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Popular Culture as a Medium of Advocacy for the Social Status of Lesbians: The Case of Rebeka’s “Pocałunek” [Kiss]

**Kultura popularna jako medium rzecznictwa o społecznym statusie lesbijek.
Przypadek „Pocałunku” Rebeki**

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Abstract

Aim. The purpose of this study is to present selected constructs of popular culture in the context of emancipation in its broadest sense. The focus of this reflection is the cultural and sociopolitical status of non-heteronormative women in Poland, with particular attention to the mechanisms of their exclusion, silencing, and marginalisation in both the private and public spheres. The research problem addressed concerns the advocacy for the rights of sexual minorities through art.

Methods and materials. The research problem was formulated as the following question: how do contexts related to the emancipation of non-heteronormative women manifest themselves in contemporary popular culture? To answer this, a broader socio-cultural background was outlined, conducting a case study of the song “Pocałunek” [Kiss] by the band Rebeka and using the media statements of Iwona Skwarek as one of the main sources of analysis. An interdisciplinary critical approach and an intersectional paradigm were applied, utilising the tools of contemporary sociology, feminist critique

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(herstory, the essays of Adrienne Rich), gender studies, and a queer perspective. The theoretical context is established by the persuasive and emancipatory dimension of music.

Results and conclusion. An analysis of the text of the work reveals the mechanisms of systemic violence against non-heteronormative individuals in Poland, manifesting both in familial microstructures (the pressure to silence lesbian relationships and the fear of homophobia) and in the institutional sphere (discursive oppression by political structures). The song accurately reflects the phenomenon of moral panic surrounding the gender ideology and artistically processes the problem of the dehumanisation of sexual minorities in public debate. The analysis illustrates how Rebeka's autobiographical and sensitive artistic output can serve as a tool for breaking the barrier of lesbian invisibility in culture. The song acts not only as a medium for women's rights advocacy but also realises the emancipatory potential of art by rejecting patriarchal attempts at stigmatisation and refusing to cast the protagonist in the role of a social outcast.

Keywords: lesbian, woman, song, author, LGBT+

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem opracowania jest przedstawienie wybranych konstruktów kultury popularnej w kontekście szeroko pojętej emancypacji. Przedmiotem refleksji uczyniono kulturowy oraz społeczno-polityczny status kobiet nieheteronormatywnych w Polsce, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem mechanizmów ich wykluczenia, uciszania oraz marginalizacji w sferze prywatnej i publicznej. Podjęty problem badawczy dotyczy rzecznictwa praw mniejszości seksualnych za pośrednictwem sztuki.

Metody i materiały. Problem badawczy sformułowano w postaci pytania: w jaki sposób we współczesnej kulturze popularnej zaznaczają się konteksty związane z emancypacją kobiet nieheteronormatywnych? Aby na nie odpowiedzieć, zarysowano szersze tło społeczno-kulturowe, a jednym z głównych źródeł analizy studium przypadku uczyniono utwór „Pocałunek” zespołu Rebeka oraz wypowiedzi medialne Iwony Skwarek. Zastosowano interdyscyplinarne podejście krytyczne i paradygmat intersekcyjny, wykorzystano narzędzia współczesnej socjologii, krytyki feministycznej (herstoria, eseistyka Adrienne Rich), *gender studies* oraz optyki *queer*. Kontekstem teoretycznym jest perswazyjny, emancypacyjny wymiar muzyki.

Wyniki i wnioski. Przeprowadzona analiza tekstu utworu ukazuje mechanizmy systemowej przemocy wobec osób nieheteronormatywnych w Polsce, objawiające się zarówno w mikrostrukturach rodzinnych (presja uciszania relacji lesbijskich i lęk przed homofobią), jak i w przestrzeni instytucjonalnej (dyskursywna opresja ze strony struktur politycznych). Utwór trafnie odzwierciedla zjawisko moralnej paniki wokół ideologii gender oraz artystycznie przetwarza problem dehumanizacji mniejszości seksualnych w debacie publicznej. Przeprowadzona analiza ilustruje, w jaki sposób autobiograficzna i wrażli-

wa twórczość artystyczna Rebeki może stanowić narzędzie przełamywania bariery niewiedzialności lesbijek w kulturze. Piosenka nie tylko stanowi medium rzecznictwa praw kobiet, lecz także realizuje emancypacyjny potencjał sztuki przez odrzucenie patriarchalnych prób stygmatyzacji i osadzenia bohaterki w roli społecznego wyrzutka.

