

The metaphorical representation of the concept of “mother” in the epic works by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Rou Shi and Vsevolod Ivanov

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Abstract. The research paper highlights the metaphorical representation of the concept of “mother” in the works of fiction by Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian writers. The authors of this paper analyzed the novel “Behind the curtain” by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, the story “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) by Rou Shi and the story “Polaia Arapiia” by Vsevolod Ivanov. In Borys Antonenko-Davydovych’s novel “Behind the curtain” the metaphor of “Motherland” is represented by the concept of “mother”. In the novel this metaphor is defined by the research paper’s authors from the subtext of the work of fiction. The concept of “mother” in the story of Chinese writer is realized through the metaphor of “female slave”, that is presented in the title of the work. The metaphor of “hope” represents the concept of “mother” in the story of Russian writer, this metaphor is represented in the name of the main character. This paper proves that the concept of “mother” in the epic works of Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian writers is also represented through the metaphor of “berehynia”, which indicates the similarity of these three works. The concept of “mother” in the novel “Behind the curtain” by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, the story “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) by Rou Shi and the story “Polaia Arapiia” by Vsevolod Ivanov is represented through similar semantic markers: motherly love, humility, self-sacrifice, mental strength over a man, unselfishness, protection, humanity, kindness.

Keywords: conceptology, concept structure, concept core, concept periphery, concept, concept of “mother”, metaphor, novel, story

1. Introduction

The concepts are the means by which people perceives the world around them, which explain the relationship between language and culture, language and thinking etc., as well as attention

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to the picture of the world of the individuals. This is known that the concept has no uniform meaning. This is due to this term is in itself integral and is used in several sciences. We agree with the opinion of Zahnitko [25], who understands the concepts as “mental formations, the main manifestation of which are preserved in human memory in certain stereotypes consciously-typed fragments of experience, which allows the transfer of information about them to others” [25].

Misinkevych [14] says that the concept is “the culturally significant unit of the mental level, which in a certain system (picture of the world) acts as a core element, and in the consideration of a particular community becomes an ethnolinguistic unit” [14].

There are different approaches to the concept structure. Vorkatchov [22] and Karasik [11] present a three-dimensional model of the concept, Popova and Sternin [17] present a core-peripheral model, Maslova [13] present a five-level model. Considering the concept as the structural unit, we would like to present its model. The concept consists of the central part – the core, and also it has the peripheral part. The core is formed by the clearest, the most concrete and the most tangible images, while the peripheral status of the concept is indicated by its degree of distance from the core by the degree of concreteness and clarity. It should be emphasized that the peripheral part is not insignificant, but it also provides a general figurative representation.

Despite a certain well-established structure of the concept, it should be noted that this is the dynamic formation, which may acquire other parts and features in the process of thinking. On the one hand, the concept has the same clearly defined structure as the notion, and, on the other hand, the concept includes associations, images, history, culture, etymology, critical assessments and so on.

The concept is a kind of repercussion between the image, idea, archetype, but has its own characteristics. The concept represents a reality that is metaphorized for each person. Lakoff and Johnson [12] have come to the conclusion that human thinking is metaphorical. They have proven that metaphor is the main mechanism for the formation of conceptual forms of thinking and the world is the product of metaphorization. According to Lakoff and Johnson [12] conception, personality does not perceive phenomena and things as they are, it always associates with what is already known: “We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities” [12]. So, we agree with Lakoff and Johnson [12] that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, available in our language, thinking, activities, and so on. Therefore, the concepts that awaken our thinking are not just a bunch of minds, but a conceptual system that is metaphorical and central in real everyday life. This can be explained by the fact that human thinking is mostly metaphorical, and, consequently, the concept is metaphorical, because it is the result of mental activity. Researchers suggest that the metaphorical concept is the key figurative representation that is revealed through a number of metaphors. Scientists determine that the metaphorical concept is characterized by the following features: invariance, dominance in the picture of the world, implementation in various metaphorical variations, informativeness, creation of a conceptual and metaphorical

sphere. So, the concept of “mother” is the metaphorical concept that is explicated in various metaphors.

