

THE THEME OF THE DEPORTATION OF CRIMEAN TATARS IN POPULAR SONGS

Mariia Kuleshir

Lecturer, Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

e-mail: maria_kuleshir@ukr.net, orcid.org/0000-0002-6538-8857

Summary

In the article an attempt of the analysis of two songs composed and performed by Jamala, a Ukrainian singer of Crimean Tatar origin, has been made. The songs under the study – ‘1944’ and ‘The way home’ – are both dedicated to the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 forced many Crimean Tatars to leave the peninsula as protestors against Russian colonial regime were persecuted, threatened, killed. Jamala together with her dissident compatriots had to leave their ancestors’ land in 2014. Crimean Tatars including the singer’s grandparents underwent ruthless mass deportation in 1944. Jamala like other Crimean Tatars of her age represents the generation who were born in deportation, returned home and were doomed to experience the repeat of the forced exile. The singer knows the tragic collisions of her family history from her parents and grandparents who passed down to her their invaluable legacy – Crimean Tatar language, traditions, stories, memories, music, songs – the core of their identity. Jamala and her family are the witnesses and keepers of historical truth and authenticity which serves the foundation for the investigated texts.

Key words: colonialism, totalitarianism, ethnic groups, identity, memory, home, 1944, Jamala.

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1. Introduction

The Ukrainian popular song sensitively reacts to the warfare events in our country. Ukrainian performers take an active part in charitable and humanitarian activities aimed at providing material and financial assistance. Some singers also joined the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The influence of a song, in particular a popular song, is great, so almost all Ukrainian artists are actively working to bring victory closer. They produce content that gives Ukrainians the opportunity in difficult wartime to reflect on the real traumatic experience of wartime reality, to comprehend the large-scale tragedy at the epicenter of which is Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The representation of war by all possible means of culture and art, among which literature occupies a prominent place due to the multifaceted possibilities of textual expression and image, is a necessary, natural reaction of the actors of the cultural front, the purpose of which is to create a high-quality, authentic aesthetic multifunctional narrative, which has, among others, a powerful cathartic and therapeutic effect.

The aim of the article is to reveal the interdisciplinary aspect of two popular songs created and performed by ‘the voice of the deported Crimean Tatars’ Jamala: ‘1944’ and ‘The way home’. The interrelation between history and literature has been acquiring special attention recently in Ukrainian literary and culture studies. This fruitful and relevant interaction of these two powerful fields of humans’ knowledge and experience has been **the focus of attention of many researchers** to name a few: N. Honcharenko, N. Horbach, O. Puchonska. Jamala’s

interviews became a trustworthy documentary source in terms of understanding the messages incorporated in her songs and the authentic background which stipulated their production. The works of S. Mallett, R. Friedman contributed to the interpretation of the symbolic images represented in the songs. The works by the historians O. Bazhan, K. Korostelina, V. Marayev, P. Potichnyi dedicated to the topic of the deportation of Crimean Tatars shed the light on the epoch which proliferated with persecution of identity and other traumas.

2. '1944' – in memory of the ruthlessly deported

In 2016, the jury of the international Eurovision Song Contest awarded first place to Ukraine for the song '1944', a bright original performance of which was executed by a young Ukrainian singer of Crimean Tatar origin, known by the stage name Jamala, and her real name is Susana Jamaladinova. The special award 'Eurostory Award 2016' from 'Eurovision 2016' was awarded to a line in the competition song '1944'.

Jamala's song resonated in various aspects. The singer herself seems to be the embodiment of this powerful song, chosen to be the perfect medium, like a well-tuned instrument capable of producing pure sound. A lot of good enthusiastic reviews were written about Jamala's performance right after the successful premiere in Stockholm. The composition became expectedly relevant in 2022. In April 2022, Jamala took fourth place in fundraising to support Ukraine in the war with Russia. In 2023, 'The Guardian' conducted a poll, according to the results of which '1944' took an honorable third place in the ranking of winning songs throughout the history of 'Eurovision', starting from the first contest held in 1956 in the Swiss city of Lugano (*Petridis, 2023*).

The song '1944' is special in many aspects. First of all, the composition is original, since Jamala is both the author of the text and the composer of the music. The text is inspired by the singer's family history, and therefore is the result of Jamala's collective-family-genealogical and personal experiences as a keeper of family history and memory, which is passed down from generation to generation and is part of the ethnic national history and memory. It was to the fate of Jamala's grandparents that the difficult trials of the tragic events of the Second World War fell, in the context of which mass acts of deportation of ethnic groups, in particular, Crimean Tatars, took place in 1944 – in this way the title of the song acquires symbolic and polyphonic semantics.