Słowa kluczowe: lesbijka, kobieta, piosenka, autorka, LGBT+

A Word of Introduction

I was prompted to write this text by several issues which shape the perspective adopted in the article and define the areas of analysis. The starting point is the question of which behaviours and individuals can be defined as deviations from the standard, particularly since—as Kochanowski (2024) observes—although, as a rule, individuals try to meet the (absurd) demands associated with gender/sexual “normality,” this is nevertheless impossible. The issues raised can certainly be examined within various frameworks, such as medical, historical or cultural contexts (Grunt-Mejer & Iniewicz, 2020). Therefore, I adopt a somewhat simplified definition of sexuality, which serves the purposes of this article. It describes the relationship between two people as depicted in the text of a work that constitutes a key aspect of the research—which I will elaborate on further in the following sections of the article—and will also help to organise the content presented: as long-lasting, strong emotional, sexual and romantic feelings that establish an attraction to people of a specific gender (Brodziak & Kłopotkowski, 2013). The situation of LGBT+ people in Poland remains a key context; we can consider it particularly complex. It is shaped by factors such as the country’s dominant religion and the position of the Catholic Church, public discourse that is hostile to emancipation, lack of legislative sensitivity to the needs of non-heteronormative communities, and their low sense of safety. This view is confirmed by numerous studies and reports in which respondents state quite unequivocally that being an LGBT person in Poland is difficult (Galwas, 2022).

The choice of the research problem is also linked to my own experiences, which I, as the author, bring to the narrative and which are reflected in the analysed work. This approach has a methodological basis, since a sociologist also brings his or her “personal” values and views to bear on the activities that are simultaneously the subject of his or her studies. Behind this lies a clear need—in which it is sometimes impossible to distinguish between “personal” and “professional” intentions—for the research to have a certain social significance for the researcher themselves (Wyka, 1993). I am fully aware that by adopting this perspective, I am not so much passively describing the world under study as actively intervening in it. I therefore assume that the stance

and experiences of the researcher constitute a significant research criterion (Rapior, 2015). In this manner, I express my opposition to the myth of objectivity in scientific inquiry. Although I do not include direct self-narration in the text, I openly reveal the personal motivations behind the analysis (Czarnocka, 2017). It should be strongly emphasised that, although the author's personal experience served as the impetus for addressing this topic, the actual research procedure is based on objective criteria.

Methodology

The perspective adopted in this article — feminist criticism — allows for an analytical examination of the ways in which scholarship is practised. At the operational level, the study was based on a qualitative analysis of the discourse contained in the semantic (textual) layer of the song. The research procedure itself consisted of several stages. First, the text was carefully read, and three main analytical categories were identified: 1) oppression in the private sphere and within family microstructures (the mother motif, the mechanism of silencing), 2) discipline in the public sphere (the neighbour motif, religious pressure), and 3) the emancipatory act of resistance (the titular kiss and breaking through invisibility). The extracted fragments were then examined in light of feminist criticism and the queer perspective. Contextual materials — in particular, media statements by the artist (Iwona Skwarek) — played an extremely important role in this analytical process. They served to substantiate the analysis. They made it possible to ground the lyrical layer in the artist's real, autobiographical experience and to reveal the work's connection to a broader sociopolitical context. The use of such interpretive frameworks justifies treating the song as a deliberate act of advocacy on behalf of a marginalised group, rather than merely as a work of literary fiction. Such a research intervention may involve a shift away from the current paradigm of classical axioms and a turn toward values that are so important today, such as equality, egalitarianism, and accessibility (Derra, 2025).

Furthermore, it should be noted that music has become an integral part of our daily lives, and regardless of individual tastes, this art form can be considered a constant presence in the lives of nearly everyone (Jabłońska, 2016). This state of affairs makes music an excellent medium for conveying messages. Artists, both male and female, use it to describe reality and actively attempt to influence people's attitudes. It is therefore impossible to overlook the persuasive dimension of music, which is a necessary form of socialisation. It serves as a channel through which cultural content flows (Flis, 2019). For this reason, in this paper I am particularly interested in a critical analysis of discourse within a cultural text. Adopting this perspective makes it possible to examine the language contained in the text, to determine what values the artist conveys to her audience,

and to identify the systems of knowledge and social practices she proposes (Jabłońska, 2019). In this context, symbolic interactionism also emerges as an important theoretical framework, one that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of sexuality and identity. From this perspective, personal experiences and attitudes toward established social norms prove to be crucial. These phenomena are inextricably linked to the process of assigning new meanings and renegotiating existing ones (Wojciechowska, 2023).

The above explanations spark interest in a song by the now-defunct band Rebeka titled “Pocałunek” [The Kiss] (Rebeka, 2020). Consisting of two members—Iwona Skwarek and Bartosz Szczęśny—the band arranged their songs for twelve years before suspending their activities in 2020. Their discography consists of four albums (three LPs and an EP) as well as several songs not included on those albums (Świąder, 2020).

