

# Conceptual Metaphors in “The Vegetarian” from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

Yimeng Mao<sup>1</sup> Li Zeng<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> School of Law, Humanities and Sociology, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei 430000, China

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. Email: maoyimeng@whut.edu.cn

## ABSTRACT

Han Kang used a large number of conceptual metaphors in her representative work "The Vegetarian", not only showcasing Yeong-hye's inner world, but also criticizing social structural violence and calling for individual awakening and pursuit of freedom. Starting from the three types of conceptual metaphors, this article analyzes how source domains such as "knives and swords", "bras", and "plants" are mapped to the target domain based on empirical foundations. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor, analyzing “The Vegetarian” can reveal the multiple symbolic meanings behind the vegetarian behavior and other plots in the work, deepen the understanding of themes such as individual difficulties, social pressure, and self-identity, enrich the interpretation perspective of the work, promote interdisciplinary research in literature and cognitive linguistics, and provide readers with a more comprehensive and in-depth literary experience.

**Keywords:** Cognitive linguistics, Conceptual metaphor, Han Kang, “The Vegetarian”.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“The Vegetarian” is an important work by Han Kang, the winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature. It was first published in 2007 and won the Booker Prize for International Literature in 2016. This novel has been translated into multiple languages and has had a wide-ranging impact worldwide. The novel tells the story of the protagonist Kim Yeong-hye, who suddenly decides to become a vegetarian after a nightmare and even desires to become a tree, gradually approaching the brink of mental breakdown. The work deeply explores themes such as obedience and subversion, human violence, reason and madness, and interpersonal understanding through Yeong-hye's extreme behavior and inner struggles.

The book uses a large number of metaphors to profoundly reveal the subtle changes in the characters' inner world and the complex entanglements of interpersonal relationships. This article takes the conceptual metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics as the starting point, combines with the specific content of the book, starts from the three types of conceptual metaphors, and deeply analyzes how source domains such as "knives and swords", "bras", "plants" are cleverly mapped to

target domains based on people's experiential foundations. This article also explores the role of metaphor in novels, in order to provide new perspectives for more readers to gain a deeper understanding of this work in the future.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was proposed by cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book "Metaphors We Live By" in 1980. This theory holds that metaphor is not just a strategy for poetic imagination and rhetorical diversity, but a fundamental way for people to think and understand the world, and the conceptual system itself on which their thoughts and actions are based is based on metaphor.[1]

Conceptual metaphor involves three fundamental concepts: source domain, target domain, and mapping. The source domain is the specific, known concept or experience people use to understand and express the target domain. The target domain is an abstract, unknown concept or experience that people need to understand or express. Mapping refers to systematically transferring elements, structures, or relationships

from the source domain to the target domain. This transfer is not arbitrary, but based on some inherent logic or similarity. For example, in the metaphor of "debate is war", war is the source domain and debate is the target domain. Although there is no hand to hand combat in debate, there is a verbal battle. This metaphor is used to construct people's behavior in debates and how they understand what they do during debates. The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience the current thing through another thing.

Since the 1990s, with the introduction and presentation of foreign cognitive linguistics and metaphorical cognitive theory by some scholars, metaphor research in China has also entered a new era. Zhao Yanfang (1995) provided an in-depth review of "Metaphors We Live By" in her article "The Metaphorical Cognitive Structure of Language - A Review of 'Metaphors We Live By'", elaborating on the core views of the book on the metaphorical cognitive structure of language and its impact on fields such as linguistics and philosophy.[2] Shu Dingfang (1996) discussed the research history, objectives, methods, and tasks of modern metaphor studies in "On the Research Objectives, Methods, and Tasks of Modern Metaphorical Studies". She emphasized the importance of metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon and proposed the necessity and research direction of establishing an independent metaphor study, providing a comprehensive introduction to modern metaphor studies for the first time.[3] Lan Chun (1997) explored the study of spatial metaphors "up" and "down" in Chinese from a cognitive perspective in the book "A Cognitive Approach to Spatial Metaphors in Chinese", and analyzed their imagery patterns, working mechanisms, metaphorical extensions, as well as their specific applications and metaphorical meanings in Chinese culture.[4]

