

“Safe for birds, but not for people”: Centering the Landscape in Urszula Glensk’s *Pin. Stories from the Polish-Belarusian Border*.

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Abstract

This article attends to the entanglement of violence and the border landscape as depicted in Urszula Glensk’s 2023 polyphonic reportage *Pinezka. Historie z granicy polsko-białoruskiej* (*Pin. Stories from the Polish-Belarusian Border*), and is the first published critical engagement with the text written in English. Glensk’s multifocal text evokes the border as a site of varied assemblages of human and beyond-the-human actants, exposing the nuanced complexity of irregular border crossing as a site of relentless negotiation of one’s survival amidst

military violence and harsh topographical conditions. By examining the narratives of survival of those on the move alongside local accounts of border violence, I argue that the border landscape is actively mobilized as both the foundational and final practice of border necropolitics, challenging questions of agency, accountability, and perpetratorship. Subversively, in its final section, the article hopes to illuminate the local reclamation of the border landscape as a site of political solidarity and resistance.

Introduction: Determined by Location

Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on.

—Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

The Polish-Belarusian/Belarusian-Polish border spans a length of around 398.6 km.¹ Drawn largely in the aftermath of World War II between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Poland, the current border was established in 1946; bordering at its most northern point the tripoint of Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, and at its most southern point the tri-border area of Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine. More than one third of the current border separating Belarus from Poland follows the natural course of the Bug River while the remaining section runs predominantly through the densely forested and scarcely populated areas of Podlasie on the Polish side and the regions of Grodno and Brest on the Belarusian side. Podlasie, one of the sixteen regions of Poland, has a unique topography: the borderland is home to river valleys (the Bug River Valley), farmlands, wetlands (Narew National Park), peat bogs and marshes (Biebrza Marshes), as well as primeval forest ecosystems, most notably the Białowieża Forest. At fifty-one kilometers of depth, Białowieża is one of the largest and oldest forest ecosystems in Continental Europe. A UNESCO World Heritage site since 1992, Białowieża attracted 142,000 national and international visitors in 2021. The area is referred to as the Polish 'pole of cold,' and is noted for its long-lasting low temperatures which reach as low as -30°C in winter.

The current iteration of the Polish-Belarusian border has designated a part of the eastern frontier of the European Union since 2004, and in 2022 was transformed into a 180 km long and 5.5 m tall steel wall, lined

1 Sources tend to vary: others propose 416-418 km.

with concertina razor wire and equipped with cameras and sensors.² Fortification costs amounted to €375 million, consuming only a small portion of the EU’s ‘border and migration management’ budget, which the European Commission projected at €81 billion for the coming years of 2028-2034 (European Commission, “EU 2028-2034 Proposed Budget”). Of this budget, €11.9 billion is to be allocated to Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, which has headquarters in Poland’s capital and has been accused of two decades of human rights violations.

Urszula Glensk’s polyphonic reportage *Pinezka. Historie z granicy polsko-białoruskiej* (trans. *Pin. Stories from the Polish-Belarusian Border*), published in 2024, serves as a textual entrance into the reality of this fraught borderland. Born out of “bare facts” and “in-person observation of the unfolding humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border” as Glensk herself proclaims, *Pinezka* bears direct witness to experiences of people on the move, activists engaged with networks of support and opposition, and local residents of Podlasie (305).³ Merging redacted testimonies with personal reflection and documentary prose, Glensk weaves a story of border crossing as an entangled network of practices and interactions shaped by human and other-than-human encounters. In its aftermath, it exposes the nuanced complexity of irregular border crossing as a site of relentless negotiation of agency and power. Alongside Glensk’s work, I propose the landscape of Podlasie as a crucial actor in the border crisis, utilized as a site of border violence and necropolitics against those trying to cross through, but also as a site of regional attachments, propelling local resistance and solidarity.