Theoretical Background

In my paper, I draw on the tools of feminist criticism. Following Janion (2003), I argue that a system that excludes women, fails to listen to their voices, and disregards their experiences and concerns is characterised by injustice, and that such inequalities can lead to self-destruction. One of the strategies offered within the framework of feminist studies aimed at countering these injustices is “herstorical orders.” These are intended to incorporate overlooked voices into the dominant discourse, which would lead to a different way of interpreting reality and managing narratives (Kuźma & Pietrzak, 2020). The offer is thus characterised by a holistic and multidirectional approach that aims to challenge the patriarchal balance of power—and thus to present a non-patriarchal way of expressing thoughts and formulating social attitudes—including in the areas of behaviour, knowledge, and values (Chmura-Rutkowska & Głowacka-Sobiech, 2024). This perspective is also justified by the fact that feminist discourse has genuinely entered the public debate. Thanks to the spread of this idea, attention has been drawn to issues such as: discrimination in the labour market, discrimination against young mothers, the right to a dignified childbirth and the right to breastfeed, the problem of sexual harassment, the value of housework and its contribution to the national economy, domestic violence, the value and importance of caregiving work, the right to a dignified miscarriage, the glass ceiling, architectural barriers, the double burden of work and home life, and many others. As the researchers demonstrate, this approach makes it clear that the aforementioned issues do not exist solely within language as phantasms detached from reality; rather, they often define power relations and illustrate the trivialization of topics important to marginalised social groups (Korolczuk *et. al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, it seems that lesbian themes in music have not been the subject of broader analysis and, consequently, have not been given the recognition they deserve. Obviously, one could mention celebrities who, at least in their statements, support the LGBT+ community, such as Madonna and her song “Vogue”—which has been interpreted, among other things, as an anthem for the LGBT community in the United States (Kopaniecki, 2022)—or Katy Perry’s song with the telling title “I Kissed a Girl” (Summers, 2012). I am aware of the critical opinions regarding this song, and, like some scholars, I also recognise its homophobia and misogyny. For this reason, I will not analyse it further and am citing it only as an example (Carman, 2009).

Moving away from an American-centred perspective and focusing on Polish works, one might mention, for example, Maria Peszek’s “Virunga” (2021), in which the artist uses the metaphor of the “mountain gorilla” to highlight not only the marginalisation of the LGBT+ community but also the fact that it is equated with a dangerous, unpredictable creature. In their hugely popular song “Chciałbym umrzeć z miłości” [I would like to die of love], the band Myslovitz (2003) treats the emotion of love as a universal experience and does not address the issues examined in this article in the lyrics themselves. It is worth noting, however, that the music video for this song features a scene of two women kissing. In an effort to highlight the diversity of artists—both male and female—who have chosen to incorporate themes of love and lesbian relationships into their work, it is worth noting that Lesz (2011) also dared to include such a gesture. In the song “That Girl,” the woman takes us through a story in which a hazy memory of the previous evening—which she spent at a party—surfaces, and she wonders whether the mysterious woman really: “Dotknęła mojej dłoni? / Czy to jest w mojej głowie?” [She touched my hand? / Is it all in my head?]. These questions are answered by the flashbacks featured in both the lyrics and the music video for the song, because: “Obcisła sukienka / Zapach perfum / [...] / Delikatne usta / Słodkie biodra” [A tight dress / The scent of perfume / [...] / Delicate lips / Sweet hips] led the song’s protagonist to “break free,” as she herself calls for, and the culmination of this extraordinary night turned out to be a lesbian kiss, which concludes the music video for “That Girl” (Szewczyk, 2015). You will not find a reference to the music video in the bibliography or the sources cited in the text; it is currently unavailable online. However, I am deliberately referring to this song. First, I am drawing on available sources—journalistic articles—one of which I include in the references. Second, I also draw on my own observations; my exploration of these topics did not begin with the decision to write this text, but rather is one of my primary interests. Finally, it should be noted that I view this as a symbolic gesture through which I oppose the erasure of women’s art.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the sociocultural situation of LGBT+ people through the lens of emancipatory processes taking place in contemporary popular

culture. The main focus of this analysis is on the mechanisms of advocacy for sexual minorities, which were examined using the song “Pocałunek” by the band Rebeka. The concept of a song is usually defined as a concise text that, together with music, forms a whole intended to be sung. As the literature on the subject indicates, however, an analysis of this type of communication requires consideration of a broader context: genre affiliation, socio-historical conditions, and, in popular culture, live performances as well as visual elements such as music videos (Kasperska, 2025). Due to the lack of an official music video for the song in question, this paper focuses exclusively on the semantic layer. For this reason, the terms “song” and “work” are used interchangeably in this article to refer directly to the lyrics of “Pocałunek.” However, this work is not the sole focus of the study; rather, it is treated as an example and a case study. It serves to illustrate broader social phenomena and provides a catalyst for in-depth reflection on the mechanisms of exclusion and emancipation in the public sphere. Given the lyrics of the proposed song and the multitude and diversity of perspectives offered by feminist studies (Tong, 2002), it makes sense to draw on the tools proposed by this research approach. Rich (1980/2003) offered valuable insights in *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. In her essay, the writer proposed a reflection on imposed heterosexuality and sought to challenge claims about its “naturalness.” She suggests that the very concept of lesbianism should be defined broadly, as it can encompass descriptions of relationships between women, accounts of their individual experiences, or, more broadly, their entire lives. It also appears that a feminist approach has been accepted in the social sciences as well. Fuszara (2008) conducted a series of interviews with representatives of various disciplines, all of whom shared a commitment to adopting a feminist/gender perspective in their research. The analysis shows that there are more similarities than differences between disciplines. However, it is important to emphasize that the proposed perspective has become a full-fledged member of the sociological methodological community. Kowalska (2012) highlights the emancipatory nature of feminist theories and their clear stance on unequal treatment. The sociologist also emphasizes the importance of cultural factors in shaping power structures and the need to take into account the diversity of women’s experiences, including—which is relevant to this analysis—sexuality.