Entering this century, metaphor research has begun to diversify and develop. Some scholars have combined metaphor with translation, such as Chen Daoming's (2002) "Metaphor and Translation: Implications of Cognitive Linguistics for Translation Theory Research"; Some scholars have applied conceptual metaphors to foreign language teaching, such as Liu Zhengguang and Ai Chaoyang's (2016) "Three Basic Issues in Foreign Language Teaching from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics", which provides new ideas and methods for foreign language teaching; Some scholars have analyzed literary works from a metaphorical perspective, providing a new

perspective for in-depth interpretation of literary works, such as Ma Lingling's (2019) "Cognitive Linguistics Research on Analyzing Metaphors - Taking 'The Rose Dedicated to Emily' as an Example". The diversified development of metaphor research not only broadens the research scope of linguistics, but also brings certain impacts to multiple fields such as translation studies, education, literary criticism, etc., promoting interdisciplinary integration and innovative development.

At present, research on "The Vegetarian" is still focused on the fields of literary criticism and translation studies, such as Zhao Pu's (2024) "Life and Death are Natural - An Interpretation of Han Kang's Natural View of 'The Vegetarian'", Hou Xinran and Jin Chunzi's (2024) "Interpretation of Dream Narratives in 'The Vegetarian'", and Xu Jun and Zhang Xiaotian's "Comparative Analysis of Translator Subjectivity Based on Corpus Chinese English Translation - Based on Han Kang's Parallel Corpus of 'The Vegetarian' Chinese English Translation". There is not much literature in academia that studies "The Vegetarian" from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and it mainly focuses on plant metaphors, such as Yu Zhiwen's (2020) "Plant Image Metaphors in Han Kang's Novels - Taking 'The Vegetarian' as an Example" and Yu Xinyue and Jin Hui's "Research on Plant Metaphors of the 'Tree' Image from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics - Taking 'The Vegetarian' as an Example". This article expands the scope of research on conceptual metaphors in "The Vegetarian" in order to fill the gaps in related studies.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN "THE VEGETARIAN"

In this novel, the three chapters of "The Vegetarian", "Birthmark", and "Tree Fire" are intricately linked, and the author comprehensively portrays the spiritual alienation process of housewife Yeong-hye from being a vegetarian to aspiring to become a plant through the transformation of narrative voice. Violence and aestheticism achieve a paradoxical unity in the novel, and the timeless struggling and uneasy text exposes the structural violence from the nuclear family, clan, and society that ravages Yeong-hye.[5] The book uses a lot of metaphors to depict the pain of Yeong-hye. This article will analyze the role of conceptual metaphor in novels from three types:

structural metaphor, directional metaphor, and ontological metaphor.

### 3.1 Structural Metaphor

Structural metaphor refers to the metaphorical construction of one concept using another concept. That is to say, using a familiar concept or idea can help understand and describe another concept or idea that may not be familiar or abstract. For example, "life is a journey", in this structural metaphor, people compare life (a complex and long-term process) to a journey (an activity that people are relatively familiar and easy to understand). Through this metaphor, people can say things like "the starting and ending points of life", "the bumps and scenery on the road of life", "growing and learning on the journey of life", etc., all of which use the concept of journey to understand and describe different stages and experiences of life.

#### 3.1.1 The Metaphor of "Murder Weapon"

The metaphor of "murder weapon" depicts Yeong-hye's journey from inner numbness to awakening and rebellion, as well as the gradual emaciation and sharp protrusion of her body due to this inner transformation.

- (1) What's going on? Why am I getting thinner and thinner? Am I becoming so sharp to pierce something?