My theoretical analysis of the border landscape unfolds under three subsequent sections which perform theoretically-informed close readings of fragments of Glensk’s text. The first section, “On the Move

2 In early 2025, a report by the medical organization Doctors Without Borders revealed that concertina razor wire wounds are one of the most common injuries on the Polish-Belarusian border, affecting one third of those trying to cross. The sharpness of the razor wire cuts not only the skin, but is capable of traversing muscles all the way to the bone, consequently preventing all sorts of movement due to unimaginable pain (*Uwięzieni Pomiędzy Granicami: Zagrożające Życiu Konsekwencje Zwiększonej Militaryzacji i Przemocy na Granicy Polsko-Białoruskiej*, January 2025).

3 All quotations from Glensk’s *Pinezka* are translated by me unless otherwise indicated.

Through the Polish-Belarusian Border” situates the context of contemporary irregular migration via the Polish-Belarusian border and contextualizes the journeys of *Pinezka’s* subjects. The second section, “Necropolitics of the Border,” introduces the processual turn in border studies, and by following the thought of Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe, frames Glensk’s portrayal of border militarization as a site of legitimized necropolitical violence. The third section, “Violence by Forest,” explores how through its utilization as a necropolitical tool, the territory of the borderland can challenge questions of agency, accountability, and perpetratorship. This section unfolds under the theoretical backdrop of Jason De León’s writing on environmental entanglement in border studies, particularly his research on migration through the Sonora Desert in *The Land of Open Graves* (2015) and the posthuman turn; more specifically Donna Haraway’s writing on sympoiesis and Karen Barad’s writing on posthuman accountability. Lastly, the final section, “Staying with the Forest Trouble,” investigates how Glensk’s text frames the Białowieża Forest as a site of attachment and solidarity, gesturing towards the capacity of borderlands to mobilize and facilitate political opposition.

On the Move Through the Polish-Belarusian Border: A Few Words on Urszula Glensk’s Subjects

This article owes some clarity to the contexts and people whose journeys it concentrates on, as well as, briefly, my own position. Since the first half of 2021 an estimated 109,057 attempts of ‘legally unregulated’ crossings of the Polish-Belarusian border have been made: 40,000 in 2021, 16,000 in 2022 (Tomczak), 26,057 in 2023 (We Are Monitoring),⁴ 30,000 in 2024 (Zdanowicz), and 27,000 in 2025 (Cieślik). ‘Legally unregulated,’ for those crossings have been made without the required prior request for political asylum, as stands the demand of Fortress Europe, and their number is only an estimate, since the methodologies of data collection by the Polish border patrol have been deemed inconsistent and non-transparent (We Are Monitoring). The reliance on

4 Fortress Europe is a term the history of which can be traced back to WWII. Presently, the phrase illuminates the EU’s heavily fortified external borders and anti-migration policies.

estimates is further complicated by the lack of access to more individual data. For safety reasons, a number of those on the move travel without documentation; some have their documentation stolen or destroyed by the Border Control officers, while others, due to ongoing conflicts in their countries of origin, simply do not possess valid identification at all. It becomes consistently difficult to assess how many of those crossings have been made repeatedly by the same individuals, which were successful, and what exactly happened to the others. While available data elucidates some of the dynamics of pushbacks and detentions occurring at the border, it simultaneously obscures the experiential realm of border crossing as such, leaving out the lived narratives of those who were forced to fail, and those who did succeed.

In contradiction to the mainstream narratives staging migration as a demographic and economic threat jeopardizing the prosperity and wellbeing of major global powers, it is precisely the well-being and prosperity of those global powers that remains complicit in the forced displacement of people around the globe. “Increased migratory pressure over the decades owes more to the dynamic of international capitalism than just the growing size of the population of third world countries” explains economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, whose work conceptualized the embeddedness of migration in the framework of social inequalities, pointing at the indisputable implication of Western states and the global asymmetry of power brought about by imperialism and capitalism in the mass displacement of people (qtd. in Walia 4). Those that cross the Polish-Belarusian border come from countries ravaged by poverty, conflict or war: Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, as well as Kurds, and the Tigrayan people, all facing hardship, genocide, and/or ethnic cleansing in their respective countries of origin. Many flee to Poland through Russia and later Belarus out of necessity, often through complex routes involving expensive smuggling to the Belarusian border, after which travelers are displaced into the Białowieża Forest and forced to make their way through on their own. Those who arrive do so to urgently seek safety and better life opportunities.