Scientists have investigated a number of concepts: the concept of “mother” (Bagrintseva and Dosimova [2], Burdun [3], Chibisova [5], Pak [16], Shayakhmetova, Shaiakhmetova and Mukhametzyanova [19], Wierzbinski [23]), the concept of “house” (Nagornova and Volkova [15]), the concept of “border” (Zaporozhets and Stodolinska [26]), the concept of “leisure” (Stroganova [21]), the concept of “childhood” (Chemodurova and Ialovenko [4]), the concept of “podvig” (“glory”) (Zlochevskaya [27]), the of concept “grekh” (“sin”) (Radbil and Saygin [18]), the concept of “honor” (Yurina and Temirova [24]), the concept of “miracle” (Ilyina and Karpova [8]), the concept of “fate” (Chupryna, Baranova and Merculova [6]), the concept of “bread”, “swamp” (Demeshkina [7], Ivantsova [10]) etc.

The aim of our research paper is to identify the metaphorical representation of the concept of “mother” in the novel “Za shyrmou” (“Behind The Curtain”) by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, in the story “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) by Rou Shi and in the story “Polaia Arapiia” by Vsevolod Ivanov. This will allow us to see the commonality and uniqueness of the artistic reception of the concept of “mother” in the works of the writers who belonged to different nationalities, but had similar conditions for the formation of their creativity.

2. Research methodology

We consider that the concept of “mother” is one of the sacraments and saints, that’s why it takes an important part in the conceptsphere of different peoples. The concept of “mother” is one of the fundamental concepts in the world literature. It is the form of organization of the world, the way through which person realizes the world and reveals the peculiarities of mentality. However, in different periods of development of writers’ creation can be traced a wide range of connotations of the image of the mother: from deification to desacralization and even maternal murder.

To study the concept of “mother”, we took three epic works, which were created by authors in the tragic periods of the history of Ukraine, China and Russia. The state structure was changing in these three countries and the completely new ideological politics was establishing in that time. Most of the citizens, not of their own free will, were involved in the crucial historical events of their homeland. Therefore, the study of the concept of “mother”, which for all national literatures initially has a sacred character, will allow you to see its semantic content, to understand the features of the representation of the author’s traumatic experience in the works of Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian writers.

So, our research paper is based on the model according to which the concept of “mother” is represented in the literary texts of various authors through metaphors that represent their reception of the mother and the author’s worldview. The integrated approach was used to achieve the aim of this article. The use of various research methods made it possible to objectively consider the metaphorical representation of the concept of “mother” in the works of fiction of Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian authors. The comparative typological method made it possible to determine the general and original in the representation of the concept of “mother” by various authors, including at the thematic level, which helps to understand the originality of writer’s

receptions and metaphorical transformations of the concept of “mother”. The elements of the methodology of hermeneutics and semiotics were used to interpret specific works of fiction, to understand metaphors, images and motives in the epic texts.

3. Results and discussions

In the novel by Ukrainian writer Borys Antonenko-Davydovych “*Za shyrmoi*” there is an image of a wise mother, although, unfortunately, she is not an authority for her son. Oleksandr Ivanovych Postolovskyi (the main character of the novel) is influenced by his wife who is Russian, and distanced himself from his mother, became ashamed of her, and settled mother behind the curtain in his office. Mother slept on an old bed, used old bed linen, which was unfit for use: “On his right, hugging the wall and curtained off, stood the bed. The old wooden camp-bed, with its long canvas sack mattress filled with straw long turned to dust, was covered with a patched sheet and an old home-spun bedspread. His mother had brought these with her from distant Pereyaslav after she had finally decided to move in with her only son” [1].

The indifference of the son severely hurts the mother’s heart and soul, but she humbly accepts the humiliation, continues to care for him, to love deeply. This semantic component of the concept of “mother” is close to the works of Rou Shi and Vsevolod Ivanov. The main character of the novel forgot about his mother due to the other people’s problems, separating himself from her with the curtain, which symbolizes indifference in the work. He did not notice her deadly disease in time, although he was a doctor: “If this had not been his mother, but somebody else, he would have felt disappointed, as a doctor, that the disease had been diagnosed by another doctor and not by him. He would have been displeased and ashamed <...> that he had overlooked cancer in a patient where the symptoms had been so obvious <...> But this was his mother, a mother who had lived by his side, whom he saw each day, a mother who withered, wasted and was dying before his eyes, and he had noticed nothing! Noticed nothing – neither as a doctor nor a son ... How could this have happened?” [1]. Oleksandr Ivanovych realizes that his indifference and artificial shame for her natural behavior did not allow him to notice the obvious signs of cancer in his mother. He is well aware that he has betrayed his mother. He is confused by his conscience and remorse for the dearest person in the world. Other characters in this work allow us to better understand the semantics of the concept of “mother”. Russian wife of the main character manipulates her husband, forcing him to look at his mother from a different angle, to understand her ignorance, simplicity, incompatibility with city life. The wife has a chauvinistic mindset, she believes that nationality affects the mental and professional abilities of a person, she is surprised that surgeon-Uzbek Khodzhaiev is appointed the head of her husband. According to her, representatives of this nationality cannot be doctors and generally show a knack for intellectual work, professionalism: “– Is he Russian or Uzbek? she inquired. – From the name, I’d say he was Uzbek – Khodjayev. – Then he’s as much as a noodle as Akhmetjanov! – On the contrary, Akhmetjanov is only a medical assistant, whereas this fellow is a surgeon. And it’s said he’s good one. Even after becoming superintendent, he continues to practice. He still does many involved abdominal operations in the provincial hospital. – I just can’t imagine an Uzbek working as a doctor, especially as a surgeon or a gynecologist. – Why not? Alexander objected. – There are fine Uzbek doctors,