This is her self-questioning from Yeong-hye's perspective. Starting from no longer eating meat, Yeong-hye's body gradually underwent changes. The source domain is a weapon such as a sword, sharp and aggressive, while the target domain is Yeong-hye's gradually changing body. Awakening from the abyss of the dream, Yeong-hye's heart went from numbness to the accumulation of resistance. Her body also underwent changes, becoming increasingly emaciated, her bones prominent, and her overall outline becoming sharp and prominent.

The profound transformation in Yeong-hye's heart actually stems from her insight and experience of the difficulties faced by women in the real world. Those injustices, constraints, and helplessness deeply hurt her heart. All emotions converged into a powerful force, making her sharp like a sword from the heart to the body, as if ready to pierce through all obstacles at any time.

#### 3.1.2 The Metaphor of "Time"

- (2) He knew his wife's hard work, but he still wasted most of his time watching this performance.
- (3) It's a similar kind of image creation that won't waste too much of your time, but... you have to be naked.

In people's daily lives, "time" is seen as an entity like money, limited resources, or rare commodities that can be used, consumed, and planned. The above two examples both reveal the concept of the structural metaphor of "time is money": that is, both time and money have limitations, requiring people to allocate and utilize them reasonably.

These words are from the mouth of her brother-in-law, who is an artist. He, like Yeong-hye's husband, regards women's attentive care for the family as their natural mission. His wife, who is busy running a business on weekdays, rarely has free time to spend with him. She is extremely eager to spend the warm weekend with him and her son. The brother-in-law's job is relatively easy, but he chooses to go out and watch plays during this time, immersing himself in his personal hobbies. The contradictions and conflicts in this family relationship once again highlight the dereliction of duty of some men in the family, reflecting the structural difficulties faced by women in society, and further rationalizing Yeong-hye's resistance.

Example (3) was an invitation from her brother-in-law to Yeong-hye in order to complete his own creation and satisfy his personal desires. The phrase "it won't waste too much time" was intended to give her desire a legitimate reason as an artist. This metaphor implies a power relationship between brother-in-law and Yeong-hye. As an artist and inviter, brother-in-law has the right to define and allocate time. By saying "it won't waste too much time", he is actually telling Yeong-hye that he has the right to decide how she should use her time. This control over time further reflects the brother-in-law's expectation of being in a dominant position in their relationship. It also reflects the universal concept of time and value in society. Time is seen as a resource that can be quantified, used, and consumed. By emphasizing the limitations of time, brother-in-law attempts to make Yeong-hye realize that her time is valuable but should be sacrificed for his creations. This concept is actually providing social support for the behavior of brother-in-law,

while also reflecting the widespread neglect of women's time and value in society.

#### 4. THE METAPHOR OF DIRECTION

Directional metaphor refers to a series of metaphorical concepts constructed with reference to spatial orientation. It is not constructed from one concept to another, but organized within the same conceptual system by referencing spatial orientations such as up and down, inside and outside, front and back, depth, center edge, etc. This metaphorical approach utilizes people's basic perception and experience of spatial orientation to connect abstract concepts or emotions with specific spatial orientations, thereby enhancing the expressive and infectious power of language. For example, "I'm feeling up" corresponds to "I'm happy today". "Up" originally meant "upward", but in the metaphor of "happiness up, sadness down", it also has the meaning of "happiness".

##### 4.1 The Metaphor of "Up and Down" Orientation

- (4) Younger brother's wife quickly grabbed my brother-in-law's arm.
- (5) You grab Yeong-hye's arm.
- (6) Older brother's wife tugged at her father-in-law's right arm. Father-in-law

simply threw away his chopsticks and grabbed a handful of sweet and sour meat with his hand, approaching his wife. Brother-in-law stepped forward and grabbed his wife who was hunched back and retreating.