We can see, then, that sociology was highly regarded among the female researchers who helped shape the Polish feminist movement (Bator, 2006). Furthermore, it is not difficult to identify common features of feminist theories and queer theory, such as the abolition of systems of oppression or the rejection of the assumption of a supposedly natural order of gender and sexuality (Bielska *et al.*, 2025). The convergence of these visions should come as no surprise, especially given the strategies of conservative circles focused on combating so-called gender ideology, which create significant communication challenges. These difficulties stem, among other things, from the de-

valuation of concepts related to emancipatory processes—such as the right to divorce, abortion, or same-sex marriage—which are portrayed as a threat to “Polishness” and contrasted with the “decadent West” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). For this reason, the parallel use of both perspectives constitutes a justified approach that facilitates a more holistic analysis of the phenomenon in question.

Results

Intimacy Is Only a Private Matter

In the following part of this article, the focus of the research will shift to social space and the mechanisms through which LGBT+ individuals seek social recognition and visibility. The key category for analysing this phenomenon is the act of kissing itself. Historically speaking, it symbolized peace, understanding, and harmony (Szwagrzyk, 1959). The etymology of this word, in turn, suggests that we use it to express a desire to unite with someone or something into a single whole (Masłowska, 2012). This profound, cultural dimension of the pursuit of unity is captured by popular culture, which is directly reflected in the case study under examination – a song by the band Rebeka. Before making a direct reference to its textual layer, it is worth noting that the title “Pocałunek” itself directs the research perspective toward the aforementioned social contexts. As the literature on the subject indicates, the title is one of the fundamental factors enabling the identification of a work: its form is linked in multiple ways to the content of the work it names and symbolizes, as well as to the modes of its recording and the material form of its transmission (Sierotwiński, 1986).

We should not dismiss the proposals presented above, and although they serve their purpose, they can be defined as universalizing interpersonal relationships. Given the issues addressed in the article and the song discussed, this inquiry should be expanded. It is not until the fourth section of the lyrics that the artist reveals to her audience—both male and female—who she bestowed the titular kiss upon. Thanks to the chorus, we learn that the woman bestowed the kiss upon a fellow woman; the lyrics state, among other things: “Tyle lat się boję pocałować / Dziewczynę, którą kocham” [For so many years I have been afraid to kiss / The girl I love] (Rebeka, 2020). What catches the attention is not only the tender gesture, but above all the emotions associated with the confession. It should therefore be noted that the late placement of the confession in the text is difficult to interpret as a gimmicky artistic device, a desire to intrigue the listeners, or a wish to hold their attention a little longer. In “Pocałunek,” Rebeka expresses her fear of revealing her lesbian love; at the same time, this decision allows her to attempt to free herself from the heteropatriarchal system, for the lesbian kiss becomes a revolution, the seed of change with activist and artistic potential (Małgowska, 2020).

One of the fundamental characteristics of feminist criticism is the examination of the female experience and the opportunity for women to tell their own stories (Showalter, 1993). The Polish feminist tradition has adopted this approach to narrative, as noted by Wejbert-Wąsiewicz. Writing about contemporary Polish female artists, the sociologist mentions, among others, Marta Dzido and her abortion coming out; she also references the work of Sylwia Chutnik, in which the writer addresses topics such as single motherhood, as well as the courageous confessions of the protagonists in Justyna Bargielska's poetry regarding lost pregnancies (Wejbert-Wąsiewicz, 2018). The work in question, in a sense, complements this list, as it also manages to capture a lesbian perspective, as Skwarek explained in one of her interviews:

This is a song about fear. I was walking home from the movies with my girlfriend and kissed her on the street – just a very gentle peck. Suddenly, a woman from a window in the apartment building next door started yelling at us. I panicked instantly, curled up, and once I got home, I couldn't stop thinking about it. I'd been in many similar situations before, but this one really shook me up. Later, I wrote a song about how, for so many years, I've been afraid to kiss the girl I love on the street. (Wróżyńska, 2019)¹

This approach to the subject helps restore a certain historical justice within the feminist movement itself and serves as a reminder that, on the one hand, non-heteronormative women have helped shape it throughout its various periods, and on the other hand, it highlights the various difficulties they faced – such as being labelled the “lavender threat” (Friedan, 2012), and that concern for the issues facing this community was labelled the “lesbian danger” (Mizielińska, 2004). The situation appears no less complicated in Poland, where one can point to feminist-lesbian magazines (Walczak, 2024) or the strong collaboration between some lesbian and feminist movements in the social sphere (Kochanowski, 2007). However, narratives that separate feminism from non-heteronormativity sometimes emerge even among those who identify as feminists (Mizielińska, 2008) and manifest in the exclusion of lesbians from pro-women events (Desperak, 2010). Considering this, we see that sociocultural analyses clearly indicate that homogenization—treating all women as equal—can lead to marginalization, while the intersectional approach focuses on social action (Szalkowski, 2025).