The text of the song is bilingual: the main verses are written in English, and the refrain is in Crimean Tatar. The composition became the first 'Eurovision' song with lyrics written in the Crimean Tatar language. And Jamala became the first representative of the Crimean Tatar ethnic group to take part in Eurovision. The use of the Crimean Tatar language in the text of the composition gives it authenticity. Also, lines in the Crimean Tatar language create the effect of the presence of the Crimean Tatar ethnic group and the effect of the voice of this people. These lines are written on the basis of the well-known Crimean Tatar folk song 'Ey, güzel Qırım', translated into English 'My beautiful Crimea' or 'Hey, beautiful Crimea!'.

'When strangers are coming... // They come to your house, // They kill you all // and say // We're not guilty // not guilty //'. This is how the composition begins and, in fact, this is how the long journey of the Crimean Tatars into exile and the even longer history of their return to their native home began. The words in these lines accurately reflect the deportation events of 1944. Strangers come to the house and take all the residents to the station and force them into the freight cars. Deportation is equivalent to the death of a person. Depriving a person

of their native home and homeland literally means depriving them of their identity, which metaphorically, and often literally realistically, leads to death (*Bakulina, 2022*).

The author-singer is the successor and heir of the family of Crimean Tatars who fell under the pressure of the Soviet totalitarian deportation machine. Jamala shares numerous memories obtained from her grandparents about living in deportation. Her grandfather used to tell her that when they came to the Central Asia they didn't have bread, they had to drink rain water from the puddles because they didn't have access to drinking water (*Petsa, 2022*). Jamala is adamant about the value of authentic history and memory: 'Thank God, in my family since childhood, I have been told the history correctly, despite what was said on television. My family had a clear understanding of everything that was happening. Why? Because we are witnesses of everything that the Soviet authorities did to my family. It was so painful and so obvious that I could not even help but say about it and write a song about it – '1944'. ...Because if we forget it, we become dead souls' (*Petsa, 2022*).

Many of the deported couldn't survive the harrowing travel in the cattle cars. A lot of Crimean Tatars died when they arrived in the hungry steppe (*Ziitdinova, 2023*). Historians give a spin-chilling statistics concerning the deportation. Potichnyi P. indicates: 'Thus, a population of approximately 250,000 was made homeless and transferred great distances at a very high cost in human life. ... Crimean Tatar sources quote the figure of 46.3 per cent deaths in the deportations and eighteen months following' (*Potichnyj, 1975, p. 308*). Korostelina K. writes: 'The secrecy of Soviet institutions kept the general population ignorant of the numerous atrocities committed by the Soviet government against its people. Those who expressed disapproval of inhumane treatment of minority groups were denounced as enemies of the people. Nevertheless, stories about mass deportation and arrests began to circulate unofficially throughout the country. ... But few realized the scale of the tragedy, or the full extent of demonization campaign against the Tatars and other minorities' (*Korostelina, 2015, p. 40*). Korostelina K. describes the unfair and cruel treatment of Crimean Tatars by Russia as 'identity-based conflict' (*Korostelina, 2015, p. 33*).

The lyrics of the song read that the perpetrators of the deportation operation may have had different beliefs. Employees of those infamous Soviet punitive 'bodies' could even sympathize with the Crimeans who were sent to a foreign land. They only carried out the order and tried to justify themselves by saying that 'we're not guilty'. Also, there can be another interpretation of this phrase which is especially obvious in the light of current war in Ukraine. That is infamous Russian propaganda which proclaims Russia the liberator and its war campaign in Ukraine denazification.

The following lines are no less dramatic. Here, the theme of death is further developed, and a shrill call to stop illegal, anti-human criminal acts is also heard. In fact, the text is so intense that the words and message are extrapolated from the events of 1944 to the events of 2014 in Ukraine, as well as the events of 2022. That is, in the text of the composition '1944' the trauma of World War II, as well as the trauma of the Russo-Ukrainian war, is revealed (*Insaidy*).

'Where is your mind? // Humanity cries. // You think you are gods. // But everyone dies. // Don't swallow my soul. // Our souls //'. In these lines, it is said that the totalitarian regime is based on the ideas of deification of power, as well as, as a result, total submission and service to power. Personality, the individual and his values have no weight in a totalitarian society. Person is perceived as a cog in the imperial system. Actually, identity becomes a category that acquires dangerous signs and threatening potential in the dimensions of the totalitarian system. People must be faceless, obedient, follow the instructions and ensure the functioning of a totalitarian regime. Propaganda feeds the existence and prosperity of totalitarianism. Identity, O. Bazhan remarks, on the contrary, threatens totalitarianism, undermines it. Therefore, the absorption of

identity, the destruction of the individual and collective soul is an indispensable, immanent and obligatory function of totalitarianism (*Barsukova*).