Control or being controlled is up, and being controlled or compelled is down. At family gatherings, the father-in-law took advantage of his elder status to occupy a high position, while the younger brother-in-law took advantage of his male identity to occupy a high position. When the upper echelons perceive that the objects they manipulate are beginning to break free from control and their own power is facing challenges, a mixture of anger and fear surges in their hearts. The previously invisible family hierarchy has now become apparent, prompting them to resort to physical violence in reality, attempting to force Yeong-hye to accept meat. ("Figure 1")

And although the older brother's wife and younger brother's wife also urged Yeong-hye to eat meat, as bystanders who were also women, watching Yeong-hye suffer violence, their hearts were filled with pity and sympathy. They tried to balance those men with their own strength, but unfortunately, their efforts did not seem to change anything.

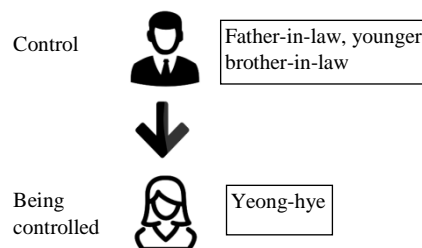


Figure 1 Metaphorical illustration of the "up and down" orientation.

##### 4.1.1 The Metaphor of "Center — Edge" Direction

- (7) What I am most satisfied with is the my wife's ability to live, because she can calmly kill a few cockroaches with her bare hands. She is the most ordinary woman I have chosen and chosen in this world.
- (8) I feel like I don't know this woman anymore. I didn't lie, it's a fact. But driven by responsibility, I walked towards her with legs that looked like they had been injected with lead.

The state of being widely accepted by families and society is seen as the "center", while the situation of being excluded and abandoned is seen as the "edge". Taking Yeong-hye in (7) as an example, before the dream arrived, she was the ideal partner in her husband's mind - a diligent and simple wife and mother who would not make her husband feel inferior because she was ordinary. She silently managed household chores day after day, taking care of her husband's life, but it seems like she had lost herself and her soul. This kind of Yeong-hye is a model recognized by her husband and accepted by society. However, since that dream, Yeong-hye's world has undergone earth shattering

changes. She refused to eat meat and no longer took care of her husband's daily life as meticulously as before, but existed in a way that she considered comfortable. However, in (8), this transformation

gradually marginalized her in her husband's heart, until she was completely abandoned deep inside. ("Figure 2")

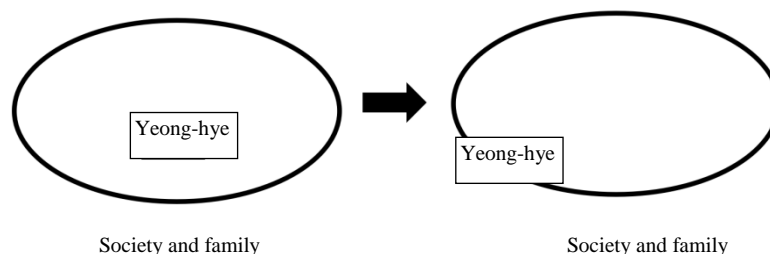


Figure 2 Metaphorical illustration of the "center — edge" orientation.

## 4.2 Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphor refers to treating abstract and vague experiences, such as events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as concrete, tangible entities or substances, in order to classify, group, quantify, etc. For example, the example of "inflation is lowering our living standards" views inflation as an entity that can be referred to, quantified, and identified. In literary works, ontological metaphor often regards intangible and abstract concepts, such as character psychology, thoughts and emotions, event states, etc., as tangible forms, using concrete objects as media to interpret difficult to understand experiences.

### 4.2.1 The Metaphor of "Bras"

In the context of the work, "bras" serve as a metaphor, representing the intangible constraints imposed on women by social norms under the patriarchal social system. This metaphor relies on the shared wrapping and restrictive features of both, constructing a mapping relationship from the source domain (i.e. the bra itself) to the target domain (social regulation). For a long time, bras, as a representative of women's intimate clothing, not only carry rich social and cultural connotations, but are also often regarded by men as a symbol of women's sexy charm, and have evolved into one of the social norms that women have to follow. In the novel, Yeong-hye chose not to wear bras, which is a brave challenge and breakthrough to the above social norms, expressing her desire and pursuit for freedom and independent living, and demonstrating her personal will's rebellion and transcendence against the traditional constraints of society.

