

## Tragedy or betrayal of love in the ballad "Renegade" by Adam Mickiewicz

Rafiq Novruzov<sup>1</sup>, Gulnar Novruzova<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Baku Slavic University, Head of the Department of Literature of Slavic Peoples, Baku, Azerbaijan.

<sup>2</sup>Baku Slavic University, Associate Professor of the Department of Practical Russian Language, Baku, Azerbaijan.



### Article History

Received: 25.09.2025

Accepted: 23.10.2025

Published: 01.11.2025

Corresponding Author:

Rafiq Novruzov

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the analysis of the ballad "The Renegade" by the famous Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. The idea of the work is to describe the events that reflect the fate of loving people who cannot unite with each other due to the dogmas of confessions. The plot of the poem consists of three episodes that make up a sequence of events. In their structure, they resemble edifying stories of traditional Sufi parables. The Polish poet, skillfully using the realities of Eastern culture, in particular Turkish, tries to create a colorful, fabulous picture of the medieval Ottoman Empire, against the background of which the events of the life of the ruler-pasha unfold. The places of action of the events are different. The first episode takes place in the harem of the ruler. Concubines of different nationalities try to entertain their saddened, sad master with dances and songs. The reader does not know the reasons for the sadness of the ruler, who is surrounded by beautiful girls eager to attract his attention. The fairy-tale atmosphere is broken by a court servant who comes with his gift, a new concubine. He, confident that her beauty will be able to lift the mood of the master, removes the veil from the concubine. The expected reaction is not crowned with success: the master is not surprised by anything, but at the same time, to everyone's surprise, he suddenly dies. The second episode takes place in the square, where a crowd is described demanding the unconditional punishment of the concubine, who is the cause of the ruler's death. The last episode, the final scene takes us to a distant northern country, where the former captive, who linked her fate with a coreligionist, dies of longing for her lover. This episode is the culmination. During the funeral service for the deceased, a Turk appears who asks to fulfill the wish of his deceased master and marry the deceased. The ballad ends with a mystical refusal of the deceased, who remained faithful to her religious traditions. Thus, the poet, turning to an ancient Eastern parable, reveals the tragedy of love, leaving its perception and interpretation to the reader himself.

**Keywords:** Ballad, Conceptual Idea, Structure, Oriental elements, Tragic ending.

### Cite this Article

R. Novruzov, G. Novruzova , Tragedy or betrayal of love in the ballad "Renegade" by Adam Mickiewicz (2025) *GRS Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*, Vol-2(Iss-11).1-4

## Introduction

In his Turkish ballad "The Renegade", which is a continuation of the cycle of poems dedicated by Mickiewicz to the Eastern theme, a story is told about the events of medieval times. In it, the poet, using Eastern pictorial means, tries to depict an incident from the life of a Turkish pasha, reflecting the tragedy of his love for a non-believer. The events are organized around an intrigue that contributes to the tragic development.

**Materials and methods** General scientific research methods (observation, comparative analysis, synthesis) and elements of discursive analysis.

## Results and discussion

In the Turkish ballad "The Renegade", the poet tries to reflect the historical legend about the tragic love of characters belonging to different faiths. First of all, let us pay attention to the title of the poem, which sheds light on its content and ideological concept. It is known that in the Middle Ages, Europeans derogatorily called a Christian who went over to the side of Muslims and accepted their religion a renegade (traitor, apostate). Here, as we will see later, we become witnesses to the reverse refraction of treason, that is, with an attempt by a Muslim to violate the dogmas of his religion in order to unite with a Christian girl. As we can see, Mickiewicz

rethinks the meaning of the term "renegade", orienting it from the state plane to the plane of a social phenomenon and certain religious beliefs. It is known that in the Ottoman Empire, many Christian renegades who converted to Islam served in the state apparatus and army.

Thus, the theme of the work is love. Naturally, the all-encompassing theme of love covers the life of an individual and society. If we consider the concept of love in the confessional dimension, then this aspect is considered in various planes by famous scientists [Kafarov, 2022]. Without going into the details of this issue, we note that the love context is present in all religions. In some of them, the ritual and collective principle dominates, in others - the personal-subjective, national and motivational aspects. And there are those that contain both dominants. Therefore, some scientists suggest distinguishing between confessional and existential dimensions of love [Kafarov, 2016]. At the same time, each of these categories contains significant elements of contradictions and disagreements of a dogmatic nature. They sometimes become the subject of artistic consideration. The ballad of Mickiewicz objectively fits into the discussed context. It resembles the plots of Sufi parables, which, through the prism of the philosophy of the relationship between man and God, touch upon the dilemmas between the earthly and the divine, the individual and the collective, the natural and the

social [Chepeleva, 2013; Schimmel, 1999]. The author gives the reader a life situation, and the reader, in accordance with experience, religious and secular beliefs, must decide on an assessment of this system of values.