Furthermore, “Pocałunek” fits into the discourse on the intersection of social categories. By incorporating an intersectional approach into research practice—which involves recognizing the connections between various social variables, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs—it becomes possible to diagnose a problem from multiple perspectives, an approach that finds appli-

¹ Author's own translation.

cation in various disciplines (Oleksy, 2014). The work in question is based on a woman's experience, and media statements indicate that the artist incorporated strictly autobiographical elements into it. In recent years, the representation of LGBT+ people in popular culture has been steadily increasing, becoming more diverse in the process and allowing for the free interplay of these social categories (Stoch, 2025). The process described bodes well for ongoing changes, but harmful queerbaiting remains a widespread problem in mainstream media. This marketing strategy is primarily a problem of representation—or rather, a lack thereof—a refusal to depict certain identities on screen, to name them, and thereby to acknowledge their right to exist, while simultaneously exploiting queerness (Kobus, 2017). This tactic, also referred to as a decoy aimed at non-heteronormative audiences and allies, results in supposedly progressive cultural works—which raise issues important to the LGBT+ community—actually reinforcing the heteropatriarchal social hierarchy. This leads to a systemic denial of representation at a time when it should potentially be possible (Kobus, 2017). In contrast to these trends stands the song “Pocałunek,” which authentically addresses the issue of discrimination against lesbian woman. In it, the artist shares her own experiences, describing relationships and events in which she faced oppression on a daily basis. Given this, it is precisely this candid expression that constitutes the greatest strength of the song under analysis. The intersectional perspective present in the song's narrative clearly illustrates how a member of a marginalized group (a woman), who also belongs to a minority vulnerable to social exclusion, can experience specific, multiplied forms of unequal, inferior treatment – multiple discrimination (Klajmon-Lech, 2023).

In addition to the act of kissing itself, the place where it took place seems to be crucial. Rebeka, recalling this memory, quotes: “Bo pani z okna krzyknie do nas / Jak śmiemy ukazywać się jej oczom świętym” [For the lady from the window will shout at us / How dare we show ourselves to her holy eyes] (Rebeka, 2020). It is therefore worth drawing on one of the key observations made by feminist theorists and representatives of the women's movement – the personal is political/public (Kwiatkowska, 2010). This observation posits that patriarchally defined gender differences between men and women result in men being perceived as rational, aggressive, and competitive—that is, suited for the world of work and public life—while women were seen as emotional, caring, and passive – and thus best suited for caring for the family at home (Hannam, 2007). It can therefore be concluded that in this communicative situation, discrimination occurs on at least two levels. The protagonist of the text, due to her biological sex, is deprived of the right to function freely in the public sphere, while her relationship with her partner has been questioned and devalued by heteronormative attitudes that cast both women as unwanted intruders. In this context, it becomes necessary to address the issue of the invisibility of lesbians in public space, understood both as the lack of representation of the experiences of non-heteronormative women

in cultural discourses and political structures, as well as the infantilization or paternalization of emotional and erotic relationships between women (Struzik, 2012).

The analysed text is replete with numerous references to spaces that can hardly be considered lesbian-friendly. The following lines appear in various parts of the song: “A mama powie / Nikt nie musi wiedzieć / Schowaj zdjęcia, bój się Boga” [And Mom will say / No one needs to know / Hide the photos, for God’s sake] (Rebeka, 2020). It is worth noting here that parental activism in support of LGBT+ people is becoming increasingly visible in Poland. Newly formed organizations are undertaking numerous initiatives to raise awareness, increase the visibility of LGBTQ+ families, and normalize their presence in public spaces – such as media appearances, the publication of official statements, and initiatives aimed at those working in educational institutions (Uryga, 2022). Despite this significant and visible change, we continue to observe various difficulties parents face in coming to terms with the news that their child is non-heteronormative. Mothers still grapple with social expectations and a stereotypical view of their own role, which is often reinforced by religious narratives (Gajtkowska, 2014). Therefore, the mother-daughter relationship deserves special attention in this context. Research shows that adult women often define motherhood negatively, which directly translates into their low self-esteem (Smoleńska, 2026). The traditional family model, and conventional understandings of femininity and motherhood mean that daughters are expected to strictly replicate the established model, and the child is treated as a showcase of the mother’s parenting skills (Lewicka, 2021). Their non-normative sexual or gender identity usually provokes a strong reaction from their parents. Revealing it is associated with stress and fear, and as it turns out, these fears are not unfounded and can lead to real, negative consequences, including homelessness (Gajek, 2021). A similar situation occurs in “Pocałunek,” where the protagonist experiences an oppressive system. Silencing mechanisms prevent the woman from freely expressing herself, and her mother orders her to hide symbolic photos of her lesbian love. The strategy of concealing intimate same-sex relationships demonstrates that the problem of exposure to homophobia in the family environment remains a persistent and acutely present phenomenon (Mizielińska & Stasińska, 2014).

