

Izabela Morska¹

Oceania Is at War with Eurasia: The Stalemate of the Polish Government and the Catholic Church in Poland Over the Polish-Belarusian Border Zone

This text discusses the growing tension in relations between the Polish government and the Catholic church in Poland over the plight of refugees on the Polish-Belarusian border that reached a critical state in August 2021. Although the Conference of Polish Episcopate (KEP) emphatically encouraged prioritizing the value of Christian mercy, the government insisted on a dehumanizing narrative (people as tools of war) to conclusively replace the Gospels with a new object of worship: the border. With the state of emergency imposed on November 9, 2021, altruistic activities were defamed, organized humanitarian support removed, and the right of residents to privacy suspended. A new verbiage, such as “weaponization of migrants” and “tightness of the border”, justified stop-and-search procedures within “the zone”, performed by various uniformed forces operating concurrently and acting with unconditional authority. Over the course of the fall and winter of 2021/2022, a parallel universe emerged, enforced by local authorities in small towns and villages located along the border with Belarus. What consequently unraveled was an impromptu narrative of a dystopian crisis rooted in the premise that migrants are the enemy in a war that is not hybrid but holy. Moreover, this text traces similarities between the evolving alternative reality experiment on the Polish-Belarusian border and the constricted world of George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as a vision of a society harnessed to the task of perpetuating political fiction, while the state apparatus produces an incessant flow of propaganda, effectuating the state of unrest and danger at the border.

Keywords: Usnarz Górny, migrants, George Orwell, dystopia, Poland-Belarus border

¹ University of Gdańsk, izabela.morska@ug.edu.pl.

The perishability of migrants: the metafiction of a migration crisis

The choice of finding an appropriate register in which to write about violence intertwined in the experience of migration is a crucial one. Several contemporary philosophers and scholars (Gatrell 2013; Noiriel 1996; Woolley 2014; Krępa, Fiałkowska 2022) express an urge to practice new forms of writing; the point is to counteract the propensity for annihilation of personhood apparent in routine proceedings of refugee-processing agencies, to emphasize instead the importance of ethics and ethical writing about refugees, stressing the importance of the refugee experience and perspective, or even engaging in such writing which, while prioritizing the safety and privacy of asylum applicants counters the formulaic anonymity of refugees. My method is about comparing and juxtaposing narratives (Ryan, Thon 2014; Baroni, Revaz 2016). I observe narratives concerning refugees in Polish political discourse or see them reiterated in discourses elsewhere and then reference them back to Poland, a place where the dreams of colonial hegemony and postcolonial ruthlessness converge. Some of these narratives contain key words, such as “hybrid warfare” or “Lukashenko’s collaborators” (in reference to volunteers who offer legal and practical support to refugees), which deserve perhaps a separate analysis. The role of the EU remains unclear – or perhaps too painful to be soberly accepted.

Peter Gatrell in *The Making of the Modern Refugee* highlights the danger of presenting refugees as virtually erased by bureaucratic processes and “deprived of the capacity to exercise a degree of control over their own lives” (2013: 9). Yet one could argue that the case of Middle Eastern and African refugees resembles an earlier one, that of Jewish refugees on the *St. Louis*, turned down by several countries in 1939 and eventually forced to return to Europe. The refugees on the Polish-Belarusian border, indicated as racially and culturally other (Sadura, Urbańska 2021), are rendered “indistinguishable” (Gatrell 2013: 10) and thus perishable; nameless, unprotected, exposed to various forms of violence and rough weather, not prepared for the challenges of surviving in the primeval forest, slowed down by the presence of children and the elderly, their exact number – including age, gender, mobility, and other characteristics – unknown (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021; Ciobanu 2022a), they are, as in Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*, reduced to the “eternal essence of refugees, which it is the nature of the east to produce” (Barthes 1993: 95–96; qtd. in Gatrell 2013: 10). Serena Parekh in *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis* (2020) underlines the sheer impossibility of establishing a clear distinction between migrant and refugee and unavoidable arbitrariness of any such divide. Although the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 (Convention 1951) presents an official definition of the refugee, its wording is not applied consistently in various regions of the globe; conclusively, the UN “considers people to

be refugees in a much broader set of circumstances than most countries” (Parekh 2020: 29). Although Parekh and several other philosophers tend to agree that “it is the severity of the harm and the need for international protection, rather than the source of the harm, that should ground our definition of a refugee” (2020: 30), asylum processing officers operate under a routine obligation to sort the asylum seekers from the migrants based on a source of violation; consequently, people fleeing their homes and seeking international protection are likely to be turned down as economic migrants if they are fleeing poverty or hoping to improve their overall quality of life, regardless of the fact that poverty is more often than not associated with a lack of agency and vulnerability to violence. The arbitrariness begins as soon as an asylum seeker is unable to argue their case effectively or to present a proof of being targeted based on “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Parekh 2020: 3); a sudden change in admission laws may also result in denied entry. Due to its inscrutability, the global refugee regime, ostensibly officious, with its processing results distinguished by “randomness” (Parekh 2020: 30), is also a kind of metafiction, a riddle whose outcome depends on sheer luck.

In *Illegal Immigration in Europe: Beyond Control?* (2006) Franck Düvell, a scholar affiliated with the Center on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, discloses that the enlargement of the EU in May 2004 created new responsibilities – specifically, for the newly admitted countries – in exchange for a relative freedom of movement granted to denizens of accession countries within the fifteen “old” states; to quote verbatim: “At the same time, enlargement creates a new duty for the new, post-communist member states from Central Europe to protect the EU from unwanted migration from the East and South” (Düvell 2006: 3). Strictly speaking, as the EU acquired a new set of border states, consisting of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia, the underlying condition was made apparent (Szymański 2021). Tasked with the border control of the European Schengen Area, Frontex was created as the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders in 2004 to restructure itself as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with its headquarters in Warsaw.

