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METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TRAVEL NARRATIVE IN KULYK KEEFER'S MEMOIR HONEY AND ASHES Bystrov Y. V.

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This paper explores the metaphorical conceptualization of travel narratives in Janice Kulyk Keefer's memoir Honey and Ashes, employing cognitive-linguistic tools to analyze how the author's physical journey mirrors an interior exploration of identity, belonging, and heritage. It applies the framework of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual integration (or blending) theory (as developed by Fauconnier and Turner) to the analysis of the interplay between the source domain of travel and the target domain of narrative. The analysis reveals that Keefer's journey—spanning from Canada to her ancestral village in Ukraine—serves as a metaphorical bridge between past and present, with the memoir's structure reflecting the cognitive processes of memory and self-discovery. Key conceptual mappings include the traveler as narrator, the road map as stories, and destinations as chapters, illustrating how the metaphor "NARRA-TIVE IS TRAVEL" shapes the text's meaning. The study highlights Keefer's dual role as both observer and subject, as she grapples with questions of cultural identity and belonging. Through contextual and interpretative analysis, the article demonstrates how metaphorical expressions in the memoir activate deeper cognitive structures, enabling readers to construct coherent mental models of the narrative.

Key words: Janice Kulyk Keefer, narrative, travel narrative, identity, conceptual metaphor, domain, blending, conceptual integration

МЕТАФОРИЧНА КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЯ ПОДОРОЖНЬОГО НАРАТИВУ У СПОГАДАХ ДЖЕНІС КУЛИК-КІФЕР «МЕД І ПОПІЛ»

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У цій статті досліджується метафорична концептуалізація подорожніх оповідей у мемуарах Джаніс Кулик Кіфер «Мед і попіл», використовуючи когнітивнолінгвістичні інструменти для аналізу того, як фізична подорож авторки відображає внутрішнє дослідження ідентичності, приналежності та спадщини. У ній застосовується концептуальна метафорична теорія Лакоффа та Джонсона та концептуальна інтеграційна (або змішана) теорія (розроблена Фоконьє та Тернером) для аналізу взаємодії між вихідною сферою подорожей та цільовою сферою оповіді.

Аналіз показує, що подорож Кіфер — від Канади до рідного села в Україні — слугує метафоричним містком між минулим і сьогоденням, а структура мемуарів відображає когнітивні процеси пам'яті та самовідкриття. Ключові концептуальні відображення включають мандрівника як оповідача, дорожню карту як історії та пункти призначення як розділи, що ілюструє, як метафора НАРАТИВ — ЦЕ ПОДОРОЖ формує смисл тексту. Дослідження підкреслює подвійну роль Кіфер як спостерігача і суб'єкта, яка бореться з питаннями культурної ідентичності та приналежності. За допомогою контекстуального та інтерпретаційного аналізу стаття демонструє, як метафоричні вирази в мемуарах активують глибші когнітивні структури, дозволяючи читачам побудувати цілісні ментальні моделі наративу.

Ключові слова: Дженіс Кулик Кіфер, наратив, подорожній наратив, ідентичність, концептуальна метафора, домен, блендинг, концептуальна інтеграція

Introduction. Cognitive stylistics and cognitive narratology are two related disciplines that have principally contributed to developing an understanding of literary reading experiences. They both are interested in how the composition of a text generates meaning construction which is a cornerstone of cognitive science. The two approaches are increasingly united in contemporary research, particularly in studies that draw on insights, conceptual models, and analytical frameworks from across the cognitive sciences.

Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), the conceptual theory of metaphor has provided us with numerous examples that demonstrate the power of this cognitive construct, serving as the basis for building emergent experiences and offering insight into travel writings that may take the form of memoirs.

Considering that language, being an integral part of the human cognitive system, is inseparably connected with cognition, as well as travel writings, the physical journey of the traveller, and the narrating subject represent both a journey and an exploration of the self. One of the recent advances in understanding how travel writings are mirrored in an interior journey of the traveler is metaphorical conceptualization of life narratives (Akli, 2009; Butor, 1992; Edwards & Graulund, 2012; Gibbons, 2022; Horsdal, 2012; Mikkonen, 2007; Psomadakis, 2007; Smith & Watson, 2010). Consequently, metaphorical conceptualization in various types of discourses is active-

ly relied on in cognitive linguistic research (Bystrov & Gontarenko, 2024; Bystrov & Tatsakovych, 2023; Doichyk, 2024; Nytspol, 2023; Kulchytska & Erlikhman, 2024; Mintsys, 2024).