Public Violence as Institutional Violence

The analysed work illustrates the multi-layered nature of the experiences of non-heteronormative individuals. The author identifies another dimension of normative pressure, consisting in the reproduction of heteropatriarchal patterns of sexual identity construction through reference to the value system promoted by the dominant institution of the Church in Poland. The protagonist hears oppressive warnings in both public and private spaces — “Jak śmiemy ukazywać się jej oczom świętym” [How dare we show ourselves to her holy eyes] — referring to the behaviour of the woman observing

her and her beloved from the window. However, the mother's reaction seems more compelling. The God-fearing parent warns her daughter against the wrath of the Almighty – "Bój się Boga" [for God's sake] (Rebeka, 2020). Her attitude can be explained relatively simply. Cultural patterns of motherhood demand unconditional devotion to children, while at the same time fuelling the desire for power and provoking excessive control, a dependence that permeates adulthood (Prochera, 2019). It is therefore appropriate to examine the beliefs of the Catholic Church regarding the LGBT+ community.

Zacharenko's report proves helpful here. The author notes that equality policy initiatives—including women's rights, LGBT+ rights, the promotion of feminist ideas, and issues of sexual and reproductive health—have been met with a critical response from the Catholic Church. This institution has undertaken propaganda initiatives aimed at articulating alternative positions to emancipatory postulates. The Vatican has entered into cooperation with various organizations promoting conservative dogmas, and this cooperation has led, for example, to the popularization of the slogan "gender ideology" (Zacharenko, 2017). It is worth emphasizing that this strategy has been successful in several areas. I have already referred to the fact that, using various techniques, the concept of gender itself has been given a broad definition, encompassing many social phenomena supposedly contrary to the natural order. Consequently, it has been significantly distorted and wrongly assigned pejorative connotations (Kurowska *et al.*, 2016). Representatives of the Catholic Church, using propaganda slogans and popularizing a simplified way of thinking, tried hard to bring the terms gender and homosexuality closer together. At the same time, they aimed to design a world in which these terms would be associated negatively or even more incomprehensibly, such as genderism, as well as by disseminating narratives linking the LGBT+ community with sex crime (Sobczak, 2014). Such actions contribute to the spread of confusion regarding this concept, which is already poorly understood by the general public. This is underscored by research conducted by Kubiak-Szymborska, which shows that only 10.8% of respondents claimed to be able to define the concept (2012).

It cannot be ignored that the perspective presented above is present in publications considered scholarly, and some researchers, both male and female, contribute to its dissemination. One example is Stanisławczyk's text *Problem tożsamości płci w przekazie medialnym i odbiorze społecznym* [The problem of gender identity in media communication and social reception] (2014), in which the author accuses various international institutions of promoting and supporting their sex education, which boils down to implementing a LGBTI program. Although the article did not precisely define its framework, it nevertheless dared to make serious accusations against non-heteronormative individuals. Homosexuality was equated with liberal-leftist ideology, and, according to the author, promoting such ideals would result in the dismantling of the family (Stanisławczyk, 2014). The presented approach should not be read as a one-off position, but rather

as an expression of an ambitious plan to establish anti-gender studies and new social sciences based on a different set of fundamental truths about human nature, sexuality, family, and society (Korolczuk, 2016).

Korolczuk and Graff (2018) analysed narratives opposing progressive attitudes, including equality demands for non-heteronormative people, and the strategies of anti-gender movements. Their findings are particularly significant as they demonstrate that the Church's and right-wing opposition to LGBT+ emancipation efforts constitutes a continuum. The discourse thus entrenched has led to the portrayal of activists, both male and female, as well-off elites who allegedly want to impose "demonic" attitudes and colonize the rest of society. The female researchers point to numerous initiatives aimed at inciting moral panic, such as the *Stop Paedophilia* and *Stop LGBT* campaigns and civic projects, and the creation of so-called LGBT-free zones. Disapproval of emancipatory strategies is also expressed at the discourse level, in which LGBT+ people are presented as foreign imports from Western Europe, contemptuously referred to as "Ebola from Brussels" (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). The European Union's reaction was particularly decisive in the case of actions taken as part of the LGBT-free zones campaign, when some municipalities decided to adopt resolutions openly discriminating against this community (Czubała, 2023). The conservative press supported the initiative, and *Gazeta Polska* [Polish Newspaper] decided to include stickers with the aforementioned slogan in its editions. Although the newspaper was forced to discontinue their distribution, the idea did not disappear from the public sphere (Rawłuszko, 2021).