The ballad consists of three parts, which consistently describe the events that took place in the Middle Ages. The author himself narrates. The ballad consists of three parts. The first part of the story indicates the place where the events unfold. This is a harem. From the very beginning, as is traditional in oriental tales, we are presented with a luxurious picture of the palace of the shah or sultan (in this case he is called "pasha" (a high title in the Turkish political system), sitting on a colorful Kashmiri sofa. The reader may reasonably ask why the poet emphasizes the name "kaszemirskim". Historical documents show that the period of the Persian Safavid dynasty (1501-1722 AD) in India influenced the art of making fabrics, furniture and carpets. We will add to what has been said that the first sofas originated in Turkey and Iran, previously called the Ottoman Empire.

Harem concubines of various nationalities (Greek, Lezgin, Kyrgyz) sing and dance in front of the master, trying to attract his attention and entertain him. In the eyes of the girls, magical (satanic) signs are felt, aimed at seducing, bewitching him. But their aspirations are in vain: the pasha is sad, he is sad, nothing interests him, the pasha does not see their seductive eyes, does not hear their songs, he is captivated by his thoughts:

*Co się niedawno stało w Iranie,  
Opowiem światu całemu:  
Na kaszemirskim usiadł dywanie  
Basza pośrodku haremu.  
Pieją Greczynki, pieją Czerkieski,  
Płasają branki Kirgisa,  
U tych w żrenicach szafir niebieski,  
U tamtych cienie Eblisa [Mickiewicz, 1929].*

Suddenly, in the clouds of tobacco smoke, the "kizlyar-aga", a court servant of the harem, appears, who leads a new concubine into the palace through the parting slaves. Here we should pause to explain to the reader the meaning of the word "kizlyar-aga". Looking ahead, we will say that in the process of analyzing the work, we will often encounter vocabulary of Turkish origin, which requires mandatory interpretation for the full perception of foreign-language inclusions. So, the name of this character, translated from Turkish, is interpreted as the caretaker of the harem. In addition to the sultan, the caretaker and other overseers (eunuchs), outsiders were prohibited from entering the harem.

"Kizlyar-aga" addresses the master with an exclamation, thereby trying to please and change his mood. In his address "effendi" means "lord, master". Following the tradition of eastern addresses to the ruler, the court servant admires the radiant eyes of the ruler, which shine like stars at midnight, likened to the bright star Aldebaran, which is a lonely supergiant visible to the naked eye. Such praises were common in eastern poetry. On the other hand, the Polish poet successfully notes the obligatory presence of astrologers (stargazers) in eastern palaces, whose services were constantly used by the padishahs. The court servant came with joyful news about a concubine from distant and cold Lehistan:

*«Którego jasność takiej jest mocy*

*Między gwiazdami dywanu,  
Jak wśród brylantów na szatach nocy  
Ognisko Aldeboranu,  
«Racz ku mnie błysnąć, gwiazdo dywanu!  
Bom dobrych nowin tłumaczem:  
  
Oto służebny wiatr z Lehistanu  
Darzy cię nowym haraczem.  
«Padyszach nie ma takiej krzewiny  
W sadzie rozkoszy w Stambule,  
Ona jest rodem z zimnej krainy,  
Którą wspominasz tak czule» [Mickiewicz, 1929].*

A Polish reader would hardly understand what is hidden under the alien name "Lechistan". The fact is that the Polish language belongs to the Lechitic group of Slavic languages. This is, firstly. Secondly, the Tatars, Turks and Cossacks in the 16th-17th centuries called Poland Lechistan. Let us add to the above that Ottoman Turkey was the only state that did not recognize the final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1795. According to a common legend, the Ottoman Sultan, when receiving foreign ambassadors, especially asked: "Where is the ambassador of Lechistan?" [Nuriev, 2021].

So, let's return to the text of the poem. The servant describes the beauty of the concubine brought to him, the likeness of which does not exist either in the ruler's rose garden or even in the vast Istanbul. The servant's address is struck by a detail that can be perceived as the disclosure of a secret hidden from those around him. This secret is encrypted in the combinations "którą wspominasz tak czule". Thus, the meaning of the venerable Pasha's sadness, caused by the memories of this beauty, is revealed. The caretaker proudly removes the veil from the captive. And then everyone present is numb with amazement... Naturally, the reason for such amazement is the enchanting beauty of the concubine. The poet, according to the narrative, surprises those around him with the imperturbable calm of the Pasha, who "laził" looks at the beauty, turns on his side, his chibouk and turban fall; it seems that he is overcome by a deep sleep...