According to an ongoing investigation, Frontex, in complicity with some EU member states, could be responsible for thousands of deaths resulting from border pushbacks, which the agency denies, despite the launching of *The Black Book of Pushbacks* (Barker, Zajović 2020) by the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), a network of organizations, active from Istanbul to the Italian-Slovenian border². The 1,500-page document containing statistics from the

² A pushback means forcibly pushing a person or persons back over a border without consideration of their circumstances and without any chance to apply for asylum (Kuschminder 2021).

years 2017–2020 and 892 testimonies details the experiences of 12,654 victims of human rights violations against asylum seekers along the Balkan migration route on Europe's external border. Conclusively, the pushbacks have become “an institutionalized part of EU border policing” according to the data collected by the BVMN; incidents involving minors constitute 44.8% cases and physical violence in 74.7% cases (Degering 2021). The practical implementation of pushbacks flies in the face of the 51 Geneva Refugee Convention (Fotiadis 2021). Specifically, Article 31 stipulates that no penalties should be imposed for “illegal entry or presence” if refugees “show good cause for their illegal entry or presence” (Convention 1951). Indeed, to develop Parekh's (2020: 34) example, we might find it oddly anticlimactic if the Von Trapp family from *The Sound of Music* were to be pushed back as they complete the “Climb Ev'ry Mountain” finale. And yet, it would have sufficed to associate the singing family with a threat of terrorism in the minds of their potential hosts to activate the exception to Article 31; that is, Article 33b: “The benefit of the present provision may not, however, be claimed by a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country” (Convention 1951). This exception, as well as the specification contained in Article 31 that refugees must be “coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened” is precisely the argument brought up by the xenophobic movements in Europe (more pronouncedly since the migration crisis of 2015–2016), thereby undermining the ancient principle of hospitality delineated by Derrida in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Derrida 1999: 87; qtd. in *Migrant Cartographies* 2005: 141). Consequently, the imagery of influx or invasion referring to the refugees' storming the borders has proven an effective vehicle for any regime to convince its voters of the actuality of danger and the reliability of protection.

The regulation of refugees: the case of Afghans in Usnarz Górny

Several reports from the Polish-Belarus border emerged between December 2021 and July 2022, including Amnesty International's (*Polska: Okrucieństwo zamiast współczucia na granicy z Białorusią* 2022; “Witamy w Guantanamo” 2022), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights Poland's *Legal Analysis of the Situation on the Polish-Belarusian Border: Situation on September 9, 2021* for Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Górczyńska 2021), Fundacja Ocalenie's (Pałęcka 2022), the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network's *Polish Forest Full of Fear* (Ciobanu 2022a), *Die Here or Go to Poland. Belarus' and Poland's Shared Responsibility for Border Abuses* by Human Rights Watch (HRW) of November 24, 2021 (on June 7, 2022, HRW released another report, *Violence and Pushbacks at Poland-Belarus*

Border), and *Humanitarian Crisis at the Polish-Belarusian Border* by Grupa Granica released on December 12, 2021. However, it should be noted that sidestepping the ban on media entry into the border zone, journalistic reports (Said-Moorhouse et al. 2021) from villages and towns just outside the forbidden area, mostly by the independent news portal OKO.press (Miniszewski 2021; Mikołajewska 2021; Borodaj 2022; Rumieńczyk 2022), continued to appear throughout the fall and winter of 2021/2022.

The findings of HRW are as follows: Poland does not provide statistics on the number of people detained or pushed back to Belarus, and the 30,000 crossing attempts reported by the Polish media could include the same people making multiple attempts to cross. A spokesperson for the Belarusian government was quoted on November 18, 2021, saying that 7,000 migrants had stayed in the country. These figures coincide with the opinion issued by Grupa Granica (Border Group), a formation encompassing nongovernmental organizations and activists who assist people experiencing migration, that the humanitarian crisis taking place on the Polish-Belarusian border is not a migration crisis (Grupa Granica 2021: 3).

People from faraway countries, such as Iran, Yemen or the Democratic Republic of Congo found themselves enmeshed in a scheme designed by the Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko, trapped in a primeval forest with no recourse or help. The HRW report notes a significant increase in flights from airports in Istanbul, Damascus, Baghdad, and Amman to the Minsk international airport since August 2021. The number of people trying to enter the European Union (EU) via its Eastern Borders (Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland) had been rising steadily all throughout the spring of 2021 to six hundred in June and three thousand in July 2021 (Grupa Granica 2021: 5). On July 2 Lithuania introduced a state of extraordinary situation across its entire territory (unlike Poland, Lithuania did this without barring the Red Cross access to the border area) and initially resolved to assist persons with special needs; that is, people with illnesses and disabilities, victims of violence, and women. Even more commendably, children were registered, and an effort was made to offer them shelter (Hyndle-Hussein 2021a). Significantly, however, since the Lithuanian parliament's almost unanimous vote for a state of emergency on November 9, 2021, the language of care vanished to be replaced with the kind of phraseology that Orwell in *Politics and the English language* calls "the defense of the indefensible" (Hyndle-Hussein 2021b; Orwell 1981 [1946]: 156)³. Meanwhile, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia aligned their activities with Frontex, requesting assistance.

³ Contemptuous statements, often presenting violence as a "solution to the problem", such as "don't let them in", "shoot like ducks", thoroughly dehumanizing (announcing the need for an "animal shelter") are examples of such phraseology (Kamiński 2021).

Poland was dallying, and when new guidelines for the Border Guard finally appeared in the middle of August, these three legislative acts limited access to asylum procedures and worsened the living conditions in centers for foreigners. The first was the Regulation of August 13, 2021, amending the Regulation of the Minister of the Interior of April 24, 2015, allowing for the placement of migrants in accommodation cells with a floor space of 2 m² per occupant (Górczyńska 2021). This law presently contributes to catastrophic conditions in refugee centers, resulting in unrest and mutinies or depression and suicide attempts – in the EU the recommended floor space for accommodation cells is 4 by 4 meters (*Violence and Pushbacks* 2022). The second was the Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of August 20, 2021, suspending or restricting border traffic at certain border crossings (Górczyńska 2021). Finally, the October 14, 2021 amendment to the Act on Foreigners of 12 December 2013 (2013), passed by the Polish Parliament, justified pushbacks and approved the construction of the border wall (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021; *Poland: Parliament Approves* 2021; Rządowy projekt ustawy 2021). The last law violates several legal provisions, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees the right to asylum and other directives (Directive 2008/115/EC 2008) issued in alignment with the 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 UNHCR Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (*Handbook on procedures and criteria* 2019), such as the prohibition of “collective expulsion of aliens” (Protocol No. 4 1963) (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021).

