of the circumstances of the excited poet's emotions, the whole poem fuses emotions and scenes very well so as to make the imageries of the poem vivid. The whole poem uses the gorgeous language and strong emotions to show the inner emotion of resentment, loneliness and despair of Lin Daiyu. Through the multifaceted comparison between the bright and colorful peach and the lonely person, the poet creates an aristocratic girl's self-image, who is full of worry, resentment and inability to extricate. Lin Daiyu uses the peach blossom to metaphorize herself, expressing her strong inner emotions. The line "泪眼观花泪易干, 泪干春尽花憔悴 (As she gazes at the blossom her tears run dry, her tears run dry, spring ends, blooms fade away)" is the self-portrayal of Lin Daiyu. That Lin Daiyu burst into tears when she saw peach blossoms expresses her inner depression. Lin Daiyu had been oppressed by feudal ethics, and relied on the Jia family for a living; the lack of confidence in finding for her ideal love grows. Facing the great and beautiful spring and blooming peach, Lin Daiyu's heart was deeply touched. Therefore, the poet uses the

blooming peach to metaphorize Lin Daiyu, expressing that she wanted to break through the shackles and enjoy the spring sunshine. Furthermore, the lines "A cuckoo-call and spring is left behind, only faint moonlight falls on the lonely blind (一声杜宇春归尽, 寂寞帘栊空月痕)" expresses Lin Daiyu's emotion of pain and despair which is caused by knowing that her love cannot be achieved, although she does not want to give it up.

In the lines "池塘一夜秋风冷, 吹散芰荷红玉影. 蓼花菱叶不胜愁, 重露繁霜压纤梗. (A pool at night; the chilly autumn wind, The red-jade shadows of caltrop apart has tossed; the water-caltrop and lotus are overcome by grief, Their slender stems weighed down by dew and frost.)", the poet uses the delicate characteristics of the water-caltrop and lotus, which can not withstand the blow of wind and frost to metaphorize the girl's delicate characteristics. In the poet's view, the separation of siblings is as if the water-caltrop and lotus were broken down by the wind and frost. Through long-term living in the Grand View Garden, Jia Baiyu witnessed the former glory of Grand View Garden and when he faced the depressed scene of family separation he seemed to see the feudal family's bleak prospects. All of these events resemble the pressure of wind and frost on the water-caltrop and lotus. The poet uses emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to express the longing and sad emotions of Jia Baoyu when he sees the empty house that Jia Yuanchun lived in before. After Jia Yuanchun married far away from home, siblings Jia Baoyu and Jia Yuanchun hardly have opportunities to get together.

In the line "开到荼蘼花了事. (When the tea millet blooms, spring flowers fade.)", the poet uses the short life of the flower to metaphorize that nothing can be permanent and that every thing will have a final outcome. The poet uses the short life of the tea millet flower from its blossoming to its withering to metaphorize the outcome of Grand View Garden from prosperity to decline – giving the reader a deep impression. The tea millet flower is white and fragrant. It will blossom at latest in the spring and will wither very quickly; the withering of tea millet flower indicates the end of spring. The line "开到荼蘼花了事. (When the tea millet blooms, spring flowers fade.)" appears in the 63rd chapter of A Dream of Red Mansions. When Jia Baoyu and the beauties play the game "Jiuling" Sheyue got a sign which indicated to write this verse. When Jia Baoyu sees this verse he hid this sign and told Sheyue to not talk about this verse again because he do not want to touch the inner sadness.