But the poet pauses (ellipsis) and adds the word "nieżywy". In this way, he dispels doubts and confirms the death of the ruler...

*Tu gazę, co jej wdzięki przygasa,  
Odślonił — cały dwór klasnął; [1]  
Spojrzał raz na nią trzytulny Basza,  
Wypuścił cybuch i zasnął.  
Chyli się na bok, turban mu spada,  
Biegą przebudzić, — o dziwy!  
Usta zsiniały, twarz śmiercią błada,  
Basza renegat nieżywy! [Mickiewicz, 1929].*

After this episode, the second part of the ballad begins. The author takes us to the square, where a huge crowd has gathered, eager to witness the execution of the sorceress. The cries of the people with demands are conveyed in quotation marks and complement each other. The crowd - the Janissaries and guardians of the law -

demand the execution of the captive - Nazaretkę, czary. In this context, in our opinion, the word "Nazaretkę" should be interpreted as a synonym for the word "Christian". Those present are convinced that the cause of their master's death is the witchcraft of the beauty. Each of the indignant ones demands to apply various punishments to her: to stone her to death, to wall her up. The latter punishment was a type of death penalty, when a person was placed in blank walls, after which he died of hunger and thirst.

The voice of the indignant crowd is drowned out by the intervention of another direct speech, revealing the name of the ruler - Hassan, - characterizing him as a cruel, strict renegade man, never captivated by odalisques. Paradoxically, the owner of these qualities suddenly becomes a victim of "Wszystkiemi wzgardził! Teraz go zabija / Postać łekliwej gazeli; / Jako motyla lada modra żmija. The crowd does not calm down, the people demand immediate retribution. The qadi, the judge, must arrive, who must determine her punishment. However, the crowd initially chose the punishment - beating the captive with stones and prepared a pile of stones in advance:

«O dziwy, zgroza! — wołają janczary  
I mędrce w prawie ćwiczeni —  
Tę Nazaretkę za okropne czary,  
Zakopiem w stosie kamieni.  
«Owóż to Hassan, ów renegat Basza,  
Sroższy nad lwa i tygrysa,  
Co go nie tknęła żadna dziewczka nasza  
Ni Dżurdżystanu hurysa;  
«On, gdy Chanowi na srebrny półmisek  
Rzucił łeb księcia Iflaku,  
Wdzięczny mu Chagan dziesięć odalisek  
  
Z własnego przysłał orszaku.  
«Wszystkiemi wzgardził! Teraz go zabija  
Postać łekliwej gazeli;  
Jako motyla lada modra żmija  
Promieniem oczu zastrzeli.  
«Niechże tę żmiję bej, na pastwę czerni,  
Z warownej straży przywiedzie!  
Już od godziny zebrali się wierni,  
I kady z miasta już jedzie...»  
Przyjechał kady, zbierają kamienie,  
Czekają — próżna nadzieja!  
Bej nie przychodzi, odbite więzienie;  
Ani dziewczicy, ni beja!...[Mickiewicz, 1929].

But the crowd's hopes are in vain. There is neither a virgin nor a bey (a title of minor feudal rulers). In the last, third scene, the author takes us to a distant northern country, where the former captive in her homeland has linked her fate with another. But she is unhappy with him. Prosperity and luxury in her native country cannot make her forget her former lover. She dies of despair:

Wkrótce ojczyznę ujrzała branka,  
Lecz wszędzie jej tam nie miło:  
Nie widzi — bowiem swego kochanka,  
Z którym się wszystko skończyło.  
Wszystko! i w swoich pamiątek kraju  
Wkrótce z rozpaczny umarła;  
A ciało martwe, według zwyczaju,  
Dębowa trumna zawarła [Mickiewicz, 1929].

Relatives surround the oak coffin and say goodbye to the deceased. The priest calls everyone to prayer. At the moment of the mournful farewell, a Turk appears with Pasha's last will:

A gdy rodzina płacz swój rozwodzi  
I ksiądz do modlitwy wzywa —  
Nieznany Turczyn zziąjany wchodzi  
  
I tak się do nich odzywa:  
«Basza zostawił w zgonie rozkazy,  
Abym tę urnę wziął z sobą,  
Gdy go śmiertelne okryją glazy,  
Gdy go okryją żałobą;  
«Kazał, bym obszedł cały świat kołem,  
Trafił do północnej ziemi,  
I niósł tę urnę z jego popiołem,  
Złączyć z prochami lubemi.  
Znalazłem popiół! Ty, o kapłanie,  
Wypełnij Baszy zlecenie!  
Z urną swat wchodzi, przed tobą stanie,  
Dziwne będzie ożenienie.  
«Zdejmij z tej martwej ręki pierścioneł  
I włóż jej pierścień Turczyna;  
Ona małżonką, on jej małżonek,  
Po śmierci się ślub zaczyna!» [Mickiewicz, 1929].