Giorgio Agamben reading Hannah Arendt’s essay “We Refugees” notes that “in the context of the inexorable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional legal-political categories, the refugee is perhaps the only imaginable figure of the people in our day” (Agamben 1995: 114). Twenty-seven years after Agamben’s essay was published, this passage argues that the nation-state revives itself chiefly with the help of various social bogeymen; the refugee is the only figure capable of being accepted by disenchanted citizens as “the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come” (1995: 114). With the situation that exists on Poland’s eastern border, Agamben’s political community has just arrived: as in a futuristic dystopia, the state, protecting itself against its citizens’ disenchantment, revamps the refugee narrative to the point that, whether it takes the shape of aimless single young men, educated professionals, or multigenerational families with children, its content is adjusted every time to suit the purpose of erecting steel-and-concrete barriers (Kogovšek-Šalamon 2016).

From mid-August 2021 onwards, the events at the Polish-Belarusian border have taken on the shape of a narrative which recalibrates both the Hungarian tale of success (the authoritarian state closes its ranks to protect national purity) and German or Swedish cautionary tales (the refugee as a trigger to strengthen

nationalistic alliances), while also mutating into something imminent and unspeakable. On or before August 9, a group of thirty-two Afghan migrants, of whom five were women, including a sixteen-year-old among them, appeared in Usnarz Górny (Pałęcka 2022: 21). Pushed back by the Polish Border Guard patrol towards the Belarusian side of the border, the migrants were not allowed to return, so they sat on a strip of land between two lines of armed guards. Initially, migrants were permitted to contact, among others, a Member of the Polish Parliament, who provided them with tents, sleeping bags, and power of attorney for legal representation; they also established contact with employees of the Ocalenie Foundation, and representatives of the Ombudsman Office. All these visits took place on August 19, 2021 (Borodaj 2021; Górczyńska 2021; Pałęcka 2022: 20). Providing the migrants with support locally or opening a humanitarian corridor would have been a tried and tested route (Kogovšek-Šalamon 2016; Beznec et al. 2016; Bużinkić, Hameršak 2018). However, on August 20, the Polish Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration issued an act recommending expulsions (Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych 2021). All the while, the Usnarz group of migrants remained trapped.

For the remaining days of August, the migrants could only communicate with the activists from the Ocalenie Foundation and Grupa Granica from a distance, through an interpreter, shouting over the rumble of military vehicles and wailing sirens. Incredibly, they were denied both international protection and contact with legal representatives (Grupa Granica 2021: 27; *Wizytacja KMPT ad hoc* 2021). The Border Group report mentions “their deteriorating health, lack of access to any medical assistance or medication”, as well as “their poor mental state”, no sanitary facilities, and no access to drinking water (Grupa Granica 2021: 3), which was additionally confirmed by the Polish Ombudsman’s Visitation Report of August 24, 2021 (*Wizytacja KMPT ad hoc* 2021). For incomprehensible reasons, the Border Guard firmly refused to hand medical supplies and feminine hygiene products over to them; when one person lost consciousness, the guards who stood in a tight semi-circle around the camp refused to call an ambulance (Pałęcka 2022: 19, 20).

All further proceedings took the shape of a state-sponsored barbarity (as in state-sponsored health care, housing, childcare or “state-sponsored war, terrorism, and individual acts of sadism” (Nelson 2011: 7, 40) or, more precisely, a lesson in social disempowerment aimed at progressive groups in Polish society. These included people who had earlier protested the dismantling of democracy, organized for the future of the planet, rallied for the release of LGBT activists, and participated in women’s marches. By midnight of September 1, due to the just imposed state of emergency, the humanitarian groups had to leave the site; all the same, pictures of stranded migrants continued to circulate on social media

eliciting spontaneous responses ranging from calls to organize for help to death threats. Their ordeal lasted until October 20, when the most desperate members of the group broke through a wire fence that had, in the meantime, kept them cooped up. Tear-gassed, handcuffed, and bereft of their phones, they were separated into smaller groups and expelled to Belarus. Apart from one young man who managed to re-enter Poland and remains in the guarded center for foreigners, the fate of all the others is unknown (Pałęcka 2022: 20).

The plight of Afghans in Usnarcz foreshadowed further developments. On September 2, a state of emergency was introduced in 115 towns in the Podlaskie Region and 68 towns in the Lubelskie Region; this exceptionally stringent measure barred the entry of humanitarian organizations, including the Polish Red Cross, as well as the ambulances spontaneously organized and supported by public contributions. Having barred entry to the media, the Polish Parliament (Sejm) authorized pushbacks of children and placed the region entirely under the control of various military and paramilitary formations supported by another vote in the Sejm on October 14. The state of emergency provided justification for a “theater of cruelty” (Nelson 2011: 15)⁴, which met with an instant response from civil society. Diverse social groups organized with the purpose of collecting funds, clothing, and sleeping bags suited for extreme temperatures brimmed with questions: “If this is indeed a war, shouldn’t civilians be protected?,” “if crossing the border illegally is a crime, shouldn’t the trespassers be jailed; or (...), if they are weapons of war, shouldn’t they be treated as POWs and transferred to camps?,” “if children show up and then disappear from sight, shouldn’t some kind of record of them be kept?” Rodziny Bez Granic (2021–2022) (*Families without Borders*), a group established on Facebook by Polish users who opposed the official governmental bias already in the early fall of 2021, open only to registered participants and still active, shared practical information on how to help specific migrants and served as both consciousness-raising and emotional support circle for people immersed in fundraising and networking. Some other Facebook users, particularly in the milieu of cultural activists, experienced border drama vicariously (“I lie in bed