The objectives of this study are to identify the role of conceptual metaphor as a cognitive tool for constructing travel narratives and to extend cognitive-linguistic research on metaphors within the framework of travel narratives in Kulyk Keefer's memoir *Honey and Ashes*.

Taking into account both findings from previous research and the main goals stated above, **the research questions** that guide the present study are the following: (1) What is the role of travel writing in the processes of examining questions of identity, origin, belonging, and home in Kulyk Keefer's memoir *Honey and Ashes*? (2) How is the motif of the journey represented in the narratives thematically and formally? (3) How is travel narrative conceptualized in terms of conceptual metaphor analysis and the procedure of conceptual blending in Kulyk Keefer's memoir?

Material and methods. Janice Kulyk Keefer, born in Canada in 1952 of eastern Galician descent and a mixed Ukrainian-Polish background, describes the major part of her life story in *Honey and Ashes* about her car trip of several weeks from the Netherlands through Germany to Poland and Ukraine in 1997.

Janice Kulyk Keefer's memoir does not belong to the genre of travel writing but with a strong feeling and intention of the author to build a bridge towards the past of her grandparents and her current Canadian life, between present-day Canada and the old world village of Staromischyna, once part of Poland, now located in Ternopil region of Ukraine "to tell a story that will speak across any number of borders, to anyone who lives in two countries of the heart and mind at once" (Kulyk Keefer 1998: 7). It is Staromischyna, also called the Old Place, where her grandmother was born and where all the stories she has heard originate and where she wants to return to "somewhere I have never been" (Kulyk Keefer 1998: 215).

Every time when she walks along the streets of the city of L'viv, she is trying the role of a tourist she self-consciously raises the question of belonging, when the journey turns her "into an existential experience involving transformation and philosophical exploration of oneself" (Zygadlo, 2024: 59): "I am a tourist: I give alms. But am I also, somehow, a native of this place, at however many removes? (Kulyk Keefer 1998: 259). These self-reflective questions become extended when she arrives at her grandmother's house in Staromischyna. For her, this becomes the place where she feels safe, "the

only place that speaks the past to me as if it were a living language" (Kulyk Keefer 1998: 287). This sensation of a living language derived from the memory of the dead translates into her project of life writing in her memoir. As Hornung (2013: 19) rightly claims, "this linguistic bridge-building extends to geographical divides such as the rivers in Staromischyna and Canada, or the Atlantic Ocean, but also more importantly to the communication between different people".

The focus here is on how the narrative strategy of the "haunted" memory of her ancestors can be interpreted through the blend of her two ethnic identities — Ukrainian and Canadian to be integrated into the travel narrative. In this regard, her journey is a metaphorical bridge towards the past of her grandparents and her Ukrainian-Canadian origin. The sense of being a traveler, be it of a spy, an envoy, a ghost by proxy, and the ghost of a ghost, which participates in the formation of the conceptual metaphor NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL, developed by travel theorist Kai Mikkonen (Mikkonen, 2007), thus resulting in the dynamics of multiple shapes of the authorial road map. As Kulyk Keefer argues, "I begin to doubt my own reality, knowing that during our stay here I'll be someone other than I think myself to be. A spy, looking for something that doesn't exist anymore. An envoy, making this return voyage for my mother and aunt, and in some ways for my absent sons as well. And a ghost by proxy, standing in for my dead grandparents, who would see things differently, overlaid by memory, not merely story. The ghost of a ghost, a nearsighted voyeur whose vision, even when corrected by glasses, will remain imperfect, only half-true" (Kulyk Keefer 1998: 256).