engineers, agronomists . . . – You know, each nation has its calling: the Chinese cultivate tea, gypsies tell fortunes, Jews trade . . . < . . . > I can perhaps envisage an Uzbek as a teacher, an actor, even a poet (though people say they write boring verse), but a doctor, an engineer, or an artist – never! I would never entrust my health to an Uzbek. Never! It just doesn't suit them" [1].

The thoughts of Russian wife of the main character are usual for the Soviet period, when colonial politics prevailed and chauvinistic attitudes toward members of other non-Russian nationalities in the USSR were widespread. Borys Antonenko-Davydovych is a writer of the "shot revival" era who was repressed and spent many years in Stalin's camps, therefore he understands this well and deliberately opposes Ukrainian mother to Russian daughter-in-law.

The image of surgeon-Uzbek Khodzhaiev only intensifies this confrontation. This character is ready to do his best to help Oleksandr Ivanovych to save his mother, takes his grief as his own. Khodzhaiev accompanies Oleksandr Ivanovych's mother to the capital of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, supports him during the most difficult time for him, when his mother died, finds exactly the words that the character needs in this situation: "I appreciate your loss: it is immeasurably great. What can I say? The human mind finds it hard to agree with the absurdity of death. But be brave. People like you needed by many . . .". Whether it was because of these simple warm words or because the last minutes of being with this generous, considerate person, who had done so much for him in these days of grief were coming to an end, something heavy shifted in Alexander's chest and he uttered painfully, almost screaming the words out: "If only you knew what a debt I owe her! How can I repay her, when . . ." [1]. So, Khodzhaiev demonstrates humanity, compassion and sincere kindness.

All components of the novel, its subtext allow us to understand that the concept of "mother" has a deeper, metaphorical realization. The mother in this novel is represented by the metaphor of Motherland, that is personified by the character of the work (Odarka Pylypivna). The son, betraying his mother, being manipulated by his Russian wife, betrayed the Motherland, betrayed his roots. He understands this when he brings her coffin from Uzbekistan, where his mother died, to Ukraine, and at the first Ukrainian station he feels both loneliness without his mother and relief from meeting his native land: "Whether it was the gentle warm breeze which blew in from the south and lightly stroked his face, or whether it was something else, he didn't know, but for the first time since all this began, tears came to his eyes and left him relieved. As if he had reconciled with someone or something, as if he too had been forgiven everything that lay behind him. He was only sorry that Marusia from Pereyaslav was not there beside him. She would have been just the person to meet him here with his mother's body at this first station on Ukrainian soil. . ." [1]. The concept of "mother" and the concept of "Motherland" are identical for understanding and interpretation by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych. In this novel this concept is also realized in semantic markers such as: humility, self-sacrifice, mental strength over the son, motherly love, kindness, protection, unselfishness, humanity.

Rou Shi (Chinese: 柔石; pinyin: Róu Shí; Wade-Giles: Jou Shih) is Chinese writer and in his work "A Slave Mother" ("为奴隶的母亲") he does not name the main character, for the readers she is nominated just with one word – mother. Obviously, this constitutes the central core of the characterization of this image. The drunkard husband, who impoverished his wife and son to poverty, sells the main character (his wife) to a rich house for three years. During this time, she must give birth to a child and comes back home. Therefore the woman is forced to leave her son with a drunkard father.