- (9) I haven't worn a bra, so naturally I have no way of knowing how unbearable it is.

But seeing that no other woman hates wearing bras like she does, that's why I was surprised by her extreme reaction.

From the perspective of Yeong-hye's husband, he found it difficult to empathize with Yeong-hye's preference for not wearing a bra and expressed dissatisfaction with her daring to break established social norms, as he had never been there before. Yeong-hye's choice is not only a brave challenge to the traditional female role positioning, but also a symbolic and powerful resistance to the constraints women face in a patriarchal society. In the narrative of the book, especially from the husband's perspective, other women also failed to understand Yeong-hye's behavior.

- (10) My wife is wearing a tight black shirt, and the contours of her two nipples are clearly visible. Without a doubt, she was not wearing a bra. When I turned my head to observe everyone's reaction, I happened to bump into the gaze of the lady in charge. I could tell that her pretended calm gaze was mixed with curiosity, surprise, and even a hint of contempt.

The description of the special affairs lady can be interpreted from two levels: On the one hand, because the specialized lady has already gained a certain degree of equal power with men, her thinking is assimilated by men, and she holds a complex contemptuous attitude towards victims who are still in a disadvantaged position as women; On the other hand, as the narrator of this chapter, the husband's inner attitude is also reflected in the wife's reaction, and this description may also be an external projection of the husband's inner attitude towards his wife.

#### 4.2.2 *The Metaphor of "Eating Meat"*

- (11) It's really fortunate. I have never eaten with a true vegetarian before. It's scary enough to think about eating with people who hate seeing me eat meat. Those who choose to be vegetarian for spiritual reasons, to some extent, will dislike eating meat, right? What do you think?

This is the mockery of Yeong-hye by the dedicated wife at a gathering of her husband and other colleagues. In this passage, "eating meat" is not just a dietary habit, it is metaphorically referred to as a symbol of social identity and belonging. The act of eating meat is seen as "normal human" behavior, implying that those who eat meat are part of the mainstream society, while Yeong-hye, as a vegetarian, is seen as an outlier. Yeong-hye appeared out of place because she didn't eat meat, and her dietary habits became a reason for her being marginalized by those at the dinner table.

- (12) Mother-in-law pushed the plate containing stir fried beef, sweet and sour meat, stewed chicken, and octopus noodles in front of my wife and said.

"What are you staring at? Hurry up and eat!"

Father-in-law angrily urged.

"Meat" is an important metaphor in novels. The shocking scene of flesh and blood in the forest in Yeong-hye's dream directly triggered her strong resistance to "meat", which further became the trigger for the sudden escalation of family conflicts in the novel. In the scene of the family gathering, the oppression of Yeong-hye by family members was particularly evident.

Here, "meat" metaphorically represents the fate of Yeong-hye and women who are also in a disadvantaged position. Whether Yeong-hye eats meat not only reflects her level of obedience to family authority, but also deeply reveals her attitude towards accepting male power. The dominant group's gaze and control over the disadvantaged group is seen as food that can be eaten. In the framework of family and society, "meat" symbolizes the domesticated vulnerable groups who continue to suffer from the fate of exploitation, objectification, and discipline. The act of "eating meat" becomes a manifestation of the power of the upper class, closely linked to the will of parents and patriarchal discourse. The consuming and being consumed relationship between humans and meat actually reflects the

conflict between family orders and the personal will of Yeong-hye in terms of integration and resistance. Yeong-hye's dream told her that this is a cannibalistic society. She realized that there is a balance between eating and being eaten in society, and she did not want to live in such an environment. She neither wanted to be eaten nor ate others, so she chose to become a tree and no longer eat meat. At this point, Yeong-hye's identity changed from a weak victim to a seeker of violence, ultimately facing exclusion from her family and society. But just as the ultimate fate of meat is to be consumed by humans, Yeong-hye's path of rebellion was ultimately drowned out by the violent currents of family and society. The image of "meat" ultimately points to Yeong-hye's fate. In the closed loop of "eating and being eaten" fate, Yeong-hye, as a weak and exploited person, cannot truly control her own destiny.