### Happiness

A Dream of Red Mansions is a novel that takes love tragedy as the theme, and the emotional tone of the whole novel is sad. Therefore, the poetic metaphors that express happy emotions are not numerous. However,



we still find some emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers which express happy emotions. The poet mainly uses the appearance of flowers and the characteristics of flowers to construct poetic metaphors. For instance, in the line “连理枝头花正开 (Double flowers bloom on a single stem)”, the poet uses the gorgeous appearance and prosperity of the pairs of blooming flowers to metaphorize young couples that love each other and have a very harmonious relationship, so as to express a happy emotion. In the line “冉冉香莲带露开 (sweet dewy lotus in bloom.)”, the poet uses the blooming lotus with dew to metaphorize Lin Daiyu's beautiful appearance and temperament. In the eyes of Jia Baoyu, every twinkle and smile of Lin Daiyu is very beautiful. When seeing Lin Daiyu who is beautiful as a lotus, Jia Baoyu is naturally very happy. In the line “女儿喜，灯花并头结双蕊 (The girl's joy: The wick forms two heads like a double flower)”, the poet used the wick to form two heads like a double flower to metaphorize the marriage of men and women which expresses the characters' inner happy emotion. In the line “花气袭人知昼暖 (When the fragrance of flowers assails men we know the day is warm)”, the poet uses the image of the fragrance of flowers to construct emotional poetic metaphor by using the fragrance of flowers to metaphorize the arrival of spring. When spring comes the weather becomes warmer, reviving everything, and people naturally feel happy.

### Pride (or Gentlemen's feelings)

"Gentleman" is an important category of Chinese traditional culture, it is a personality paradigm which is shaped and respected through thousands of years in China. Furthermore, it is a personality image of the Chinese nation, exhibiting the features of the ideal and the reality, excellence and kindness, and nobility and extraordinary [12]. The Gentleman is an ideal personality that is shaped by Kong Zi. The Noble and ordinary moral character of the gentleman is highly respected by Chinese thinkers as well as the ordinary people. The famous Great Masters Zhang Dainian believed that the motto “天行健，君子以自强不息；地势坤，君子以厚德载物 (The movement of heaven is full of power. Thus the gentleman makes himself strong and untiring. The earth's condition is receptive devotion. Thus the gentleman who has breadth of character carries the outer world.)” is best summarized as the core substance of the Chinese national spirit [13]. The most important content of Confucianism and the whole Chinese traditional culture is to expound the connotations of “仁、义、礼、智、信及忠、孝、廉、耻 (Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, faith and loyalty, filial piety, honesty, shame)”, which are the ethics and norms for interaction with others. These characteristics are integrated into an ideal “gentleman” [14]. Every person should be a gentleman by choice of traditional Chinese culture. The gentleman culture is the source of the outstanding traditional

Chinese culture. Cao Xueqin, as an ancient Chinese literati, was deeply influenced by the gentleman culture; this culture plays a very important role in his creation of poetry in *A Dream of Red Mansions* [11].

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Cao Xueqin created a lot of poems about chrysanthemums, plum flowers and white begonia through the perspective of the characters in the novel. In these poems, the poet uses a lot of poetic metaphors to express the characters' emotions of pride. This reflects that Cao Xueqin respected the gentleman culture, and is very fond of chrysanthemums, plum flowers and white begonia. In the poems about chrysanthemums and white begonia, written through the perspective of Lin Daiyu, the protruding element is that the chrysanthemum and white begonia open in the cold season and have an aloof character which is not found in other flowers. The poet uses the flowers to metaphorize Lin Daiyu, using the characteristics of the flower to express her own emotion of pride and attitude toward life of being incompatible with the secular. Because Lin Daiyu has emotions of pride and is incompatible with the secular, she opposed the imperial examination career and pursued free love. In Chinese culture, the Chrysanthemum, Plum and Bamboo flowers are the symbols of gentlemen. These poetic metaphors, were formally constructed by Chrysanthemum, Plum, and White begonia to express emotions of pride. These poetic metaphors have unique Chinese cultural characteristics.

### A summary of emotions expressed by poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

In the aforementioned examples, it can be observed that the poet uses a lot of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to express the characters' various emotions including sadness, happiness, and pride in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Furthermore, these emotional poetic metaphors are mainly constructed through the use of images of the appearances, characteristics, periods, colors, fragrances, and growth environments of flowers.