The excited Turk tells those present that his master ordered him to take the urn with ashes after his death, go around the world in a circle, and come to the northern land in order to marry his beloved. A touching scene is described where an attempt is made to perform the sacrament of marriage after the death of lovers who were unable to unite during earthly life. The Turk asks the priest to remove the ring from the dead hand and put on the Turk's ring, thereby blessing them as husband and wife:

Ksiądz odpowiedział: «Czyż te zamiary  
Mam w groźnym wykonać musie?  
Czyliż twój Basza był naszej wiary,  
Czyliż on umarł w Chrystusie?»  
Ksiądz mówił, ale na księdza głosy  
Turczyn nic nie odpowiadał —

*I tylko z czoła rozgarnął włosy  
I milcząc, księdza twarz badał.  
Ksiądz obrażony chciał zerwać śluby,*

*Chciał z jej palca zdjąć pierścienie;  
Lecz próżne jego były rachuby,  
Broniło dłoni ściśnięcie.*

*Martwa dziewczica ścisnęła rękę,  
Pierścienia wydrzeć nie dała.  
Na tem ja, bracia, kończę piosenkę,  
I piosenka moja skoła [Mickiewicz, 1929].*

In this poem, the poet openly speaks about dogmatic religious principles, the laws of which prevented the marriage union. The Turk cannot answer the priest's question: "Czyliż twój Basza był naszej wiary, / Czyliż on umarł w Chrystusie?". One detail is important here. It is known that in Christianity, marriage is also understood as a holy life, it is a life in Christ, which presupposes the sacrificial bearing of the cross, forgiveness of each other. And the priest's use of the expression "Czyliż on umarł w Chrystusie?" is intended to clarify the testator's affiliation with the Christian faith.

The priest is perplexed, he does not understand the purpose of these intentions. Moreover, the canons of religion contraindicate the wedding of a Christian woman with a non-believer. Despite this, the priest makes concessions, breaking his vow, tries to remove the ring from her finger. However, the dead maiden squeezes his hand and does not allow it to be removed... On this intriguing mystical scene, the Polish poet ends his touching story. Thus, the author emphasizes that the sorceress, even being dead, remains faithful to the Christian tradition.

## Conclusions

Summing up the undertaken analysis of the ballad "Renegade" by Adam Mickiewicz, it should be noted that the Polish poet touches on the theme of love in the context of the contradictions of confessions, which with their prohibitions do not allow the possibility of a marriage union. A distinctive feature of the work is its saturation with oriental, in this case Turkish, pictorial means, creating not only the flavor of medieval history, but also a visual picture of the events taking place, revealing through the plot of the parable the true reason for the tragedy of love of two images, based on the prohibitions of religious traditions.

## References

1. Kafarov T.E. (2017). Lyubov kak obshechelovecheskaya tsennost I duchojvnaya potrebnost // Nactnaya misl Kavkaza [Love as a universal human value and spiritual need] // Scientific Thought of the Caucasus. 2017. No. 1. – P. 36–42.
2. Kafarov T.E. (2016). Polifoniya lyubvi (filosovskie I sotsiologicheskie ocherki). [Polyphony of love (philosophical and sociological essays)]. - Makhachkala, 216 p.

3. Mickiewicz (1929). Renegat. URL: [https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Renegat\\_\(Mickiewicz,\\_1929\)](https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Renegat_(Mickiewicz,_1929)).
4. Nuriyev Ali (2021). A qde posol Lexistana ?mnoqovekovaya istoriya turetsko-polskich otnosheniy["Where is the Ambassador of Lehistan?": the centuries-old history of Turkish-Polish relations]. – URL: <https://www.trrussian.com/mnenie/a-gde-posol-lehistana-mnogovekovaya-istoriya-turecko-polskih-otnoshenij-7487461>.
5. Chepeleva A. V. (2013). Jenskiy aspekt eticheskoy konsepsii lyubvi v sufizme[The Feminine Aspect of the Ethical Concept of Love in Sufism. [Electronic resource]. – URL: <file:///C:/Users/BAKU/Downloads/zhenskiy-aspekt-eticheskoy-kontsepsii-lyubvi-v-sufizme.pdf>.
6. Schimmel A. (1999). Mir islamskoqo mistitizma [The World of Islamic Mysticism / Translated from English by N.I. Prigarina]. Moscow: Aletheia, Enigma, 416 p.