On 27 March 2025 Poland implemented a temporary suspension of the right to submit asylum applications, an amendment which, as of 26 April 2026, has been renewed six times, once every sixty days (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji). Although strongly contested for its life-threatening implications and for being flagrantly unlawful, the suspension persists to this day, violating the Geneva Conventions, EU law, and the country's own constitution.

Writing about migration in 2025/2026 as a Polish citizen with an EU passport that allows me to safely reside in the Netherlands means writing in the direct aftermath of two major elections, presidential and general (occurring in my home and host country respectively), each concluding with a victory of a presidential candidate/party demanding stricter asylum and migration policies, justified discursively as national practices of security (“Stop Nielegalnej Migracji”) and further fortification of the EU (“Pact on Migration and Asylum”). The discourse which relies on a language of threatening numbers and figures is revived in Glensk's text into a lived world of entrapment in faulty policies, complicated reasons to flee, and borderlands reminiscent of *death-worlds*. In this article I wish to give exposure to Urszula Glensk's *Pinezka*, as a text capable of capturing—at least in part—the lived impact of contemporary migration policies and structures of dependency enforced in their aftermath. A necessary literary intervention, as popular imagination of what criminalization of movement entails for those most directly impacted by it, rarely lends itself to an understanding capable of encapsulating its hardship and struggle.

Necropolitics of the Border

Pinezka's first narrative focus is Adam, a student from Ethiopia fleeing ethnic cleansing in the country's region of Tigray which the text introduces in a chapter merging redacted testimonies with the author's first-person narration. The fragmented, mnemonic recollections of the events at the border shared by Adam are interspersed with redacted moments of dialogue; however, even there Glensk's voice is rarely present, revealing its authority mainly in the arrangement of the text. Upon arriving in Moscow on a student visa alongside a few

friends, Adam crosses Belarus all the way to Minsk, and later Brest. The original group of seven separate into smaller units at the border, and Adam, having crossed the forest alongside one more person named Yarem, manages to reach the Polish side. There, the boys are caught by the border control who confiscates their mobile phones, ridicules and beats them, and finally pushes them back to Belarus. With no access to food or water, the boys spend a whole day in a remote part of the forest. Finally, they pick up and begin moving alongside the border in the direction of Lithuania, feeding on sour apples found in the area. A few days pass and the boys manage to successfully cross the border. Adam narrates:

When you're in the forest, you go one day without sleep and then rest the following day. The second time we crossed to the Polish side of the forest, there were many people from Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen. Some of them could pay for the transport but we did not have the money. (Glensk 10)

Although much less graphic than some of the other stories, Adam's narrative clearly illustrates some of the most prominent characteristics of attempts at crossing through the Polish-Belarusian border: violence, pushbacks, uncertainty, and lingering in the forest.

As the text illuminates through the stories of other subjects, crossing from Minsk to the border zone, although costly, poses no significant challenge. The hardship begins precisely as one enters the terrain of the borderland (Glensk 20). Adam was lucky to begin his journey in the late spring of 2021, when conditions in the forest were not yet as harsh, and little to no awareness of a 'migration crisis' was present in Podlasie. As Glensk points out, before the summer of 2021 and the declared state of emergency in the area on 2 September 2021, people on the move were mistaken by residents for Białowieża tourists—"foreigners, those who arrived to admire the bison and the forest" and so were largely ignored (20).