In this work, the drunkard husband is the antagonist of the protagonist, cause he is a weak and irresponsible person. The author presents an episode that illustrates the cruelty and insensibility of the main character's husband. A year before the events described in the work, the mother gave birth to her daughter. The weakened character (the woman) was lying in blood, trying to reach the newborn. The husband came up to them and "with a resolute look of a butcher who was about to slaughter a lamb, he grabbed the girl with his rough hands and threw it into boiling water. There was a splash and a gurgling sound. The mother then thought in surprise: "Why does the baby not scream anymore? Is it fair that she should die such a death?". Later, the mother realized that everything happened because at that moment she was almost unconscious, and her heart seemed to have been ripped out" [20]. The mother lost consciousness from grief, mental and physical pain. The woman left her beloved three-year-old son Chun-Bao at home, who was attached to her, and he was afraid of the cruel father, who beat the child for any act, for crying or whims.

The mother-slave gave birth to a son to a rich family, whom she also loved with all her heart. The owner of a house wanted to leave her at his home, but the jealous wife sends the woman home. The main character returned home and she saw that her slavery did not change anything, her husband still drinks, her son is seriously ill and has forgotten her in three years. In the finale of the work, the mother-slave feels her powerlessness and the meaninglessness of the life.

We would like to note that in this story Rou Shi opposes two concepts: "mother" and "father". The concept of "mother" means sacrifice, humility, inner mental strength, caring for children. The concept of "father" represents cruelty, insensitivity, despotism, indifference to the wife and child, inability to overcome life's difficulties, weakness, which manifests itself in avoiding reality in drunkenness. We also emphasize that in the story of Rou Shi, not only the character's legal husband is weak, but also the father of her second son. He cannot resist his bossy and jealous wife, who in the beginning forces the pregnant mother-slave to do hard housework, and then kicks her out of the house.

Motherly love and devotion to children are realized in the work in several aspects. Firstly, in order to save her son from death by starvation, the woman goes into slavery. Secondly, she breastfeeds both of her sons for a long time, in the work the author emphasizes several times that the children are three years old, but they are still not torn off from the mother's breast: "She sat by the hearth with a boy, he was already three years old, but she still did not wean him" [20]. This testifies to the deep love of the mother for her sons, of the desire to keep in touch with them as long as possible. In the finale of the work, the author emphasizes that the mother, who returned home, sleeps next to her son, who, even after three years of her absence, instinctively cuddles to her breast: "Chun-Bao slept. The mother hugged him tightly, and he, sniffing, buried himself in her chest. The night was silent, cold as death, and it seemed there would be no end to it . . ." [20]. And this indicates that the child sees in the mother the force that is able to protect him.

We would like to note that unlike Vsevolod Ivanov, Chinese writer does not turn to the historical context, does not focus on the social conditioning of the mother's tragic fate. Obviously, that the author's task is to draw the reader's attention to not the personality of the mother, but to her tragic fate. Therefore, Rou Shi takes the tradition of selling wives as its basis. Husbands had the right to sell their wives to rich houses, in order for her to be a servant, a concubine, and also give birth to a child for a childless married couple. The writer proves that this tradition

is immoral. The title of the work “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) reveals its main idea, the author’s desire to show the inner world of the mother, who, obeying the ancient tradition, becomes the female slave of her husband-despot, dutifully fulfills all his decisions.

So, the concept of “mother” in of Rou Shi’s work “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) is realized through such markers as: humility, self-sacrifice, mental strength over a man (husband), motherly love, humanity, unselfishness, protection. For an accurate definition of the metaphor that is dominant in the representation of the concept of “mother” in the work of Rou Shi “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”), it is necessary to refer to the title of the work. The author focuses on the metaphor of “female slave”, which reveals the meaning of the work. The main character does not belong to herself, her whole life is submission to others, she does not have any rights, her fate is determined by other characters who have weaker mental strength and lower moral qualities – her husband, wealthy owners with whom she gave birth to a child. The writer deliberately does not give the woman a name, because “mother” is her dominant characteristic. Therefore, the main character of this story is the absolute image of the mother.

In Vsevolod Ivanov’s story “Polaia Arapiia” the writer creates terrible pictures of the famine that touched every inhabitant of the village. People have lost their human essence, they are exhausted, they eat clothes that is made of leather, they hunt rats: “Birds with hungry scarlet beaks flew out from the sky. The carts creaked. Horses with long, humped fangs grabbed and tore rat meat. Far away, like shepherds, the dogs ran behind the gray layer. The peasants beat the rats with sticks; shoveling carts with shovels. The unkilld rats, like huge cucumbers, crawled to the ground” [9].