‘We could build a future // Where people are free // to live and love. // The happiest time. // Our time //’. These lines embody the goal of people who believe in the values of a humane society, which prioritizes development, harmonious relationships, balanced interpersonal and international interaction, and caring for the environment. Also, these lines express sadness and regret over the fact that the false priorities of the anti-human totalitarian system prevent the actualization and legalization of the humanistic axiological code.

The text of the song ‘1944’ represents the period of the history of the Crimean Tatar ethnic group, during which this people suffered a collective trauma that arose as a result of a violent break in the geographical and physical connection with the homeland and native home, which caused a traumatic impact on the psycho-emotional and mental level and also affected the domestic, linguistic, traditional and cultural spheres, which can be generally defined as identity. The powerful message of the composition ‘1944’ warns against crimes against humanity and the individual, which occurred during the catastrophic 20th century and continue to be repeated in the 21st century. The reverberations and consequences of trauma caused by the totalitarian system are expressed in literature (*Honcharenko, 2020; Puchonska, 2020*), art, and cultural heritage, which is also an effective form of psychotherapy that helps to reflect on the traumatic experience and integrate it as an organic part of individual and collective existence.

Jamala’s expressive performance of her original song ‘1944’ draws attention to both the text and the context of the composition. It is worth noting that the singer’s performance at the ‘Eurovision Song Contest’ aroused great interest both in Ukraine and in other countries. The aesthetics of the performance were thought out carefully and thoroughly. Attention was paid to the singer’s stage costume and stage lighting during her performance. After all, when Jamala performed the song, there was only her on the stage – no dancers, no ballet or pantomime. Light projections on the stage created an atmospheric visualization that symbolically revealed and complemented the content and message of the song.

When Jamala decided to present her song ‘1944’ at the ‘Eurovision Song Contest’, she faced numerous comments that suggested that this composition might not receive a proper reception at the contest. Opinions were also expressed that perhaps the song has a political vector and therefore is not suitable for the contest (*Stephens, 2016*). Even the performer’s mother, Galina Tumasova, who is a musician herself, expressed fears and doubts whether Jamala would be able to convey her message embodied in her song to the listeners (*Astakhova, 2016*). However, the singer noted that her original song ‘1944’ was written on the basis of her personal experiences, caused by her personal history and the life experiences of her close relatives. ‘A song of memory’ – this is a brief and substantial description that the singer attached to her composition (*BBC News Ukraina, 2016*).

Jamala’s grandfather Ayar Jamaladinov and paternal grandmother Ediye Chabanova were both born in the village of Kyuchuk-Ozen (Crimean Tatar – Küçük Özen), which in 1945 was renamed Malorichenske, in Crimea. On the mother’s side, the performer’s grandfather Mykhailo Osyovich Tumasov was born in Nagorno-Karabakh, and grandmother Polina Ivanovna Ladanova was born in Voronezh, Russia. The singer herself says that her maternal grandmother is half Ukrainian and half Russian. Her maternal grandfather is a pure-blooded Armenian (*Manila, 2016*). Paternal grandparents are Crimean Tatars and they were deported from Crimea on May 18, 1944 to Kyrgyzstan. In 1944, Crimea was occupied by the Germans, then the Soviet troops performed de-occupation, after which acts of mass deportation of the inhabitants of the peninsula were executed, and then Russians were resettled in Crimea.

So Jamala's father was born in deportation and met his wife there. Both Susana and her older sister Evelina were born in the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, then the Kyrgyz SSR (*Petsa, 2022*).

In the singer's genealogy, different ethnic groups are intertwined. Jamala grew up in a family where multiculturalism was manifested, among others, in musical preferences. In addition to European music, the family cherished the musical heritage of the Crimean Tatars, the musical and song diversity of Armenian, Ukrainian, Russian, Azerbaijani, Iranian, and Turkish cultures. Classical music occupied a prominent place among the preferences of the singer's family (*Kravchenko, 2020*).

The music school where Jamala studied is located in the premises of a house that was previously owned by deported Crimeans. The singer recalls that the memory of how these people returned from deportation and presented documents certifying their right to property, and how they were explained that now there is a music school there and they had to look for housing on their own, was imprinted in her memory – no one provided them with compensatory accommodation (*Kravchenko, 2020*).