As Glensk's narrative picks up in pace, the text reveals a rapid change following the deployment of the state of emergency: sixteen border guard posts were distributed evenly across the Polish side of the

border zone supported by military units, initially around nine hundred soldiers and police patrols (Glensk 26, 32). Then 115 towns and villages were suspended from day-to-day functioning and incorporated into a restricted area fully inaccessible to those residing outside of it (Glensk 35). Upon entering and leaving the area by car, even drivers with local license plates were subjected to racialized and arbitrary vehicle checks lasting up to around thirty minutes, during which trunks and back seats were inspected for possibly transporting people (Glensk 144). Mario, who works in the UK as a banking consultant and spends the rest of his time volunteering in places touched by crises, shares with Glensk:

It's not normal to have helicopters flying overhead all the time and convoys of Humvees driving around. You're driving down a forest road at night and there, in the darkness, with its lights off, stands a Rosomak armored vehicle. You see more soldiers here than civilians. (119)

Highly militarized, the Polish-Belarusian border transformed from a site of crossing to, following Achille Mbembe's definition of the workings of state of exception in his *Necropolitics*, "the zone where violence is deemed to operate in the service of 'civilization'" (77). Although borders, in their strict sense, are politically motivated geographical locations—sustaining what border studies scholar Kamila Fiałkowska describes as "the common, symbolic, and sometimes even religious notion of the intertwining of state, nation and territory"—when examined closely, they reveal themselves as complex everyday socio-political institutions (2: translation mine). Rather than being singular, fixed establishments, borders are evolving spaces of relations and social practices. In this understanding, rather than static, impermeable or naturally proposed by the geographies of their location, borders emerge as practices of bordering, shifting and contested, dependent on the everyday performance of those intertwined in their legibility. What kind of border is revealed in Glensk's text? Perhaps even more importantly, under what understanding of power does it operate? What politics does it enact?

Contemporary critique of power structures owes largely to Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of biopolitics or biopower. What Foucault termed as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species become the object of a political strategy” instigated a shift in understanding power as relational and pervasive, especially directed to, and impinged upon, the body (1). Mbembe’s consequential development of biopolitics into a theory of necropolitics, proposed that contemporary power extends its governance not only to the life of the body but, most importantly, its death. Mbembe redefined sovereignty as an exercise in control over mortality, and drawing from Giorgio Agamben’s writing on the state of exception and Carl Schmitt’s writing on the sovereign, argued that power operating as control over death institutionally constructs *death-worlds*, where subjects deemed as enemies of the state are enforced into forms of strictly biological existence, a state-controlled dwelling in death (Mbembe 12, 39).

How else to describe the logics of pushbacks, detention in the depths of the forest during the harsh conditions of winter, and prevention of access for asylum applications, if not by a dwelling in death? “It’s terrible, terrible in the forest” says Albagir A., born in the Sudanese village of Mohajniya who tried crossing the border in early March 2022 (Glensk 190). Repeatedly pushed back between the Polish and Belarusian side of the border, exposed to extreme cold, and days-long hunger, Albagir was lucky to have crossed. How else to describe such neglect, if not as tantamount to a most certain death-sentence? A forty-six-year-old Moroccan man repeatedly pushed back at the border shares:

This border is like a river, a river of death. People die there without water. They don’t have water! Nothing: neither water, nor food [...] We were stuck there in the middle. Between the Polish army and the Belarusian army. You can’t move in either direction. You’re stuck in between, without food or water, without a blanket or a mattress, in the cold, in the rain, in wet clothes on the bare ground. (Glensk 142)

The logic of pushback, a major practice utilized in the military operations on the Polish-Belarusian border and an act which captures people on the move in the forest, is itself rooted in necropolitics; by operating under the assumption of the disposability and un-grievability of the lives whose rescue it defers, it dictates death. Border pushbacks are forceful displacements of individuals or groups of people from the territory of one country to another. In the case of the Polish border, pushbacks are instigated by interception, further detention, deportation to the border, and enforced return to Belarus (Glensk 71). Pushbacks involve physical struggle, can occur in the presence of dogs, and tend to utilize compliance tools such as batons and intimidation tactics like the reloading of weapons (72). Oftentimes when found far from the border, individuals are first detained and held at a border facility, only to be once more relocated by car into the forest.