The combination of general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, inductive and deductive methods, allowed for a theoretical understanding of modern research approaches to the formation of the macrostructure of travel narratives, clarifying the terms of cognitive linguistics and modern cognitive narratology. All metaphorical expressions (linguistic units that activate conceptual metaphors) were extracted from the text in their immediate context. The most representative examples were used for illustrative purposes in the article. Hence, the method of contextual and interpretative analysis was used to analyze the metaphorical expressions in the memoir at their micro-textual and macro-textual levels, and these expressions are "prompts for us to construct meanings by working with processes we already know; the words themselves say nothing independent of the richly detailed knowledge and powerful cognitive processes we bring to bear"

(Fauconnier, 1994: xxii). The method of conceptual metaphor analysis was used to identify and describe the conceptual metaphors activated by the corresponding metaphorical expressions. The technique of conceptual blending (M. Turner, G. Fauconnier) was applied to reproduce the linguocognitive mechanism of conceptual metaphor formation. In the paper, I focus on both conceptual and textual levels of metaphor analysis. The conceptual level, which explores the underlying cognitive structures that shape our understanding of the world, and the textual level, which examines the specific linguistic expressions of metaphors within language. The analysis of both levels appears necessary because of two factors: (1) conceptualization is the mental processing of information mediated by sensory and motor experience as well as social interaction (the theory of embodied cognition) (Langacker, 2008: 4); and (2) conceptual metaphors take shape in the form of linguistic units serving as cues for metaphor activation (Bystrov & Tatsakovych, 2023: 699).

Discussion and results. I am going to analyze Keefer's travel writings both as narratives representing fictitious fragments of experienced or/and imagined realities vs. the non-fictional dimension of personal life as reflected in her memoir. In its broadest sense, a memoir (originally stemming from the Latin *memoria* — to remember) can be seen as a curation of past experiences which rarely progresses in sequential order, but rather moves in shifts between the narrative present and past experiences to better replicate how memory narratives, and to provide a richer, more emotional glimpse into the author's life. Janice Kulyk Keefer's memoir, which is found in travel narrative, is her inner personal journey and a matter of self, of identity, and belonging. By drawing on her life experiences that are transmitted to the reader, she uses a specific mental template of conceptual metaphors which are useful in the comprehension of her present and past experiences.

Thus, in very simple terms, travel narratives can be viewed as accounts of a personal journey undertaken by the traveler-writer. They "differ in tone and style, [but] already their titles point to the writers' shared interests in issues of cultural and national identity, heritage, race, belonging, and home" (Kalous, 2022: 10). In terms of cognitive narratology, which encompasses the nexus of narrative and mind, interpretation of narrative requires reader's cognitive abilities to evoke and create storyworlds (or fictional worlds) based on their real-world knowledge. According to Herman (2002: 9), storyworlds can be defined "as mental models of who dad what to whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate — or

make a deictic shift — as they work to comprehend a narrative. Consequently, what, where, when, and why factors are considered to be the ontological make-up of the storyworld. Thus, comprehension of travel narrative in this research is rather the process of creation of mental models (storyworlds) than merely "the process of integration of information into a stereotypical schema or script" (De Fina & Georgakopoulu, 2012: 7).

This research is based on the assumption that text comprehension implies the construction of coherent mental models, which can be seen as complex multimodal mental representations containing the stories' voice and authorship, spatio-temporal, causal relations, and information about objects, persons and motivations. Furthermore, they can be changeable at different moments in the process of text understanding by the reader and each memoir relies on specific cognitive models, and more importantly, "the understanding of the strategies through which they are employed in the text is a highly demanding mental activity" (Akli 2009: 21).

My approach to the conceptual analysis of travel narratives is to take the metaphor as an object of study, viewed from the perspective offered by Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive-linguistic methodology on metaphors, and more recent work by Fauconnier and Turner on conceptual blending, to define a basic mental operation. Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY has become a classic example of a conceptual structure arising from everyday human experience, where the target domain is conceptualized in terms of the source domain. George Lakoff and Mark Turner explain the relationship between the two domains through the specifics of extending the scope of the "journey metaphor" as an interaction between two cognitive entities or conceptual spheres. They claim that the journey metaphor is reflected in its mapping onto the process of life itself: "Our understanding of life as a journey uses our knowledge about journeys. All journeys involve travellers, paths travelled, places where we start, and places where we have been. Some journeys are purposeful and have destinations that we set out for, while others may involve wandering without any destination in mind, consciously or more likely unconsciously, a correspondence between a traveler and person living life, the road traveled and the 'course' of a lifetime, a starting point and a time of birth, and so on" (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 60-61).