Among the emotions, the emotions of sadness expressed by the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers are the most abundant and complex and include loneliness, worry, longing, hopelessness, helplessness, and despair amongst others. Furthermore, the images that are used to construct these poetic metaphors include the appearances, periods, colors, and growth environments of flowers. The emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers expressing happiness are relatively simple; they mainly use the images of characteristics and fragrances of flowers. The images, which are used to express the emotion of pride, include the characteristics and growth environments of flowers.

### The internal structures of poetic metaphors related to flowers: Some case analyses

The previous section focuses on the emotions of the characters as expressed by the emotional poetic metaphor related to flowers. The images that the poet uses to construct emotional poetic metaphors include the appearances, characteristics, periods, colors, fragrances, and growth environments of flowers. Among them, the most used is “the appearances, characteristics and periods of flowers”. To understand the internal structure of the emotional poetic metaphor related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, this section will select a case from each of the three categories and make detailed case analyses.

#### Appearances of Flowers

In this section, we will take the emotional poetic metaphor related to the flower in “春恨秋悲皆自惹,花容月貌为谁妍. (They brought on themselves spring grief and autumn anguish; Wasted, their beauty fair as flowers and moon.)” as an example to make a detailed case analysis based on the conceptual blending theory in order to explain the construction process and internal structure of the poetic metaphors as constructed through the appearance of flowers. In a literal sense, this verse is supposed to persuade people to cleanse their heart and limit their desires in order to be beyond the sea of sin. However, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author (Cao Xueqin) [11] uses this verse to describe the unfortunate fate of the beauties, especially implying that the love tragedy between Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu is the central plot of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Lin Daiyu will often be full of emotions of sorrow and sadness when facing the scenes

of flowers withering or experiencing strong wind and rain due to her unfortunate experience in life. This can be understood in the line “花容月貌为谁妍. (Wasted, their beauty fair as flowers and moon.)”, in which the poet uses the appearance of flowers to metaphorize the beautiful appearance of Lin Daiyu.

The metaphorical process, which projects from the appearance of flowers to the appearance of human beings, is actually a process of conceptual blending. In this conceptual blending, two input spaces are involved, one is the input space of flower, and the other is the input space of person. Each of these two input spaces involves an entity, the characteristics of the entity, the visual experience, in addition to other things. The elements in the two input spaces construct a match between each other through cross-space mapping. The flower maps to human beings, the characteristics of flowers map to the characteristics of human beings, and the visual experience that is caused by the flower maps to the visual experience that is caused by the appearance of human beings. Under the cognitive operation of the brain, these mutual mapping elements and organizing frames of these elements are selectively projected onto the blending space to form temporary concept sets. Then, through the cognitive operations of the human brain, these temporary concept sets will be associated with the relevant long-term memory factors. Under the effect of the compression mechanism of the brain, an emergent structure will be generated in the blending space through composition, completion and elaboration; that is, the appearance of human beings is the flower. And the diagram of this conceptual blending network is as follows:

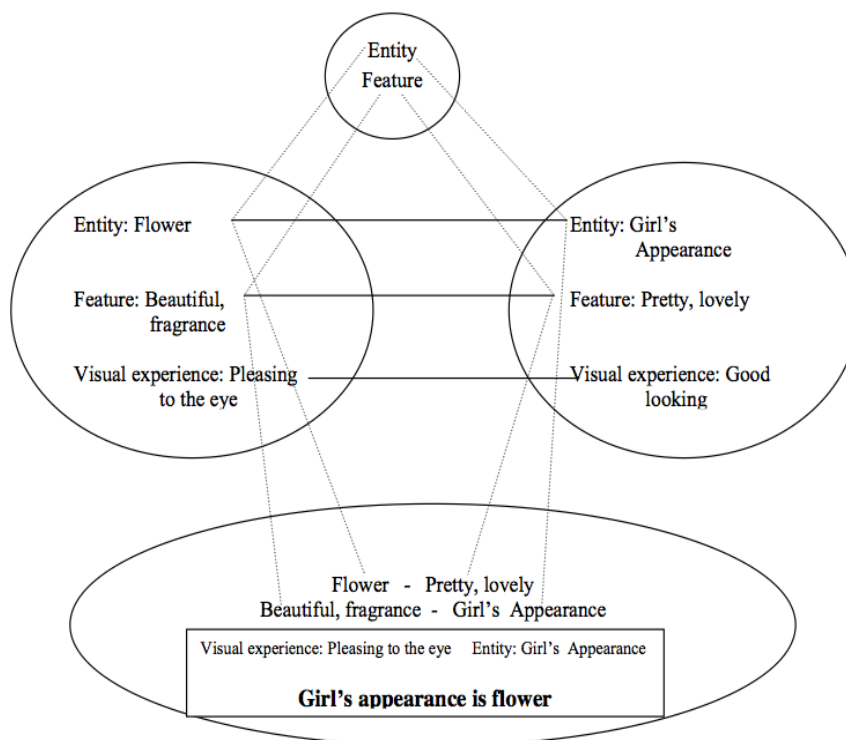


Fig-2: The conceptual blending network of the appearance of flower

In the construction of this poetic metaphor the poet project the appearance of the flower onto the appearance of beauty, through the mechanism of conceptual blending, to use the appearance of the flower to metaphorize the beauty. Thus, the appearance of beauty will have the characteristics of beauty and good fragrance, qualities that also belong to flowers. Through this poetic metaphor, the poet makes the abstract things more concrete and makes the strange things more familiar so as to vividly depict the girl's beautiful appearance to the readers.

### Characteristics of Flowers

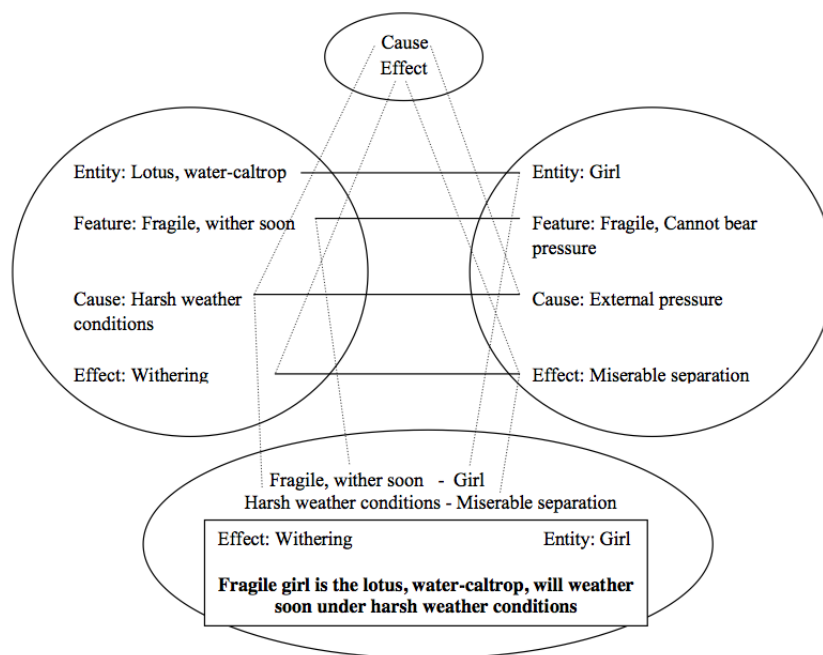
In this section we take the poetic metaphor related to flowers in the line “池塘一夜秋风冷，吹散菱荷红玉影。菱花菱叶不胜愁，重露繁霜压纤梗。” (A pool at night; the chilly autumn wind, The red-jade shadows of caltrop apart has tossed; water-caltrop and lotus are overcome by grief, Their slender stems weighed down by dew and frost.)” as an example to make a detailed case analysis based on the conceptual blending theory so as to let readers know about the construction process and inertial structure of the poetic metaphors which are constructed by using the characteristics of flowers. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author uses this poem to express the longing and sadness emotions of Jia Baoyu when he sees the empty house that Jia Yuanchun lived in before. After Jia Yuanchun married far away from home this pair of siblings (Jia Baoyu and Jia Yuanchun) hardly have opportunities to get together.