The concept of “mother” is presented by the image of the peasant woman Nadka. She loves her newborn child, protects him from the terrible reality. Love, care and self-sacrifice are the dominant characteristics of this character. To feed her family, she goes to the field to catch rats. But at this time in the house, the rats ate her baby: “– The mother wanted to feed the boy, but she threw him on the floor. But she could not lift him. The beast has eaten his nose and hand. – Her younger brother informs her this tragic news indifferently and casually. – Nadka, holding her stomach, threw the stake and went to the village. Her mouth was narrow and dry, and spread over her dusty face. Her cry was not heard over the squeak of the running rats” [9]. Nadka grieves the death of her son, she gives her unspent love and care to other villagers, gives them her last meal: “Nadka’s speech was husky, with hungry interceptions – there is not enough saliva for words. – I thought – I will bring the child to real life ... And then the rats ate him, Jesus!..” [9].

At this the most critical moment in her life, Nadka follows the old woman Efimiia, who calls herself a prophet, along with other residents of the village. The old woman leads everyone to the utopian country Arapiia, where there is a lot of food and justice: “There is said that beyond the Syrdariia, a land such as Polaia Arapiia has opened up. It rains there, as you sow – so three weeks in a row. And everyone is free to go, just go. There are many lands <...> The rat also goes there. And the bird flies. Our lands were cursed for thirty-seven years: no rain, no grasses ... Then they will return, as soon as they will be live ... Arapiia is opened for thirty-seven years, and then it will be closed again” [9].

Nadka’s maternal feelings are clearly represented in her relationship to her older brother Miron. He is swollen from hunger, but the villagers considered him fat and waited for the right time to kill and eat him. Nadka took care of her older brother, did not sleep and guarded his

sleep: “Nadka whispered: – Eat ... I left it for you. The old man hid it all. Miron and so, grit, full – he has supplies. In bodies, they say, he has not become depleted. Eat!..” [9].

In Vsevolod Ivanov’s story the main character is a strong personality, she is stronger and more courageous than men. These characteristics demonstrate the author’s adherence to the world tradition in revealing the concept of “mother”. The main character died of hunger, just like many people who could not escape a terrible fate. At the end of the story, four peasants surrounded the exhausted and dying Miron in order to eat and kill him.

In this story, the image of Nadka has a deep philosophical meaning, which reveals the semantic dominants of the concept of “mother” in the interpretation by Russian writer. We would like to pay attention that the name of the main character is Nadka, which means – “hope”, therefore her death also means the death of hope for all people who want to escape from the famine, to find the magical land of Arapiia. While the character was alive there was the hope in the souls of the hungry people who surrounded Nadka, that they would find escape from the famine, they would find the utopian country. But Nadka died of hunger and the peasants lose the hope, lose their human qualities, eat each other.

So, we state that the concept of “mother” in Vsevolod Ivanov’s story is realized through the metaphor of “hope” and has the following personality markers such as: motherly love, mental strength, courage, humanism, empathy, self-sacrifice, kindness, humility, protection.

This research shows that the concept of “mother” has a similar semantic realization in three works by Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian authors. The scheme (figure 1) highlights that these are such characteristics: humility, self-sacrifice, mental strength over a man, motherly love, unselfishness, protection, humanity and kindness. All these markers (except humility) are the semantic components of the metaphor of “berehynia”. Berehynia is the goddess of East Slavic mythology, the mother of all living things, who protects the family with all her might and preserves young children from illness and misfortune with boundless love. In East Slavic culture, the name of the mythological goddess has become both a metaphor and a gender stereotype that determines the specific type of woman’s behavior in society and in the family. In a metaphorical meaning berehynia is a woman who takes responsibility for each family member. We consider that such qualities are demonstrated by the main character’s of Borys Antonenko-Davydovych’s, Rou Shi’s and Vsevolod Ivanov’s works. The whole essence of the characters is subordinated to the desire to protect their families, especially children.