Violence thrives precisely there where it cannot be held accountable. What happens on the Polish-Belarusian border escapes regulation, for not only are the subjects of its harm politically vulnerable, oftentimes fleeing regimes that oppress them, but with no access to mobile phones or cameras they cannot capture the mistreatment and violence occurring in the midst of the forest, something unthinkable rare for the current media-driven climate ruled by a certain politics of immediate image circulation. At the heart of this necropolitical tragedy lies the fact that it quite literally remains unrecorded. Pinezka counters this, and as a reportage, or a piece of literary journalism rather than a work of fiction, intervenes in this invisibility via direct eyewitness reporting. Dense, factual, contextualized and well researched, Glensk's text stands both as an investigation into the unfolding events at the border in which the author participated from October 2021 to March 2022, and foremost as a written document recording and preserving the otherwise lost and forgotten stories.

Violence by Forest

Since the majority of those stuck are forcibly displaced with no chance of return to their countries of origin and denied entrance to Poland and consequently an asylum application, most move back and forth between

each side of the border, repeatedly pushed back and forced to remain in-between. “The record holder was turned back at the border twenty-one times in the span of three months,” recounts Mario (Glensk 121). He further compares the Polish and Belarusian practices of pushbacks to others he has experienced while volunteering around Europe, explaining that:

The situation in Podlasie is the most tragic I have ever seen. Due to the cold weather, Polish pushbacks are incomparable to those carried out at other European borders. In November, the windows of a wooden house in Świnoraje were frosted over every morning. No one could answer the question of how people in the forest were able to survive the night. (121-122)

Many of them do not.

Ruptured and interspersed with hauntingly recurring short chapters titled “Oni” (“Them”) that chronologically follow the unfolding events, *Pinezka* commemorates people found dead across the border in Podlasie since September of 2021. The chapters unfold flatly as brief obituaries bearing no narrative and no authorial commentary, echoing their inherently unspeakable weight. Although rarely outwardly reflective, Pinezka assures that the reception of its tone, and the framing of the events it documents reaches its weight, gravity, and urgency precisely through its structure. It is here, where the otherwise affectively withdrawn text mourns the horrors of the militarization of the Polish-Belarusian border and persistently reminds the reader that the stories of movement through this border, more often than not, are stories of grave political neglect and human loss.

Among them: nineteen-year-old Syrian Ahmad al-Hasan, who drowned in the Bug River while attempting to cross the border at the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in October of 2021; a twenty-eight-year-old Afghan named Mohammad Noor, found in the bogs of the National Białowieża park in March of 2023; and twenty-year-old Somalian Sadia Mohamed Mohamud who spent a few weeks at the border and was pushed back twice by the Polish Border Patrol, died

after returning from the forest to Minsk as a result of internal bleeding in September of 2023. Many more die of exhaustion after days, weeks or months in the forest, while others freeze to death. Since formally none of the deaths were directly inflicted by the Belarusian or Polish officials, questions of blame and responsibility become complicated. Pushbacks operate within a horrifying logic of withdrawal from accountability where the displacement of people operates as a mechanism of bodily disposal. However, knowingly relegating people back into the forest extends beyond mere displacement; the harsh environment of the Białowieża Forest and the topography of the borderlands are exploited as instruments of control and mechanisms of peril in their own right, abused by the Border Patrol to perform its most brutal work anonymously.