3. 'The Way Home' – struggling to return to the roots

It was not easy for Jamala's parents, like other Crimeans, to return to their native land. People were forced to settle not in Crimea itself, but in settlements of neighboring regions, for example, Zaporizhzhia or Kherson. In one of her recent interviews, the performer shared the story of her family's return to Crimea. Thus, Jamala's father had always wanted to return to the land of his parents, which he knew about from their stories, as well as traditions and language – the heritage that was carefully nurtured in a strange land in forced deportation (*Kravchenko, 2020*).

The 'exile ideology' formed in exile became the basis of the Crimean collective memory of the peninsula. It nourished the identity of the Crimean Tatars, was a powerful resource that inspired survival in extremely difficult conditions (*Barsukova*). Jamala's father always felt this strong connection to the homeland of his ancestors – the oikumene, which he inherited in exile.

In 1984, when Susana was nine months old, the family settled in Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia region. The singer's parents made a difficult decision due to numerous obstacles faced by Crimean Tatars who wanted to return to Crimea. Officially, the authorities allowed deported Crimeans to return to the peninsula. But it was the Crimean Tatars who were not given back their former property in Crimea, and they were actually deprived of the opportunity to buy other property with housing in the region from where they were expelled and robbed. Jamala's parents were forced to officially divorce by law. After the divorce, the situation looked like the mother of the singer, who is half Armenian, one quarter Ukrainian and one quarter Russian, had no relation to Crimean Tatars, and this visible and official non-affiliation with Crimea made it possible for Galina Tumasova to find a house and buy it. The singer notes that after the documents for the house had already been signed up, the owner was horrified and angry to the point of hysterics because she had actually sold the property to Crimean Tatars (*Kravchenko, 2020*). This situation is indicative of the actual attitude towards the Crimean Tatars who were returning home. However, all these obstacles and difficulties were overcome tenaciously and resolutely, because returning home was a long-term goal.

About this difficult experience of returning to her homeland, Jamala created another song in the Ukrainian language 'The Way Home', once again acting as the author of words and music. The composition was released on May 18, 2015 – on the anniversary of the deportation

of the Crimean Tatars. The singer dedicates the song to Crimean deportees, as well as to all those who had to leave their homes under the pressure of circumstances, and who never get tired of looking for their way home (*TabloID*, 2015).

It should be noted that the performer left her beloved Crimea in 2014, when the war actually began, and has not visited the peninsula since then. Therefore, the singer experiences a forced separation from her native home, the land of her ancestors, as a result of the criminal actions of the aggressor country, which spreads false propaganda and once again hides its true intentions under the guise of a 'liberator' (*Insaidy*). Jamala is convinced that home is where it is 'comfortable and light', where relatives and loved ones will warm her with their warmth, share their support, and surround her with their care. Home is like a place of strength, an incessant source that nourishes, heals, restores one who constantly returns from their travels. In the lines of the song, the lyrical heroine is looking for her way home despite obstacles, difficulties and fatigue. She is confident that she will achieve her goal. Memories of home motivate, empower and inspire her. Winged by the memoir visions of her oikumene, she will not go astray. 'I will find, // I will find my way home, // Although it will be difficult to walk // Through the memories of mad fatigue, // There will be comfort and light //'. The following lines refer to the tactile sensations associated with home, which are probably repeated since childhood. 'Birds in the palms, // As if in a dream //'. The connection with nature is also emphasized here. Also, the image of birds has an interesting and deep symbolic and metaphorical meaning, which explains and complements and unfolds the semantics of the house. Birds symbolize the universe with all its secrets and charms. The air element under the control of birds is invisible, transparent, weightless and omnipresent. They are the connecting link between the earth and the sky. Moreover, water birds serve as mediators between the earth, the sky, and even the water world. Here it is also worth mentioning mythological and fairy-tale birds, for example, the phoenix, who controls the fiery element. Also birds are associated with hope, aspiration, destiny (*Baba*, 2023). Knowledge of the universe is closely related to the space of one's home.

The image of birds in the palms appears polyphonic. This polysemantic image can also be interpreted as a charm, as an invocation of a blessing. The emphasis on the palms in the text is important. The palm is an ancient, even archaic symbol that has maintained its relevance and popularity throughout the ages. Thus, in the Christian religious tradition, 'Hand of God' or 'Right hand of God' means protection, protection for those who are on the move.