⁴ Nelson draws the term “theater of cruelty” from Antonin Artaud’s volume of manifestos *The Theater and Its Double* (1938). While acknowledging Artaud’s protesting “vociferously against the literal interpretation of his cruelty” (Nelson 2011: 26), Nelson draws the direct and practical application of this term from Jean Baudrillard’s piece in *Le Monde*, published shortly after 9/11, in which Baudrillard called the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers “our theatre of cruelty, the only one left to us” (Nelson 2011: 29). Nelson adds: “Nor did he [Artaud] live in the age of, say, beheadings available for casual viewing on YouTube. Nor, thankfully, did he live to see the results of my Google search this morning under ‘theater of cruelty’: up first, a piece from the *Nation* that describes the acts of torture committed by Americans at Abu Ghraib – and the circulation of the photographs of those acts (loc. 428). This updated understanding of the term appears to be reflected in the accounts of refugees and activists on the border collected in the magazine “Karta” (Avci, Galdamez 2022: 6–39).

and imagine what it would be like to lie in that forest and freeze”). Others felt guilty watching their children play. Yet others posted inquiries asking how to explain to a child the ordeal of the kids in the woods. Such posts began to appear in October (as temperatures in the Białowieża Forest began to drop) and became a common phenomenon in November and December of 2021. Similar sentiments were expressed by the philosopher Mirosław Miniszewski who lives in the “zone” near the border and was able to bring public attention to the first larger group of migrants in Usnarz Górny in a Facebook post of August 17, 2021 (a detailed report by TVN appeared on the following day (Miniszewski 2022; *Koczuj na granicy* 2021)). After months of providing direct help to migrants he succumbed to a profound sense of powerlessness in response to an investigation, when it became obvious that Poland was treating his life-saving efforts with suspicion (Szczęśniak 2021; Miniszewski 2022).

For many Polish intellectuals, the overall experience was like a belated loss of innocence. Watching reports about refugees drowning in the Mediterranean implies a safe distance; becoming aware of their plight within a three-hour drive from the capital denotes your consent if not participation. It might have seemed at first that such an excruciating awareness of collective responsibility for the procedures on the border was probably what the government wanted to produce. And yet it suffices to read Article 15 of the European Convention of Human Rights (2013) (ECHR) to be reminded of the fact that it too allows for the suspension of basic rights under emergency conditions: “Derogation in time of emergency 1. In time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation any High Contracting Party may take measures derogating from its obligations under this Convention to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with its other obligations under international law” (European Convention 2013). If no governmental representative referred to Article 15 to justify the hard-heartedness of this state of emergency, it was only for the lack of habit of referencing the ECHR in all other contexts.

Despite the ban on recording, personal accounts, interviews, and photographic snippets began to circulate on social media. The distribution of images was not forbidden. Volunteers told stories of encounters with Border Guard patrols. Doctors in local hospitals reported migrants suffering from limb injuries, dehydration, and hypothermia, who were intercepted in the middle of medical procedures, and then vanished; presumably, driven back to the frontier and pushed back to the Belarusian side. Survivors of repeated expulsions told stories of being beaten with clubs by Belarusian guards, of families separated at the border by Polish Border Guards (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021), and of watching others die from exposure. Some amateur video recordings proved exceedingly dramatic. Consisting mainly of screams and shouts, recorded clandestinely in the middle

of the night, they offered no background and no reasonable explanation for the excessive violence that was being blatantly administered.

One such recording sparked an “inappropriate reaction” from Barbara Kurdej-Szatan, a TV-series actress who called the members of the Border Guard “murderers” and “machines unquestionably following orders” amid a torrent of obscenities in an Instagram comment (Glińska 2021). The video in question documented a moment of escalation: women with crying babies in their arms who struggled against Border Patrol officers. Kurdej-Szatan was instantly criticized for her outburst. The actress is a petite blonde and yet her post was taken for an outright attack on the security of the state. The director of Polish Television, Jacek Kurski, announced that the actress would no longer appear in any series produced by the state-run TVP. Otherwise, no explanation or a follow up was ever offered concerning the reason for distress of apparently besieged women and children recorded in the video or their subsequent fate.

Consequently, Kurdej-Szatan apologized to the Border Guard: “I would like to stress in the strongest terms that I respect the hard work of all uniformed services and appreciate their efforts to keep us safe” (Glińska 2021). A snappy celebrity and the mother of two learned to control her outrage, but her public apology proved insufficient, and the court proceedings were initiated, with penalties ranging from a fine to imprisonment. At last, Kurdej-Szatan was acquitted on December 7, 2022, but the prosecutor’s office threatened to appeal, as if dragging her through litigations was a metonymy of harsh punishment. This cautionary tale reads like an illustration to Orwell’s *Politics and the English Language*:

A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. (...) And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favorable to political conformity (Orwell 1981 [1946]: 166).

Although the actress saved her career, Orwell’s disenchanted narrator’s voice in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* advises that such transitions are never superficial. It will never suffice to modify one’s language and correct one’s attitude by submitting to the demand of “a lifeless, imitative style” (Orwell 1981 [1946]: 166). Public apologies are staged for others to learn from. Kurdej-Szatan’s public apology represented a cautionary tale for her followers on social media, her fans reading women’s magazines, and the public devouring their favorite television series. These audiences also needed to learn the trick of responding with “ready-made phrases”.