#### 4.2.3 *The Metaphor of "Plant"*

- (13) When the stem extends to the right buttock, a purple flower blooms completely, and a thick yellow pistil stretches out from the center of the flower. The left buttock with the birthmark was left blank, and he picked up a large piece and placed a light green layer around the blue birthmark, making the petal like birthmark even more prominent.

Starting from the imagined fetal spots, it eventually blooms throughout the body, growing into an everlasting flower of life. In this process of painting, the entire book completely breaks free from the limitations of realistic imagination and enters the artistic conception of the beauty of flowers.[6] Here, "flower" is the source domain, and "vitality" is the target domain. Yeong-hye was willing and likes to have beautiful flowers painted on her because she felt the freedom to grow and bloom freely. She didn't care who she blends with, she's just crazily obsessed with the flowers that bloom freely, which were truly beautiful and captivating to her. Every bloom of a flower is a profound call and warm praise for the vitality of Yeong-hye.

- (14) Do you know how I found out? It's a dream, in which I stand upside down... leaves grow on my body, roots grow from my palms... I keep digging into the ground, endlessly... My hips seem to be about to bloom, so I split my legs open wide
- (15) My body needs watering. Sister, I don't need these foods, I need water.

In the chapter of "Tree Fire", Yeong-hye passionately expressed to her sister her desire to become a tree. The "tree" is the source domain, while the "body" is the target domain, based on the similarity of growth stages. Yeong-hye wanted to become a tree that grows upside down. She never ate meat or anything else, giving up all food and her instincts as an animal, only wanting to receive sunlight and water like a tree. Yeong-hye hoped that her life will start from a seed, go through growth and flowering, and eventually spread into a whole. This not only depicts the natural process of life from small to strong, but also implies the continuous expansion and deepening of her personal spiritual world. In this process, she yearned to maximize her self-worth, allowing her tree of life to deeply root in the soil of her soul, grow upwards, and at the same time, deeply connect with Mother Earth, and achieve a state of inner and outer cultivation, physical and mental unity.

In the origin domain of "trees", upside down growth means challenging conventions and pursuing diversity. Yeong-hye used this as a symbol of her refusal to be bound by society's established dietary habits and lifestyle, and her desire to exist in a more natural and pure form. From never eating meat to ultimately giving up all food, this process is not only a change in dietary habits, but also a profound exploration and reconstruction of self-identity and existence. She hoped to use this method to make her life like a tree, directly relying on sunlight and water - the purest source of energy in nature, in order to achieve a spiritual purification and sublimation.

The fantastic scenes of upside down growth, leaves growing on her body, and tree roots sprouting from her palm in her dream further enhance the magic and charm of this metaphor. They are not only a direct reflection of Yeong-hye's inner world, but also a symbolic expression of her pursuit of an ideal life state. Through these dreamlike descriptions, people can glimpse into Yeong-hye's deep desire and relentless pursuit for freedom, nature, and the essence of life.

#### 4.2.4 *The Metaphor of "Animals"*

- (16) I pried away my wife's tightly clenched right hand, and a bird that had been choked to death in the tiger's mouth fell onto the bench. That is a dark green embroidered eyed bird that has lost many feathers, with bite marks from predators on

its body and clear red bloodstains spreading out.