In this poem, the poet uses the delicate characteristics of the water-caltrop and lotus flower which can not withstand the blow of wind and frost to metaphorize the girl's delicate characteristics. In the poet's view, the separation of siblings is as if the water-caltrop and lotus flowers were broken down by the wind and frost. Through long-term life in the Grand View Garden, Jia Baiyu witnessed the former glory of Grand View Garden. When he faced the depressed scene of family separation, he seems to see the feudal

family's bleak prospects. All of these scenes resemble the water-caltrop and lotus flowers, which can not withstand the pressure of wind and frost.

The process of metaphorizing is actually a process of conceptual blending, which projects from the delicate characteristic of water-caltrop and lotus to the girl's delicate characteristic. This conceptual blending involves two input spaces, one is the water-caltrop and lotus, and the other is the girl. The input space of water-caltrop and lotus contains the following elements: the water-caltrop and lotus, the delicate characteristic of the water-caltrop and lotus, wind and frost, cause-effect between “water-caltrop and lotus” and “wind and frost”, and the final outcome. The input space of the girl contains the following elements: the girl, the delicate characteristic of the girl, external pressure, the cause-effect between girl and external pressure, and the final outcome.

Finally, the elements in the two input spaces construct a match between each other through the cross-space mapping. The water-caltrop and lotus map to the girl, the delicate characteristic of the water-caltrop and lotus map to the delicate characteristic of the girl, the wind and frost map to the external pressure, and the final outcome of water-caltrop and lotus maps to the final outcome of girl. Under the cognitive operation of the brain, these mutual mapping elements and organizing frames of these elements are selectively projected onto the blending space to form the temporary concept sets. Then, with the participation of cognitive operations of the human brain, these temporary concept sets will be associated with the relevant long-term memory factors. Under the effect of the compression mechanism of brain an emergent structure will be generated in the blending space through the composition, completion and elaboration; that is, the delicate girl is the water-caltrop and lotus, and will wither soon under the pressure of wind and frost. The diagram of this conceptual blending network is as follows:



**Fig-3: The conceptual blending network of the characteristics of flowers**

In the process of constructing poetic metaphors in this poem, the poet projects the delicate characteristic of the water-caltrop and lotus, which can not withstand the pressure of wind and frost, through the mechanism of conceptual blending to the girl so as to metaphorize the delicate characteristics of the girl that can not withstand the external pressure. The poet uses the familiar things (events) to metaphorize the abstract things while also creating a tragic beauty of literature, in addition to facilitating the readers' comprehension.

### Periods of Flowers

In this section, we will take the poetic metaphor related to flowers in the line “开到茶蘼花了事. (When the tea millet blooms, spring flowers fade.)” as an example to make a detailed case analysis based on the conceptual blending theory to aid readers in understanding the constructing process and inertial structure of the poetic metaphors as constructed by the period of flowers. The tea millet flower generally blossoms in the late spring and withers very quickly. The tea millet flower is white and fragrant. Chinese people have a lot of positive names for the tea millet flower, such as: 独步春 (Unique spring), 白蔓君 (White gentleman), 佛见笑 (Buddha laughed), 百宜枝 (Vitality flower), 雪梅墩 (White snow flower), 琼绶带 (Joan ribbon), and others. Su Shi, who is a famous poet in ancient China, composed a verse “茶蘼不争春, 寂寞开最晚. (Tea millet does not compete with other flowers in spring, lonely opening the latest.)” The tea millet flower will blossom latest in spring and the withering of the tea millet flower indicates the end of spring. In the verse “开到茶蘼花了事. (When the tea millet blooms, spring flowers fade.)”, the poet uses the short existing period of flower to metaphorize that

nothing can be permanent, and that every thing will have a final outcome. The poet uses the short period of the tea millet flower from blossoming to withering to metaphorize the outcome of Grand View Garden from prosperity to decline offering the reader a deep impression.