As border necropolitics become intertwined with conditions of the environment, so expands the distribution of power and violence. Following Jason De León's research on the Sonoran Desert of Arizona, a site of a deadly migration trail across the border of the US and Mexico, this article offers Pinezka to illuminate how nature itself becomes utilized as a necropolitical tool. As De León maintains, "The 'natural' processes that impact or destroy bodies may be carried out by animals, insects, and various chemical and environmental actants, but they are nevertheless part of a larger enforcement paradigm designed by the Border Patrol" (99). From Syrian brothers immobilized for many hours in the Podlasie marshes to fourth-degree frostbite on the legs of Jus, an eighteen-year old Ghanaian football player in the aftermath of forest detention in January of 2022, the environment of Podlasie plays an undeniable part in the structural terrorization of people attempting a crossing (Glensk 191). But to what extent does it really play a part? What comes out of power and violence when outsourced to the topography of the landscape? The complexity of Białowieża's ecosystem is capable of entrapment and exhaustion: the low temperatures of Podlasie are likely to seriously endanger any human body; the river valleys, marshes, wetlands, and bogs are where people drown or get stuck, remaining immobilized for days with no access to food or water. It is here that this article proposes to reconceptualize Podlasie's ecosystem as an

actant with its own agency, and to do so without relegating blame and responsibility.

Agency has a long-standing tradition of association with the rational and intentional and hence only a human subjectivity: to act is to reenact a thought. A posthuman turn renegotiates agency as not only related to the human, but to the more-than-human world. Shifting focus from the subjects of the action to the action itself, in *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway famously utters, “To be one is always to *become with* many” hence conceptualizing all as an inter-relational and mutually-informing collaboration (4). In other words, the living and non-living ‘become with’ the world together. The environment of Podlasie does act—its temperature rises and falls, its rivers ebb or flow, directly shaping the experience(s) of crossing. Each of *Pinezka’s* subjects is simultaneously interpolated by an unexplainable myriad of micro-actions, decided by themselves, but also enforced by each of their unique contexts, complicated by the condition of their body; by the state of their health and mental well-being; designated by the complicated topography of the landscape they journey through; violated by the practices of border control; and affirmed by the honest work of the volunteers. This interweaving of the actancy and agency of the many human and beyond-human presences and the concurrent processes that they engender harkens to Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. The acknowledgment and the realization of Podlasie’s own actancy should not “lessen human accountability; on the contrary, it means that accountability requires that much more attentiveness” (Barad 219). When applied to the border crisis, Barad’s agential realism complicates questions of responsibility and expands the immediacy of perpetratorship. Although the most immediate consequences of harm executed at the border tend to be outsourced to the environments of its borderlands, they can no longer be perceived as pure outsourcing. Rather, exposure to the possibility of harm and failure of care and consideration for border policies begins to translate into a politics of neglect, where passivity and disregard for the well-being of the vulnerable can be read directly as acts of complicity.

Politicization of Podlasie's landscape remains a direct result of its implication in border policy by the practice of pushbacks and deployment of borders on its terrain. Its presence does not undermine the accountability of migration policies and consequent border militarization and deployment tactics, but rather, renders the carceral premises of those policies more visible: to bring about death to those deemed as demographic threats.

Staying with the Forest Trouble

One incentive for Glensk's text was to write a book focused on an analysis of approaches to the tragedy unfolding at the border, or in her own words "I tried to understand why some freeze while others avert their eyes. Why do some people drop everything and try to save the 'strangers' while others obediently follow orders?"⁵ It is *Pinezka's* multifocality, its insistence on stubbornly following the stories of its subjects without narrative interception, that propels the subjects to reveal themselves intimately. As the text exposes a unique network of various characters differently engaged in structures of migrant support and border resistance, Glensk reintroduces the area of Podlasie as a site of attachment, care, and community, propelling residents of neighboring towns and villages to do the work of support. Resistance groups are comprised of local residents, those returning to the area of Podlasie, as well as those arriving for the first time. Humanitarian groups around the country restructured their work to respond to the surging crisis. Many others are intertwined in helping on and off site: surgeons, journalists, political activists, priests, churchgoers, artists, drivers, all compose an assemblage of human actors present in the border crisis, responding precisely to the realization Barad gestures towards, that the nuance behind the accountability and complicity requires all the more attentiveness. Consequently, following the title of Haraway's 2016 publication, a certain *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway proposes in the introduction that: "[o]ur task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled water and rebuild quiet places" (1). By responding to the crisis, those supporting people on the move through the