As a memoir is considered to be "a narrative recollection of the writer's earlier experiences, especially those involving unusual people, places, or events", with emphasis on "other people or upon events experienced in

common with others" (The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms), I argue that Kulyk Keefer's memoir is a poignant exploration of personal, familial and historical memories, and through the process of recreating the past in the present, the author is haunted by his or her family's past, which she tries to reconstruct. Furthermore, this family memoir is a mental process of creating the narrative that requires both the writer's and the reader's participation. Thus, the NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL metaphor is a conceptual resource the author and her readers share as they metaphorically travel together along the narrative path, journeying from one mental stage to another, progressing from one location to another along the memoir's path, from one chapter of the book to another. While Kulyk Keefer builds her family memoir and generic travel narrative on the familiar metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the readers understand it as a specific journey, with a starting point and an ending point chosen by the author.

Before considering some complex mental operations participating in meaning creation, I will introduce the basic operations in terms of Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces that successfully work in cognition and in a mental representation of meaning construction:

- (1) setting up mental spaces,
- (2) mapping elements from one space to another, and
- (3) blending these spaces.

Nevertheless, integration is not complete without a generic space because at any moment in the construction of the network, the structure that the inputs share is captured in this generic space. This space contains structures common to the input spaces and that are mapped onto each of the inputs.

In the first mental space, the representation of *travel* includes the elements of a traveler, a road map, destinations, a starting point, and an ending point. These elements structure the mental space of our general knowledge about travel. We also have a general knowledge of *narrative*, and therefore, we set up another container with the characteristic elements of a narrator, stories, chapters, a starting point of travel narrative, and an ending point of travel narrative. After setting up these spaces, the reader links the elements from a source domain of *travel* onto the target domain of the concept *narrative*: traveler to a narrator, road map to stories, destinations to chapters, and finally, traces to interplay between past and present. These correspondences represent the counterpart mapping between the elements in their respective input spaces, and the cross-mapping is based on a re-

lation of analogy because we understand *narrative* in one conceptual domain in terms of *travel*, which resides in a different conceptual domain. The elements in the input spaces are mental stages mapped from the source domain TRAVEL, and meaningful boundaries that organize the target domain NARRATIVE.

The cross-domain correspondences related to life as a narrative, particularly the projection of a travel onto a narrative world, are not accidental but rather have already become conventionalized. The French writer Michele Butor, who supported the analogy "travel as writing and writing as travel," later became the founder of a unique "science of substitution," the main premise of which is "to travel, at least in a certain manner, is to write (first of all because to travel is to read), and to write is to travel" (Butor 1992: 53).

The figure below represents a conceptual integration network of four mental spaces, in which the generic space and two input spaces are selectively projected into the blended space, thus forming a related minimal configuration. The two input spaces with two entities contain information in the metaphor NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL, one of a travel and one of a narrative. Therefore, to understand narrative as a travel is to have in mind consciously or unconsciously, a correspondence and a blending of the elements in the two input spaces. Hence, conceptual metaphor is regarded as "a dynamically evolving integration network comprising mental spaces, multiple correspondences and blends" (Bystrov, 2014: 7). Consequently, mental spaces and the relationships between them are built up in the memoir according to guidelines provided by a wide array of metaphorical expressions. As the metaphor "involves the creation of new meaning in a blend of inputs from the two conceptual domains of narrative and travel" (Mikkonen, 2007: 288), it can be mapped out in the following conceptual correspondences between the two input spaces and activated by the corresponding metaphorical expressions.

1. The person writing a travel narrative is a traveler. Keefer's journey prompts an engagement with deeply personal questions. In her memoir, Kulyk Keefer travels through the stories told in her childhood, which make the narrator both the observing subject and the object of investigation at the same time. Thus, the travel and its textual representation combine to create a space in which identity can be affirmed, discovered, or renegotiated (Edwards & Graulund, 2013: 11) As the narrator claims, "[e]ven if I burned all the papers, the passports and land deeds that connect me with the Old Place, even if I tried to hide my maiden name, it will always be there, the

deep ditch of nightmare. It is part of who I am and where I come from; one of the landmarks on a journey I can't help but undertake" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 201).