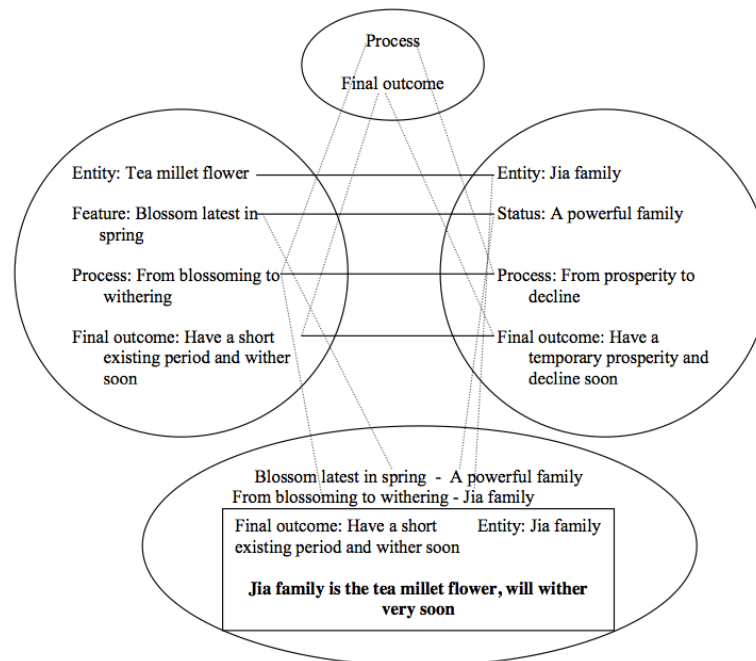
The process of metaphorizing which projects the flower from blossoming to withering to the Jia Family (Grand View Garden) from prosperity to decline, is actually a process of conceptual blending. This conceptual blending involves two input spaces, one refers to the tea millet flower, and the other refers to the Jia family (Grand View Garden). The input space of tea millet flower contains the following elements: the tea millet flower and the characteristics of tea millet flower: blossoming and withering, time, final outcome, etc. The input space of Jia family (Grand View Garden) contains the following elements: the Jia family, the status of Jia family, the process of development (from prosperity to decline), time, their final outcome, etc.

The elements in the two input spaces construct a matching between each other through cross-space mapping. The tea millet flower maps to the Jia family; the characteristics of tea millet flower maps to the status of Jia family; the blossoming and withering process of tea millet flower maps to the development process of Jia family (from prosperity to decline); etc. Under the cognitive operation of the brain, these mutual mapping elements and organizing frames of these elements are selectively projected onto the blending space to form the temporary concept sets. Then, with the participation of cognitive operations of the human brain, these temporary concept sets will be associated with the relevant long-term memory factors. Under the effect of the compression mechanism of brain an emergent



structure will be generated in the blending space through the composition, completion and elaboration; that is, the prosperity of the Jia family is like the

blossoming of the tea millet flower, which withers very quickly. The diagram of this conceptual blending network is as follows:



**Fig-4: The conceptual blending network of the period of the flower**

In this poetic metaphor the poet uses the tea millet flower, which will blossom latest in spring and the withering of it indicates the end of spring, to metaphorize the outcome of Jia family (Grand View Garden) from prosperity to decline; thereby giving readers a sense of an intuitive image. The metaphor uses a small event to metaphorize a big event, and uses a simple event to metaphorize the complicated event, so as to facilitate comprehension and offer a deep impression.