Escaping postcolonial exploitation to meet with totalitarian erasure

Ewa Majewska (2011: 35) in *La Mestiza from Ukraine? Border Crossing with Gloria Anzaldúa* grapples with the notion of the borderlands, as “spaces of economic and sexual abuse”. Poland’s eastern border, Majewska points out, was notorious as a site known for “trafficking human beings, especially women” and – with the outbreak of World War II – for the silenced cries of people removed to deportation camps. Majewska overlays a postcolonial perspective upon Poland’s eastern territories based on a certain similarity between the ambivalent presence of the Hispanic people in America (beginning as proud colonizers to be subsequently dominated) and the ethnic Poles both colonized by Germans and colonizing their Eastern neighbors (2011: 38). This parallel is additionally reinforced when we note that Christianity was introduced to Slavic territories in a manner that resembled the earliest colonization practices in the Americas. When read alongside *Migrant Cartographies* in which Daniela Merolla and Sandra Ponzanesi note how throughout European literatures not only people but ideas travel, transcending and interconnecting “apparently separate colonial legacies” (2005: 3), this approach invites us to observe how divergent multicultural scenarios multiply and the dynamics of identity and belonging coincide upon constantly evolving maps overshadowed by genealogy. In the case of East Asian and African migrants on the Polish and Belarusian border, postcolonial and totalitarian dynamics converge; to be observed, for instance, in the plight of migrants from the Free Republic of Congo, an area most blatantly affected by both colonial and postcolonial exploitation (from rubber harvesting to cobalt mining), who arrive at the Eastern gates of the EU to meet with totalitarian erasure.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) in “The Homeland, Aztlán” recalls crossing the border “through the hole in the fence / to the other side” (2), feeling “the gritty wire” (2), and pressing her hand “to the steel curtain”, incongruously “crowned with barbed wire” (2). Contrasting with “a narrow strip along a steep edge” (3) of the U.S.–Mexican border, a borderland is “a vague and undetermined place” inhabited by “the troublesome” and “the half dead” (3), a place where “trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot” (3), where the racial division is obscenely unequivocal: those in power are “the whites and those who align themselves with whites” (4). Majewska (2011: 36) recalls Gayatri Spivak who questions the ability of the colonizers to hear the subaltern’s speech. But perhaps a set of totalitarian metaphors as vehicles of communication could help clear the debris from at least one such point of connection, provided by a man who absconded from the ranks of those in power. Such is the case of George Orwell, born in Motihari, Bihar province, in British India. His great-grandfather was an absentee landlord in Jamaica,

his father worked in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service, and his mother took him to England when he was five. He was a scholarship student at Eton but neglected his studies, and his parents could not send him to a university without another scholarship. In 1924 he passed an exam to become a policeman and chose Burma because this was his mother's place of birth; he still nurtured romantic ideas about the East. In a nutshell, he was raised to be a civil servant, a cog in the mechanism of oppression. In 1927 he returned to England due to illness and resigned from the Indian Imperial Police with an idea to become a writer. His life had to take a few more turns, which included embracing poverty as an object of his research, doing menial jobs, and eventually setting out to fight in the Spanish Civil War in 1936. This was when he became disheartened. He and his friends came to Spain to fight against fascism; and yet, to their utmost surprise, they were met with a campaign of lies that smeared them as fascists. It may just be feasible, therefore, to read the Polish-Belarus narrative of entrapment through the Orwellian lens, which provides a unique meeting place for postcolonial and totalitarian topoi.

In Orwell's memoir from the Civil War in Spain, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), the leading theme, the war, is laced with various descriptions of freezing in the trenches. Having arrived in Spain as a volunteer, Orwell recalls "shabby soldiers creeping to the front" (4) and "the muddy, ice-cold trenches in the mountains" (4) in the late December of 1936. He had come to Spain "with some notion of writing newspaper articles" but joined "the militia almost immediately, because at that time and in that atmosphere it seemed the only conceivable thing to do" (4). Orwell remembers that "the shirts and socks were wretched cotton things, however, quite useless against cold" (8). The uniforms were nonexistent, and not every militiaman had a blanket. Arrival closer to the frontline is announced by "the characteristic smell of war"; that is, "a smell of excrement and decaying food" (16). War means "roaring projectiles and skipping shards of steel; above all it meant mud, lice, hunger, and cold" (18). Still, he admits: "It is curious, but I dreaded the cold much more than I dreaded the enemy" (18). Even in May "the night was getting cold" (126). One such icy night, he makes a list of the clothes he wore in his diary: "a thick vest and pants, a flannel shirt, two pullovers, a woolen jacket, a pigskin jacket, corduroy breeches, puttees, thick socks, boots, a stout trenchcoat, a muffler, lined leather gloves, and a woolen cap" (30). And yet, "I was shivering like a jelly" (30). Not surprisingly, the soldiers spent their days fighting lice and searching for firewood (30), and their nights – fighting insomnia (no one can "sleep properly in a beastly hole in the ground with your feet aching with the cold" (40–41). The effect of sleeplessness is that "one grew very stupid, and the job of climbing up and down the hills grew harder instead of easier" (41). During one military maneuver he finds himself "lying in a horrible marsh" for seven hours, "in reedy-smelling water into which one's body subsided gradually deeper and

deeper: the reedy smell, the numbing cold, the stars immovable in the black sky, the harsh croaking of the frogs” (81). The night in the marshes is by far the coldest he ever experienced. Henceforth, he finds himself reduced to a “passive object, doing nothing in return for my rations except to suffer from cold and lack of sleep” (103). This fate is shared (“Perhaps that is the fate of most soldiers in most wars” (103)) and yet singles him out (“But I admit I’m unusually sensitive to cold” (30)). The cold, the encampments that can be smelled from afar, became a shared experience of soldiers with the invention of trench warfare. In recent years, this experience is the domain of refugees, held in makeshift camps or in no camps at all, in conditions that seem and often are impossible to endure.