The selected strategy proved so effective that the concept of gender is identified with an "empty sign," a phrase that has no equivalent in reality and thus becomes a glue that glues together various elements and ideas of extreme right-wing movements (Desperak, 2019). Adopting a Polish perspective, it should be emphasized that combating gender ideology is a significant element of the programs of parties on the right wing of the political spectrum. Reports indicate that these groups promote family as a lasting union between a woman and a man, oppose demonstrations for LGBT+ equality and the presentation of diversity in public spaces, advocate for a ban on sex education, and perceive gender ideology as a threat to the family (Kozłowska & Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2021). This approach to politics is being used not only by individual political parties but also by those in positions of power. President Andrzej Duda, for example, has sided with institutions questioning the need for change in LGBT+ rights and supported initiatives described as anti-gender. This state of affairs can be observed both in the decisions made and the narrative being shaped. An example is the president's signing of the Family Charter, which introduced, among other things, a ban on promoting LGBT ideology in public institutions (Demagog, 2020), a move supported by conservative circles (Górska, 2020). He used language of contempt towards LGBT+

people, referring to them as ideology (Białasiewicz, 2020). Using this narrative, he appealed to anti-gender groups and utilized the political strategies they had developed.

The Family Charter, in addition to provisions relating to the protection of the institution of marriage or the protection of children against LGBT ideology, also includes proposals supporting specific social groups, *e.g.* a pro-family labour market or support for families raising children with disabilities (Demagog, 2020). Analysing the strategy employed in this case, one can draw on the findings of Korolczuk and Graff (2018), which point to a model for constructing conflict between communities. In this setting, traditional families, the elderly, and people with disabilities are presented as the beneficiaries of actions, while the term “gender ideology” functions as a contrasting category against which specific political and cultural narratives are constructed. A similar dynamic can be observed in “Pocałunek,” where the protagonist experiences the pressures of heteropatriarchal structures, and the dominant narrative stigmatizes her relationship with another woman, which she attempts to erase.

Finally: The Female-Monster Came Out of the Closet

The narrative presented in “Pocałunek” constructs the experiences of LGBT+ people in a way that allows for an analysis of the mechanisms of social control and discursive shaping of identity. The work problematizes the exploitation of this community in political narratives to maintain power. This type of oppressive discourse directly impacts the public sphere, where prejudice can also influence greater intolerance in everyday interactions (Kocemba & Stambulski, 2020). It seems extremely important that the author chose a female protagonist as the main character. This deserves special attention, as in various media reports lesbians are represented sporadically, which leads to the impression that the authors of the articles, when writing “homosexuals,” mainly mean men (Zielińska, 2013). Even though the male and female creators of global television productions responded quite effectively to the LGBT+ movement’s demand to include non-heteronormative characters, they more often showed a gay person who fit into the stereotypes spread in public opinion (Rams, 2011). In this sense, the process of socialization into gender roles also plays a significant role. Heteropatriarchal social structures dictate subservience to men. Submissive women are tasked with bearing children for them, whom they raise alongside other women in the family – their mother or aunt (Majka, 2009). From the perspective of feminist theorists, it can be assumed that the narrative proposed by Rebeka serves as a herstory, carrying groundwork and constituting a significant act of liberation for lesbian women. The autobiographical dimension of the work positions the author as a courageous creator, ready to speak about the diversity of female relationships (Smith & Watson, 2012).

The pro-woman attitude is revealed through the seemingly small gesture of the protagonist of “Pocałunek” — a declaration of love to another woman — “dziewczyne, którą kocham” [the girl I love] (Rebeka, 2020) becoming the beginning of positive social change. This act functions as a symbolic protest against the real exclusion from public space, which often limits freedom in the private sphere and disrupts family relationships (Phillips, 2012). The narrative of “Pocałunek” demonstrates how individual experience becomes a tool for reflection on power structures and social norms.

Beyond the song’s undeniable strengths, its lyrics supporting the LGBT+ community and its particular emphasis on lesbian love, it is an emotional story about pain, fear, and the lack of prospects for improvement. The songwriter explores this in the opening lines of “Pocałunek,” stating: “Wasze słowa napsuły mi krwi / Patrzę na ziemię i boję / I boję się zejść” [Your words have made my blood bad / I’m looking at the ground and I’m afraid / And I’m afraid to come down] (Rebeka, 2020). The protagonist feels like a social outcast, an unwanted element, a woman discredited by heteropatriarchal authority. Her homosexuality lies outside the rigidly defined boundaries: “Białe mam oczy i pianę we łbie / Wytnij ze mnie jakąś część i... / Uratuj ją” [My eyes are white and my head is full of foam / Cut out some part of me and... / Save it] (Rebeka, 2020). As a result, the woman is accused of being sick. It is worth noting that the very concept of illness is not free from stereotypes and misogynistic assumptions. Some psychologists have crudely linked illness with femininity (Jaworska, 2008). The symptoms mentioned in the text suggest rabies and yet she decides to continue this liberating story. However, the point is not to precisely define the alleged illness, but to capture the protagonist’s main affliction. The hegemony of the Catholic Church’s ethics, lack of support, and even dehumanization have led to defining LGBTQ+ people as a disease, both of the body and the psyche (Ryszkiewicz, 2024).