4. Conclusion

In this research paper we analyzed Borys Antonenko-Davydovych’s, Rou Shi’s and Vsevolod Ivanov’s works. We noticed that the historical events which have influenced the work of the writers have had also a similar character. We have proved that the concept of “mother” in the epic works by Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian writers has a similar metaphorical realization – berehynia, that is represented through such markers: motherly love, humility, self-sacrifice, mental strength over a man, unselfishness, protection, humanity, kindness. We think that the analyzed works by Ukrainian, Chinese and Russian writers demonstrate the presence of the image of an infantile man who is constantly suffering, and it brings him pleasure. In these works, the main characters have sons, which confirms our opinion that writers emphasize the mother’s

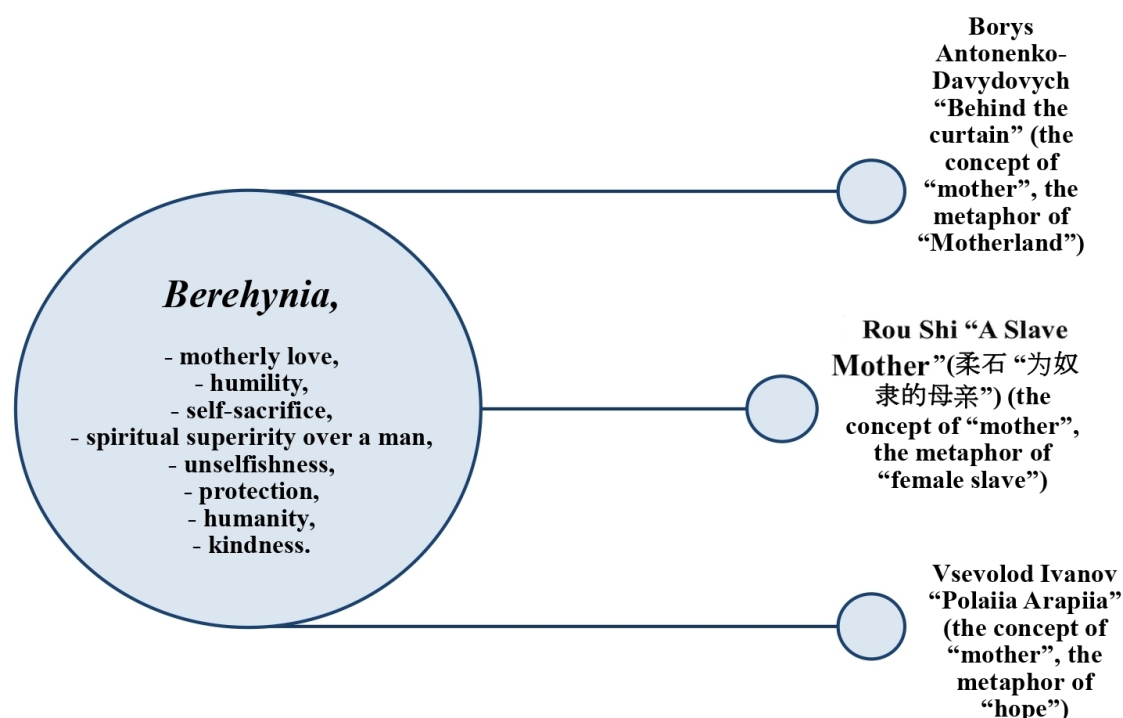


Figure 1: The metaphorical representation of the concept of “mother”.

strength, that she cares for her husband, for her sons, renounces her own desires, sacrifices herself, humbly accepts the cruelty of men and the world around her. Resigned perception of cruel acts in the works by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Rou Shi and Vsevolod Ivanov testifies to the mother’s humility before fate and her obedience. We state that obedience to fate, husband, and circumstances are the dominant features of the concept of “mother” in the epic works of these writers. At the same time, this character illustrates tremendous mental strength, a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the welfare of children.

We have identified the dominant metaphors of the concept of “mother” in these works. So, in the novel “Za shyrmoi” by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych it is “Motherland”, in the story “A Slave Mother” (“为奴隶的母亲”) by Rou Shi it is “female slave”, in the story “Polaia Arapiia” by Vsevolod Ivanov it is “hope”. The metaphors are explicitly expressed through the name of the character-mother in the works of Chinese and Russian authors; but in the novel by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, the metaphor of “Motherland” is revealed through the subtext. This is due to the author’s desire to overcome ideological censorship and to show the significance of Ukraine for the author and his characters.

Authors’ contributions

Li Li, Kateryna Bilobrovska, Viktoriia Dmytrenko, Olha Kryzhanovska conceived and planned the original idea, contributed to the conception, the design, the figures and the implementation

of the research. All authors discussed and analyzed the results and performed to the final manuscript.

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