#### **Relationship between poetic metaphor and cognition as well as culture**

Poetic metaphor is a result of conceptualization, in which the poet uses the poetic cognitive means to understand the outside world. In the process of the conceptual blending of poetic metaphors, cognitive models and culture models play a very important role. The cognitive model provides certain possibilities for the formation of poetic metaphor. Furthermore, the culture model is the key factor which allows these possibilities to become a reality. In other words, every poetic metaphor should be rooted in a certain cognitive model and culture model. The cognitive model is based on the idea that our emotions and behaviors are influenced by our perceptions of events. Cognitive theory tells us that it is not the situations itself that determine what we feel, but rather it is the way we think about the situation – the thoughts that go through our mind in any given situation are automatic and cause us to have different emotional responses. These automatic thoughts reflect the way in which we interpret and think about a situation, and have

a major effect on the way we feel [12]. In other words, the cognitive model influences human cognition and conceptualization for the world. For the same outside world, people, who have different cognitive models, will use different ways to make cognition and conceptualization. The process of constructing poetic metaphor is a process of cognition and conceptualization. The poet, as a member of a certain society, will be affected by the cognitive model and culture model of that society. So, the poetic metaphors, which are constructed by the poet, will be affected by the cognitive model and culture model of that society. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, when constructing emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers the poets were affected by the cognitive model and culture model of China. Due to the effect of these models, the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions* exhibit unique national style.

Chinese people love flowers and cherish flowers. They think that flowers, like people, have life. Life when blossoming indicates the birth of new life, and when withering indicates the end of life. Therefore, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, there are a large number of poetic metaphors constructed with the blossoming and withering flowers which are used to metaphorize the life of people, the inner emotions of people, as well as the development of social affairs, etc. In addition, Chinese people often assign different characters to different flowers according to the characteristics of flowers. Examples include: the plum (defying severe cold, cutting through snow and ice, and having lofty and unyielding character), the orchid (growing in

secluded valleys and enjoying its own excellence, and its fragrant and elegant characteristics), the chrysanthemum flower (blossoming in frost, self-admiring quality, lack of competition with other flowers), and the lotus flower (growing out of mud, but blooming pure and untainted); each of these flowers have the gentleman character. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the author (Cao Xueqin) [11] arranged Lin Daiyu to write the poems of chrysanthemum in order to show the emotion pride (or gentleman feelings) of Lin Daiyu. Without the praise of gentleman feelings and Chinese people's admiration of chrysanthemum flowers, the poetic metaphors about the gentleman cannot be constructed so perfectly. In addition, the flower has a flexible beauty, similar to the character of a girl. Therefore, Chinese people often use flowers to metaphorize girls, and the author of *A Dream of Red Mansions* metaphorizes the beauties in the novel into different flowers as his prime examples.

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### CONCLUSION

This paper uses conceptual blending theory to study the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Exploration of how these emotional poetic metaphors are related to flowers in constructing meaning achieves the creative intention of the author. The proposal of this paper also reveals the "cognitive iceberg", which is hidden in the emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers in *A Dream of Red Mansions* so as to provide the readers with a wider range of reading horizons.

Because human emotions are highly abstract, people tend to use metaphors to vividly express these abstract emotions. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, the poet uses a lot of emotional poetic metaphors related to flowers to express the characters' various inner emotions, including sadness (including loneliness, worrying, longing, hopelessness, helplessness, despair, etc.), happiness, and pride. These emotional poetic metaphors are mainly constructed by using the images of appearances, characteristics, periods, colors, fragrances, and growth environments of flowers.

Through this analysis we can understand the metaphorical process, which projects from the flowers to human beings, is actually a process of conceptual blending. Through the mechanism of conceptual blending, the poet projects the flower onto human beings, using the flower to metaphorize human beings, making the abstract things more concrete while making the strange things more familiar, so as to facilitate comprehension and offer a deep impression.

In addition, every poetic metaphor should be rooted in a certain cognitive model and culture model.

In the process of conceptual blending of poetic metaphor, cognitive models and culture models play very important roles. The cognitive model provides certain possibilities for the formation of poetic metaphor, and the culture model is the key factor which allows these possibilities to become a reality.

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