Many different cultures have a deep reverence for the symbol of the symmetrical hand, i.e. the palm. In the 'pantheon' of the Slavic pagan system, a special place is occupied by the goddess Dolonka, Palmy in English, who takes care of the house and household members. Ukrainian women hold an ancient tradition of making a special hand-made doll called 'motanka'. These dolls are meant to protect household, adults and children. Sometimes they can be given names of ancient pagan goddesses. Before Easter it is possible to buy such a doll near a cathedral or temple in Kyiv with a label on which its name is indicated and its 'power' or specific protective function is described. The dolls can be stuffed with special herbs as well. The author of the article happened to be presented a hand-made doll named Dolonka, Palmy in English. Hands also can 'represent strength, power and protection as well as generosity, hospitality and stability' (*Friedman*, 2023).

The bird is also a symbol of the human soul. For example, in S. Zhadan's poem 'The Bird' a metaphor of the human soul embodied in the image of a bird can be read. Jamala's repertoire includes the song 'Wings', for which she created music. The singer also likes to perform in stage costumes, the style of which is consistent with the image of a bird. Like, for example, at

her solo concert under the open sky in August 2023 (*JetSetter*; 2023). In this connection, ‘birds in the palms’ can be interpreted as householders under the protection of their native home.

The line ‘as if in a dream’ represents the oneiric paradigm of the narrative. Far from home, the heroine sees her home in her dreams, which indicates her organic eternal connection with home. The onirias in which she sees a home are mediators between her and her oikumene. The oneiric actualization of the house, symbolically represented by the birds in the palms, is a symbolic energy umbilical cord connecting the heroine to her place of power.

Then she talks about parents and the walls of the native home. ‘The way home is waiting for me, // Parental look, // Stone walls // Already as the norm of my life//’. Parents are the owners of the house, its guardians. They take care of the house in many ways. They fill the house with prosperity and raise the heirs so that they continue to support the house in a proper way. Life wisdom and care are concentrated in the parental view.

Stone walls are another interesting image in the text. The connection with nature is read again – stone is natural material. In addition, the Crimean Tatars traditionally built houses from stone – nurturing the architectural tradition – establishing a living identity. Metaphorically, the stone means power, reliability, protection, naturalness. Values nurtured in the space of a native home become the basis of the vitality of its owners.

Finally, the heroine has arrived home and staying in her native space becomes for her a regular, constant experience – the norm of her life, which she, in fact, sought and achieved. The refrain of the song repeats the title – thus intensifying the message of the composition. ‘At a time when // We were left alone, // Like children lost // Among the stars, // Only this path can save us //’. These lines emphasize how important it is to nurture a connection with one’s home, which is an essential component of our identity, our personality. It is especially important to return to one’s origins at a time when there is no end to the difficulties, or when in the vortex of the daily routine, or when confused, it seems that it is time to restore balance. Home becomes a point of stabilization in difficult times of challenges and trials (*Mallett, 2004*). In the entire universe, the heroine sees the light of her own home. Among the multitude of bright twinkling stars that attract strongly, she recognizes the cozy light of her native home. She sees the light and knows the path, she remembers the way home. The way home is a source of strength for her. She is filled with this power intended for her. She knows the way that saves her in the storms of life – the way home.

The image of the trail, which has rich symbolic semantics, attracts attention. The path can mean a person’s life, their destiny, their life story, which begins in the space of their native home, surrounded by close relatives. Also, the path has the semantics of searching for truth, knowledge, development, elevation to spirituality, acquisition of personal integrity.

In fact, the texts of Jamala’s songs contain messages that primarily appeal to the history of the Crimean Tatars, the singer’s family, and her personally on the one hand. And organically, these messages are extrapolated to the global level, universally resonating with every similar experience, both collective and individual, on the other hand. In this way, the axiological code incorporated in the texts is actualized discreetly with permanent attractiveness.

4. Conclusions

The problem-thematic vectors encoded in Jamala’s song compositions can be characterized as complicated complexes with different semantics and powerful appealing and attractive potential. The interpretation of the analyzed texts created by the performer testifies to

the active functioning of symbols that, thanks to their polyphonic nature, enrich the narrative both aesthetically and discursively, raising the textual codes to a universal and global level. The metaphorical, figurative, and symbolic nature of the narrative gives it a nativeness that is widely recognized and versatile. The historical background of the texts is intensified by the wealth of verbal means and at the same time is subtly aestheticized, appealing to the addressee with a multiplicity of reception and interpretation. The historical truth is represented in the songs authentically, expressively and aesthetically. Cultural and historical memory is perceived in these songs. These texts actualize the knowledge of the past, which seems to repeat itself with the tortures and stigmas of colonial trauma.

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