5 Author commentary by Glensk on the back cover of *Pinezka*.

Polish-Belarusian border attend to that very responsibility each of us has towards the other that the criminalization of movement erases. And as Pinezka maintains, this staying with, was so often propelled by a singular attachment to the territory of Podlasie, its topography, its land and the Białowieża Forest.

Roman Kalski, a horse breeder residing in a house nearly seven kilometers away from the border, with whom Glensk connects at the beginning of Pinezka, and consequently the beginning of the humanitarian crisis of the border, articulates:

I will not allow myself to sit by the fireplace, drinking tea on the porch, only to find a dead man by my fence tomorrow. No! There will be no corpses under my house. No one will die in my forest! (24)

Upon realizing his proximity to this tragedy, Kalski began to patrol the forest nearby his house, placing aid packages on trees. Glensk reflects on the network of resident activism as tied intimately to previous local struggle to prevent deforestation in the Białowieża Forest: “The experience of previous collaboration proved beneficial in remobilization, in effective organization of structures of support” (50). The existent network of politically engaged local volunteers and activists was further enhanced by circular migration of those who left Podlasie in the past, but in light of the crisis, decided to return. Michał Sutyniec, whose grandfather left during the mass exodus of the local population of Podlasie in 1915 and returned after the beginning of the Russian Revolution, himself relocated to Podlasie from Warsaw in September of 2021 and took on work in a local support base. Sutyniec shares with Glensk, “In some way, refugeehood is inscribed in the DNA of those that live here—I myself have migrated from Podlasie but surely some element of that DNA remained a part of me” (51). Sutyniec was only one among many for whom local heritage and familial history of movement prompted a return to Podlasie to mobilize against border militarization.

Conclusion

Whether the backdrop of border violence, an organizing incentive, a space of concealment and survival, or a carceral formation in its own right, the landscape of the Polish-Belarusian border emerges as the central figure, moulding and shaping the complex journeys of people on the move in *Pinezka*. Reconceptualizing the significance of the borderland's territory propels a posthuman contestation of theories of necropolitics, and consequently, questions of agency, responsibility, and perpetratorship. This article gestures not towards an erasure of human accountability in the ongoing horrors at the border, but rather hopes to illuminate the real effects of border violence as made visible by the presence of Podlasie's landscape. Alongside its utilization as an accountability-deferring tactic of border violence, yet another aspect of its prominence emerges. With its population's history of refugeehood, local attachments to the Białowieża Forest, and not-so-distant past of political activism, it becomes clear that the territory of Podlasie, too, carries the capacity to mobilize and facilitate political opposition, as Urszula Glensk's *Pin. Stories from the Polish-Belarusian Border*, illuminates with urgent precision. Following Glensk's brilliant reportage the article brings necessary attention to the context of the ongoing militarization at the Polish-Belarusian border and the text which bears sharp witness to its lived stories of courage and heartbreaking loss. At the heart of its argument, this article amplifies the lived experiences of those who continuously face some of the greatest injustices of our shared world. The precise sharedness of which illuminates our varied implication(s) in its tilted fabric, propelling each of us to stay with the ongoing trouble, or perhaps even more so, make quite the fuss about them.

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Biography

Ksenia Kwiecińska is a graduate Comparative Literature research student at Utrecht University. Her research interests include diasporic and migration writing; poetics of borderlands and politics of memory in particular, documentary fiction, and more recently, the history of land art

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