George Lakoff in *The Political Mind* (2008) unravels the twofold ethics of care that shapes any government, because every government grounds its rule in protection and empowerment offered to the people. Lakoff writes: “Protection is more than just army, police, and fire department (...). It means social security, disease control and public health, safe food, disaster relief, health care, consumer and worker protection, environmental protection” (2008: 47). A government can steer clear of these complex issues by maintaining a state of perpetual crisis and redefining protection as the defense against invented threats. This is how the state in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* operates; its disregard for the daily comfort of its citizens is evident in the opening scene. A patrolling helicopter hovers over the city rooftops, peering into people’s windows, but electricity is disconnected during the day to cut costs. Food is scarce, while alcohol tastes like gasoline. The smell of boiled cabbage lingers in the hallway. Party slogans read: “WAR IS PEACE; FREEDOM IS SLAVERY; IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH” (Orwell 2003 [1949]: 6). The people of London, the city reduced to a metonymy for dystopia, have accustomed themselves to these external circumstances that turn even the members of the privileged caste into resigned sufferers. Winston Smith is a party member and yet he, just like any commoner, expects the elevator to be out of order. A combination of learned helplessness and fear prompts most people, except for some scarce borderline enthusiasts, to create a semblance of compliance, so their passivity becomes the only viable form of defiance, interrupted only by “their periodical frenzies of patriotism” (172). Suspending disbelief, they expect their country to be at war (with Eurasia or Eastasia). They neglect their appearance, their health, and their bodies, as if the collapse of the body promised relief from a comfortless life. Smith is thirty-nine years old and in a pitiable shape even before his demise; his varicose ulcers are acutely psychosomatic, while “his face, from long habit ... [is] expressionless” (23). His place of work happens to be the Ministry of Truth; the content of his daily toil is pure propaganda, that is, lies.

Blatant lies provide nurturing glue for the regime; suspension of disbelief is an essential component of the functional psyche. The totalitarian state “is impossible

without lies”, says Rebecca Solnit (2021: 228) in synch with Orwell (1946) and Arendt (1951). This society is thoroughly demoralized. The terrifying Ministry of Love (read: Ministry of Hate) runs all matters pertaining to law and order from an ominous windowless building. Smith’s state of mind reflects that of his country. He is about to start writing in a journal, but then he halts, worried: if such pastimes are not deemed illegal, that is only because “there were no longer any laws” (Orwell 2003 [1949]: 9). And yet privacy signals a possibility of treason; seeking an object of beauty in “a frowsy little junk-shop” (9) betrays a certain nostalgia. He has just bought a book whose creamy paper pleases him, a souvenir from a bygone era. More importantly, the drive to put facts down and to present them to oneself without adornments spells out the pursuit of some reliable form of truth. Like the writer Joan Didion, Smith will use his writing to find out what he thinks. But first he needs to reveal to us (and, as it will turn out later, also to his pursuers), the appalling state of his mind.

After much prevarication, Smith describes his experience of the previous night at the movies, having accepted long ago that watching war films counts as entertainment. The audience laughs at the sight of a fat man unsuccessfully trying to escape from a helicopter that is chasing him. Smith neither condemns such a lack of empathy nor sets himself apart from the prevailing consensus. He appears strangely dispassionate – as if he was feeling nothing. As “a ship full of refugees” is bombed “somewhere in the Mediterranean” (Orwell 2003 [1949]: 11), a lifeboat appears, full of children, and the audience’s anticipation grows palpable at the sight of a woman holding a three-year-old in her arms. Smith jots down the woman’s futile attempts: she is “blue with fright herself” (11), and yet she is holding the child “as if she thought her arms could keep the bullets off him” (11). Smith appreciates “a wonderful shot of a child’s arm” (11), already dismembered (the helicopter documents an act of bombing the refugee boat with a camera planted in its nose). He refers to the woman as a “jewess” (11) most likely because her looks are Middle Eastern. For all we know she could be Syrian or Palestinian – or indeed Jewish. But then in a flash something odd happens – another woman in the audience, apparently also a mother, has a fit; she is “the prole” woman, audacious and abrupt, and she is “kicking up a fuss and shouting”. Smith’s response is dismissive at first; to all intents and purposes, he is siding with the rest of the audience. And yet, when recording her exclamations, his grammar abandons him entirely: “they didnt oughter of showed it not in front of kids they didnt it aint right not in front of kids it aint” (12). After this momentary regression, he discovers that one can think in a relatively unrestrained manner and does not die. At least, not at once.

For us, readers of Polish independent news, also under the threat of a shut-down when another motion was introduced to the parliament in the late fall of

2021, an evening ritual of skimming through the visual documentation of disheveled people sitting on the ground in the middle of a forest or children being packed onto a military truck by armed men in balaclavas, raises the question of complicity. Knowing that people are perishing in the marshes and doing nothing means passive cooperation, tacit assent; in short, connivance. Consequently, a network of support was established across the country, starting with collections for food, gasoline, and specific items, such as thermal sleeping bags. Simultaneously, petitions and open letters by major scientific institutions were written, signed, and delivered. A statement by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, dated October 6, 2021, stressed “the growing concern with which [the council] observes the tragedy of migrants who are seeking refuge”; adding that “the fact that this is a provocation by a ruthless dictator does not diminish the suffering of its victims”. The statement did not mince words, calling the events on the Polish-Belarusian border, along with the accompanying political discourse, “a ruthless laboratory” and advised against “detaining people in conditions leading to devastation and tracking down those who are trying to get out of this situation” (*Oświadczenie Rady Naukowej Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii* 2021). An open letter initiated by the ombudsman for academic rights and freedoms at the Jagiellonian University spoke against “migration policies that condemn those at the border to death from starvation, dehydration and hypothermia” and demanded “that the government of Poland take measures that guarantee those currently on the border access to legal protection and humanitarian aid, safe shelter, water and food, and medical assistance” (Chojnowska 2021). Biologists sounded the alarm that the planned construction of a fence on the Polish-Belarusian border would divide the Białowieża Forest, in consequence preventing “movement, migration, and gene flow in populations of rare and protected species to become a death trap for animals trying to cross it and threaten the survival of isolated populations” (*Stanowisko Rady Naukowej Instytutu Biologii* 2021). The Presidium of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland demanded that the government “take all possible measures to ensure respect for the dignity and safety of those seeking international protection and attempting to cross the EU’s eastern border” (KRASP 2021). The Senate of the University of Wrocław reminded the Prime Minister that “Polish people also had been immigrants in the past, for political as well as economic reasons”; as such, they “often crossed borders in defiance of the law of the destination country” (Uchwała Senatu 2021). All such exhortations, calls to reason and appeals to conscience, fell on deaf ears, for obvious reasons: if a regime wants to establish and sustain power, it must set about creating a parallel, illusory reality, and such a task cannot be achieved without ignoring science. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the only education worth having is provided by the Party;

the Ministry of Truth concerns itself with news, entertainment, and education alike. Universities are not even mentioned.