In this sense, it is worth highlighting once again the author’s exceptional sensitivity and ability to identify significant social issues. Through her observations, the artist not only shares the accompanying emotions with her audience but also carefully summarizes the difficulties faced by non-heteronormative individuals. In light of the presented material, it is worth recalling the statement of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow, Marek Jędraszewski. The clergyman spoke during a mass marking the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising:

[...] today we know that the red plague is not walking across our land. Which doesn’t mean there isn’t a new one that wants to take over our souls, hearts, and minds. Not Marxist or Bolshevik, but born of the same spirit – neo-Marxist. Not red, but rainbow. (Jędraszewski, 2019)²

² Author’s own translation.

Jędraszewski's speech caused a social uproar and even a lawsuit alleging infringement of personal rights. Although the District Court in Kraków dismissed the plaintiff's motion, it should be noted that some legal experts expressed a different opinion. The aggressive, offensive, clearly deprecating nature of the words quoted towards non-heteronormative people (LGBT), the place where they were said, the violation of the values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland regarding human dignity and the promotion of aversion towards the community of non-heteronormative people were pointed out (Borecki, 2021).

The clergyman's words, however, should not be separated from other contexts; rather, they should be placed in a broader socio-cultural context. They generated widespread interest, led to multiple consequences, and their vehement nature incited discriminatory activity. According to a study conducted in 2019, which is worth emphasising – the same year Jędraszewski warned against a rainbow plague, interest in LGBT+ topics on social media has increased. In addition to positive content, there were also hateful comments, where the described community was identified with deviance, called pederasts, and referred to as the aforementioned plague (Pałka-Suchojad, 2021). Moreover, it is worth recalling that the homily was delivered after the memorable equality march in Białystok, when nationalist circles physically attacked people participating in the demonstration (Czapnik & Hüpner, 2025). Although public opinion polls did not indicate support for this attack, and most respondents identified national groups as the perpetrators, Jędraszewski's social engineering aligns with strategies described by anti-gender movements. The use of military discourse and references to the partitions positioned LGBT+ people not only as others in relation to Polish tradition, but also as outsiders, potentially dangerous entities purportedly seeking a radical appropriation of the cultural code. As Pacuła (2012) notes, this way of presenting the world reflects a clearly dichotomous view of reality. Kubik (2021) presents similar conclusions, emphasising that such a way of thinking is unprofessional and serves to create new meanings that present the community of non-heteronormative people as a mystical and dangerous beast behind which neo-Marxist powers are allegedly standing.

Rebeka, guiding us through her "Pocałunek," told the herstory of a woman debased by the heteropatriarchal system. The excluded heroine of the work reveals herself; the truth about her sexual orientation gains textual and narrative form, and the author's diary is read (Anczaruk, 2022). This rite of passage, however, is not an idyllic tale of liberation, support, and community. Instead, it reveals the difficult reality of the Polish LGBT+ minority. While the experiences of this individual do not exhaust all the forms of systemic oppression faced by this group, the author's personal narrative provides a vivid illustration of the threats to which the LGBT+ minority in Poland can be exposed. The rejection of the lesbian woman occurs on several levels, but the authenticity of the narrative proposed by Rebeka means that the protagonist is presented as an al-

ternative to portraits of women who have all the features of a female-monster (Snoch, 2024). The emancipatory dimension of the undertaken text is also revealed in the taming of the dark closet – an intriguing and mysterious, yet dangerous place where the troubles resulting from the dominant, heteronormative culture are hidden (Kita, 2016). The arguments presented in the article lead to the conclusion that the work under examination has a significant emancipatory potential, thanks to which lesbian identity in popular culture does not have to remain silent and invisible (Struzik, 2014).

Popular culture, which includes music, carries powerful emancipatory resources. Its ubiquity and ability to shape social attitudes and individual identity are undeniable (Ostaszewska, 2014). It is therefore crucial that it tells the story of a marginalised group, thus giving the community (in this case, lesbian) its own representation. Moreover, depicting non-normative lifestyles fosters pluralism and the democratisation of popular culture itself (Dudek, 2003). Music accompanies various events aimed at the LGBT+ community, which allow this group to become visible (Mróz, 2021), and as Jabłońska (2014) aptly notes, for music to become meaningful to people, they must learn how to understand, perceive, and interpret it. The social nature of music is also revealed in its processual nature and constant dynamics of change. It functions as a product of human action, through which it becomes part of symbolic culture, while simultaneously transforming in parallel with changes in society itself (Jabłońska, 2018). Emancipation understood in this way is reflected in research showing that acceptance of the LGBT+ community in Poland has increased significantly over the last decade (Kozłowska & Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2021), in which the persuasive dimension of popular culture certainly is not devoid of significance.

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