When she walks through the city of L'viv she self-consciously thinks about her role as a tourist and raises the question of belonging: "I am a tourist: I give alms. But am I also, somehow, a native of this place, at however many removes? What in this country, its language and culture and history, has had a hand in making me who I am?" (Kulyk Keefer. 1998: 257). These self-reflective questions intensify when she arrives at her grand-mother's house in Staromischyna and when she visits its cemetery. For her, this becomes "the one place," in her words, "where I feel safe... the only place that speaks the past to me as if it were a living language" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 287).

Keefer assures her family that her duty is to write a story of family, and this work is the equivalent of that of a labourer: Writing of their lives, I became a different kind of labourer, coaxing details and sometimes whole new stories from my family (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 16).

2. Her road map is her stories. The travel can be broken up into stages that imply accomplishing certain goals. The process of achieving a goal occurs mostly through reaching a destination on a journey. The goal of Keefer's trip is Staromischyna (the "old place") where Keefer's grandmother was born and where all the stories she has heard originate. In this sense, the family's stories serve as a road map to guide Keefer through the new political realities between Ukraine and Poland, regions that formerly belonged to Galicia, Austria's largest province. Moreover, her journeying from one mental stage to another in her memory and through her imagination is mapped onto the stories about the Old Place showing her attempt to write a story that speaks "across borders: "Will I cross the same kind of border, now that this stage of my journeying's done? This sorting and setting down of stories; this mapping of the Old Place as it has emerged for me through memory and imagining" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 162).

Relying on local guides and translators she was passing through several historical and political stages, changes of political powers which caused changes in place names. Thus, the Galician city of Lemberg changes into the Polish Lwyw and then the Ukrainian L'viv (Hornung, 2013: 19). The narrator describes her physical orientation metaphorically underlining her emotional experiences in reaching the goal. In her inner journey, even "metaphors would be my guiding stars; through them I could trace connec-

tions between the most painfully disparate things, peel back the cloudy skin over my eyes, become real, at last" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 143).

The stories told her in her childhood may be a barrier in achieving the goal, and the challenge of her journey grows exponentially, at least in the size of the traveler's burden. She planned her road trip but she did not know where it could lead to: "Will a similar highway run through Staromischyna, turning it into a mere drive-through? Where are the roads from my mother's stories, cart tracks that become brown rivers when the rains beat down?" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 262).

3. The places she is going to visit are stored in the author's childhood memories and described as part of her travel narrative. Childhood memories are important landmarks in the author's life, and they are the foundation of her identity or otherness. Travel implies not only outward movement but also back-and forth motion of memory where the latter reflects an intimate connection between mapping geographical space and biological genes: "... families," she argues, "are more than gene pools: their stories travel through and map us, too" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 15).

A particular mapping of the NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL metaphor is ingrained in the narrator's memories which have shaped "places where the past is stored" where their metaphorical borders are described in terms of valleys, rivers, and chasms, or even as embroidery in pursuit of bloodlines established in the stories of her youth: "Borders take you under as well as over. Into places where the past is stored; into the present that's made up of this past, in the way valleys are made up of the rivers that once rushed through them. The past I venture into now is that larger public world holding my family's private stories. I must look for it now on a different kind of map, one that will show me the places my family's stories skirted as if they were chasms. Places in a world where history and politics are a thick tangle of embroidery, with blood, not thread, stitching the pattern" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 163). Furthermore, these destinations on the map correspond to chapters in the book, for example, Ch. 12 'Eastern Galicia', Ch. 16 'L'viv: Ghostprints', Ch. 17 'Ternopil': Field of Thorns', Ch. 18 'Staromischyna: Blood for the Ghosts', Ch/20 'Skarszewy: Skeleton Speech'.