The issue of complicity became even more pressing for local people inhabiting the border zone. A bleak landscape, complete with a helicopter flying low over the roofs, as though peering into the windows, became their daily reality. Different ethnicities coexist in this region: some villages are predominantly Belarusian; others – Tatar. Ethnic Poles are relative newcomers to the region, and they too divide into settlers who arrived attracted by job openings in wood factories after World War I or due to the post-World War II relocations and the recent arrivals, freethinkers attracted by the ideal of life in harmony with nature; while lately, newcomers from other EU countries have begun to trickle in, attracted by the beauty of the primeval forest. The imposition of the state of emergency crushed any hope for expanding tourism. Rather, the militarization of the border zone (Pałęcka 2022) completes the project of turning the primeval forest into a wood factory and the imposition of nationalistic values on the inhabitants of the border zone. Miniszewski (2022) recalls his stupefaction at how some members of the Border Guard, his former students whom he remembers vowing that they would never harm defenseless people, had no qualms about perpetuating human misery once habituation to violence dissolved a thin layer of ethical scruples.

The initial scene of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reads like an archetypical scene in which we, the disempowered audience of the autumn and winter developments of 2021–2022, can recognize ourselves. There is always someone to play the part of a woman protester who can be easily dismissed as ignorant and vulgar; there is always room for a wise man who sees more than others but remains inscrutable and withdrawn; finally, the rowdy majority, satisfied with protection and perks afforded to them by the state, silences all other voices, including inner ones. No longer able to write after his visit to the cinema, Winston reflects on the rest of the evening in his own mind. As to the uppity woman, the police arrived to “turn her out”; Winston convinces himself that she will come out unscathed (we doubt it); he attributes her rebellion to “typical prole reaction” and calls his own writing “this stream of rubbish” (Orwell 2003 [1949]: 11). Once he becomes more comfortable with his diary, Winston dares to express his belief in “proles” against better judgement, soon to repeat to himself on different occasions: “If there is hope, it lies with the proles”; that is, with the proletariat, the uncouth and impertinent ones, who could (with universities erased and great works of literature joyfully translated into Newspeak) overthrow the power of the theocratic orthodoxy. Why the religious tone all of a sudden? Because, as Orwell states in his essay *Prevention of Literature* (1946), “A totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy”. It is, in short, the state cultivating a belief in its own infallibility.

The blessed state of Polish politics: returning favors

Writing about the symbolic expansion of populism in Poland, Stanley Bill builds on Marta Kotwas and Jan Kubik's exegesis of Poland's Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) party's narrative strategies as the "thickening" of the previously "thin" populist and political narrative (Bill 2020: 120). Kotwas and Kubik admit to having been in turn inspired by Mudde's distinction between "thin" and "thick" populisms: "While the former are associated with a more inclusive, open vision of collective identity, the latter serve to define narrower visions" (Kotwas, Kubik 2019: 17). At the moment of coming to power in 2015, PiS had only a few catchphrases at its disposal: a program called "a good change", which soon came to mean the dynamic replacement of "pseudo-elites" with the "counter elite"; i.e., better fitted to represent the nation's interests; this process was accomplished through purges in state institutions, personnel changes in the judiciary and military ranks, monopolization of the public media, and the dismantling of the Constitutional Tribunal (Sadurski 2019). Throughout these sweeping changes, Poland's United Right (*Zjednoczona Prawica*) government received strong backing from the Conference of Polish Bishops (*Konferencja Episkopatu Polski*, the central organ of the Catholic Church in Poland), as well as from individual bishops, eager to serve as government mouthpieces, vociferating against "gender ideology" (since December 2014, particularly through the spring of 2015) and "LGBT ideology" (hence the LGBT-free zones of 2019–2020)⁵. Last but not least, thanks to generous government subsidies, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, who heads a Christian media empire in Toruń, having already contributed to a string of election results, is the true oligarch of the United Right (Bill 2020: 122–123; Kaczyński 2015; Mikołajewska 2021), while photographs presenting Polish politicians who kneel before various religious authorities were common long before PiS took power (Rogojsz 2012).

Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk suggest that the demonization of gender might indeed be a strategy of the Church to discipline liberal Catholics or, on the other hand, it can serve as an exemplary and "generalized evil that to some

⁵ In September 2016, the Conference of Polish Bishops scorned a conciliatory campaign "Let us offer each other the sign of peace", initiated by LGBT communities, because it was actively supported by progressive Catholic luminaries (*Komunikat Prezydium KEP* 2016). In March 2019 Polish bishops voiced their opposition to the LGBT Bill of Rights (introduced on the municipal level in Warsaw), deeming its conciliatory tenets a threat to Poland's *raison d'état* (Sosnowski 2019). The strongest voice in the Christian resistance to the "rainbow invasion" (clearly inspired by the ideal of *Antemurale Christianitatis*) was Abp. Jędraszewski of Kraków. Although initially criticized for his dehumanizing utterance of August 1, 2019, when he applied the label of the "rainbow plague" to the LGBT activists (Makarewicz 2020), he was soon cleared by a court of law; undeterred and uncensored, the bishop continues to dress LGBT persons and their allies in metaphors suitable for invaders: "they are trying to seize our Polish and Christian land" (*Abp Jędraszewski* 2020).

extent replaced Jews in their role of a scapegoat associated with modernity and moral degeneracy” (2022: 40). The idea of gender equality and LGBT visibility occasionally portrayed as “a demonic force, in need of being exorcised” (Graff, Korolczuk 2022: 40) facilitates the transformation of the religious movement into a political mobilization. Bill adds synergy to this model, noting how PiS’s own “thickened” rhetoric, promising victories over imaginary threats while also encouraging perseverance, coactively returns the favor; regrettably, the narratives that “thicken” are oftentimes used “to exclude minority groups, narrowing the scope of who belongs to the national community” (Bill 2020: 120) in addition to effectively promoting organizations with right-wing profiles, with or without links to Father Rydzyk’s media circle, and simultaneously defaming individuals and organizations opposed to the government (Bill 2020: 122–123). In the case of refugees at the border one delineates the potential not just for thickened narratives but for a consistent plot.