In the final paragraph of the chapter "The Vegetarian", Yeong-hye decisively ended the life of a bird that originally belonged to the sky with her fists. Among them, "bird" serves as the source domain, and "freedom" serves as the target domain. The bird once had full wings and was filled with the vitality of life, just like the free life that Yeong-hye should have enjoyed. However, Yeong-hye's hand tightly held onto the bird's freedom, as if her life was firmly bound by the invisible framework of society, and her bright feathers were plucked off by countless pairs of invisible hands. The suffocation and death of the bird not only reflects the social exclusion suffered by Yeong-hye in resistance, but also symbolizes her gradual loss of longing and pursuit for a better life under the heavy pressure of not being understood and enforced will. The bite marks left by predators are the traces left by Yeong-hye, a reflection of her mental breakdown. She can no longer face the world rationally, and can only express her inner self in a primitive, almost animalistic way.

- (17) ... My mother's photo was blown away by the wind. I looked up and there was a bird flying. The bird said to me, 'I am mother...' Hmm, two hands have grown on the bird's body.

If Yeong-hye is a suffocating bird, then her sister Ren-hea is a bird with wings bound and unable to reach the clouds. In the chapter of "Tree Fire", Chiyu's dream depicts a scene where her mother In-hye transforms into a bird, flapping her wings and soaring high. Despite being imprisoned in a mundane life by the shackles of reality, she becomes a caged bird that cannot truly fly. In-hye also developed a sense of awareness deep inside her heart, gradually understanding her sister's sorrow and having the courage to challenge her fate. But on that decisive night, she climbed up the back mountain, and it was the inexplicable bond that made her finally stop and choose to return. In-hye and Yeong-hye have shared the misfortune of their original families since childhood, but have also fallen into the quagmire of marriage where they do not know how to cherish and understand. But In-hye did not embark on her sister's dead end. It was her maternal instinct that allowed her to choose the weight of protecting her child on the balance of love and sacrifice. She compromised with certain social norms and sacrificed a part of herself, but this sacrifice also brought her strength and courage

from a child, becoming a solid shield for her to face the storms of life.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Han Kang uses a large number of metaphors in "The Vegetarian" to reflect themes such as bondage and awakening, oppression and resistance. From the metaphor of the "murder weapon" in which Yeong-hye's body became increasingly emaciated but full of aggression, to the contradictions and conflicts in family relationships revealed by the metaphor of "time", and to the subtle changes in the power relationship between family and society in the metaphors of the "up and down" and "center edge" directions, Han Kang cleverly uses conceptual metaphors to give us a more intuitive understanding of Yeong-hye's inner world and the structural violence in family and society. The ontological metaphors of "bras", "meat", "trees" and "birds" deeply reveal the various constraints and difficulties that women face in society, as well as their desire and pursuit of freedom and independence. Only by bravely breaking through these layers of constraints can individuals truly awaken and their lives bloom brilliantly.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Lakoff, G. & M. Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* [M]. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- [2] Zhao Yanfang, *The Metaphorical Cognitive Structure of Language: A Review of "Metaphors We Live By"* [J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 1995, (03): 67-72.
- [3] Shu Dingfang, *On the Research Objectives, Methods, and Tasks of Modern Metaphorical Studies* [J]. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 1996, (02): 9-16.
- [4] Lan Chun, *A Cognitive Approach to Spatial Metaphors in Chinese* [J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 1999, (04): 7-15.
- [5] Hou Jiaqi, *The Portrayal of Women's Dilemma in "The Vegetarian" from the Perspective of "Eating and Being Eaten"* [J]. *Current and Ancient Culture and Creation*, 2023, (39):16-18. DOI:10.20024/j.cnki.CN42-1911/I.2023.39.004.
- [6] Hu Yifang, *A Study on Imagery in the Novel Series The Vegetarian* [D]. Shandong Normal

University, 2023.  
DOI:10.27280/d.cnki.gsdsu.2023.000227.

- [7] (South Korea) Han Kang, *The Vegetarian* [M]. Chengdu: Sichuan Literature & Art Publishing House, 2021.