Travellers usually make many stops along the way, but they often unexpectedly find the place that takes them back to the starting location or a safe place, somewhere between past and present. References to photographs and documents, names of strangers, language, haunted house, and cemetery as a final destination can be found in the following excerpts:

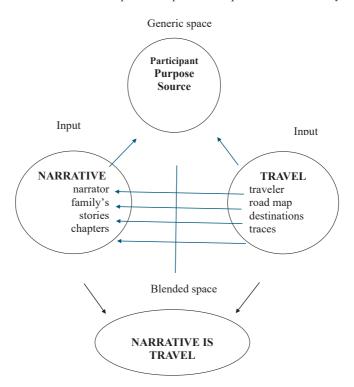


Fig. 1. The "NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL" Metaphor: Cross-space correspondences

When I speak of the Old Place I always talk of returning somewhere I have never been. I know I'm not the only one to do so. Ours is an age of exiles, migrants, refugees. How many children have been haunted by the ghost of belonging? By mysterious photographs and documents, by names of strangers who are somehow family, by a foreign language that would once have been their mother tongue? How many have grown up not in a haunted house, but haunted by another home? (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 125).

When she arrives at her grandmother's house in Staromischyna and when she visits its cemetery, for her this becomes "the one place," in her words, "where I feel safe... the only place that speaks the past to me as if it were a living language" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 287).

4. The traces of her grandparents' lives accumulate the author's memories. In the NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL metaphor, traces of past destinations

of her ancestors, their home, orchard, and the river: "In July 1997 I travelled for the first time to western Ukraine, to a small village an hour's drive from the city of Ternopil'. I was looking for whatever traces might remain of my grandparents' lives: for the place where their house had stood; the orchard in which they'd fallen in love. I wanted to walk through that very orchard, down to an actual, and not imagined, river" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 5).

Her search for her relatives' traces became not only the starting point of her journey but map out another point of her departure which is the search of the Jewish couple, her grandmother Olena's friends who left traces along her journey: "What comes home to me, as I sit at this bridal table, talking to the women who've come up to introduce themselves, is that I'll have to start searching for those traces here and now. That this connection I'm trying to make between myself and these women, between Jews and Ukrainians, began a long way back, so long ago I have almost forgotten that it began at all" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 192). Her searches are not restricted by the searches of her family. Kulyk Keefer wants Ukraine and the Ukrainian language to leave their traces in her life. While she sees on her trip the vestiges of the Ukrainians, this journey has become "another way of looking for my shadows" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 217).

In the long run, the interplay of past and present and her burning desire "to find whatever traces I can of that life: leftovers, artifacts that were once as everyday as the mug I use to drink my tea, the brush I pull through my hair" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 253) lead to mixed feelings and contradictions, "not belonging but longing", and "both sadness and pleasure in her voice: home lost, home found" (Kulyk Keefer, 1998: 328).

Conclusion. Janice Kulyk Keefer's memoir Honey and Ashes exemplifies how travel narratives serve as a powerful medium for exploring identity, belonging, and the interplay between past and present. Travel narrative as personal memoir and a journey inward is a key part of Kulyk Keefer's writing. Through the lens of cognitive stylistics and conceptual metaphor theory, this study has demonstrated that the memoir's narrative structure is deeply rooted in the conceptual metaphor NARRATIVE IS TRAVEL, which bridges physical journeys with inner explorations of self. Keefer's journey—both literal and metaphorical—reveals how travel writing transcends geographical boundaries to become a tool for reconstructing personal and collective memory. By mapping elements of travel (for example, traveler, road map, destinations, traces) onto narrative components (narrator, stories, chapters, present and past events), the memoir illustrates how cognitive processes like

conceptual blending enable readers to construct mental models of the travel narrative.

Keefer's reflections on her Ukrainian-Canadian heritage, her role as a "ghost by proxy", and her quest to reconcile fragmented identities underscore the memoir's thematic depth. The analysis highlights how metaphorical expressions activate shared cognitive frameworks, allowing readers to engage empathetically with her journey. Ultimately, *Honey and Ashes* reaffirms the centrality of metaphor in shaping narrative comprehension and emotional resonance, offering a compelling case study for cognitive narratology. In the future, it would be relevant to explore how visual or auditory elements (specifically photographs and maps) in memoirs interact with conceptual metaphors.

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