Christian appeals slighted as well

Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? ... You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.
Samuel 2, 12: 9 (*The NIV Bible*)

In the passage quoted above the prophet Nathan reproaches king David for murdering Uriah, his soldier, by proxy. To all appearances Uriah died because he was killed by an opposing army. But Nathan, or rather the Lord speaking through him, will not be fooled: It was David who ordered the soldiers to abandon Uriah in the middle of the battle, thus handing him over to a ferocious enemy. David pleads guilty, which is the only reason why the Lord shall spare him. But he will lose his newborn child because that is how accounts are settled in the Old Testament. Yet the deception that David committed is obviously a grave offense, casting a long shadow over the future of his kin. Nathan adds: “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house” (Samuel 2, 12: 10). The issue of feigning ignorance and shifting responsibility to a remote other party is of the essence here: in the official governmental narrative, Belarus is the source of evil, luring the unfortunates (migrants or refugees, this remains undetermined) with the promise of a free passage to the EU (at a high price paid to a tourist agency), then funneling them across the border, and transforming them into weapons of a “hybrid war”. Pushed back, the migrants or refugees are transformed again into naïve, reckless people who will have only themselves to blame if they are killed by admittedly more brutal Belarusian guards. All the while, Poland’s treatment

of refugees is beyond reproach (*RPO: Wstrzymać pushbacki* 2022). The migrants' counternarratives highlights their often futile and yet repeated efforts to counteract the ruthlessness encountered in the "zone" by bringing international attention to their plight (*Polska: Okrucieństwo zamiast współczucia* 2022). In the specific case of Usnarz Górny, the migrants set up camp in a narrow strip of land, as the Belarusian guards prevented them from returning. The fact that Belarus is not a safe country for migrants and asylum seekers should not have come as a surprise to anyone at the time. President Lukashenko's government unleashed a massive civil society crackdown in response to a public protest of 2020. In the summer of 2021, the Belarusian authorities announced a "purge" of nongovernmental organizations, shutting down at least 270 NGOs between August and October; consequently, Belarusian human rights defenders had no means to organize humanitarian aid for migrants or to provide them with legal or other assistance (*Belarus Authorities Purge* 2021; *A Year of Dismantling Civil Society* 2021; *Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021). The Belarusian parliament voted on suspending an agreement with the EU that regulated taking back migrants who crossed its territory into the EU on October 4, 2021, but the move had already been announced by Lukashenko in June (*Belarus Parliament Votes* 2021). The awareness of this larger context prompted the Polish Border Guards to be initially supportive of the migrants, so that they provided them with food, hoping for a favorable outcome (*Miniszewski* 2022; *Koczują na granicy* 2021).

Operating within the bounds of international law (The 1951 UN Refugee Convention), the United Nations Human Rights Council representative in Poland, Christine Goyer, called on the Polish authorities to end the impasse on the Polish-Belarusian border with an emphasis on providing immediate assistance, legal advice, and psychological support to the people stranded near Usnarz Górny on August 24. On the same day, Christian Wigand, the European Commission (EC) spokesperson, skillfully siding with both the proponents of a humanitarian approach and the hardliners, called for "full respect for migrants' fundamental rights" while also stating that the EC could not accept "any attempts by third countries to incite or acquiesce in illegal migration" towards the EU (*Poland claims* 2021). Arriving in Usnarz on the same day Marcin Wiącek, the Polish Ombudsman, reported that the thirty-two persons stranded at the border, including five women, had "no access to sanitary facilities and have to satisfy their physiological needs near the camp". If the Polish government turned a deaf ear to these voices, it could be attributed to the fact that all of them represented the secular ethics rooted in the democratic values of the EU – not the "preferred" Christian ones. And yet two days before these visitations and two days after the release of the first ministerial act condemning migrants to expulsion, Bishop Krzysztof Zadzarko, President of the Conference of Polish Bishops (KEP) Council for Migration,

Tourism and Pilgrimages issued *The Message of the Council on Refugees Arriving in Poland*. The public had every reason to believe that the administration was going to obey KEP's guidance.

Published on August 22, 2021, and quoting Pope Francis' call to welcome "every foreigner who knocks on our door" as "an opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ", *The Message* rests on the official albeit outdated concept of "the fundamental difference between refugees – who are fleeing a country for political, religious, ethnic, or other forms of persecution or war – and those who are simply seeking illegal entry into a country to improve their material situation" (Zadarko 2021b). Contrarily, several migration scholars (Parekh 2020; Beznec et al. 2016; Kogovšek-Šalamon 2016; Bužinkić, Hameršak 2018) supported by testimonies and memoirs (Nayeri 2019) stress that a firm distinction between "opportunistic migrants" and the "unselfish refugee" is both unrealistic and harmful. First, no regime targets only its opposition; indeed, mature regimes tend to be fickle, harassing their victims at random for no other purpose than that of keeping an entire population in a state of submission. Second, the charge of opportunism specifically undermines the claims of women seeking refugee status. Is a female resident of a Kurdish village an opportunist because she hopes to avoid sexual violence or an Afghan woman who desires professional opportunities an opportunist? Apparently, yes – she is, according to the criteria for refugee admissions, unless she challenges the authority to the point of risking her life to prove that her drive for professionalism is strong enough (Nayeri 2019). But to do it justice, Bishop Zadarko's document also warns that

human dramas must not become an instrument for arousing xenophobic sentiments, especially those fostered in the name of a falsely understood patriotism, which humiliates people coming from another region of the world, another culture or another religion. Instilling fear of the other is inhuman and unchristian. Our ancestors were emigrants and refugees during the partitions, during World War II and during the years of communism. They experienced the help of people from other cultures and religions. To deny newcomers their fundamental rights is to turn our back on our own history and to deny our Christian heritage (Zadarko 2021b).

But the erasure of fundamental rights is exactly what happened. Following the introduction of a state of emergency by President Andrzej Duda on September 2, 2021 (*Orędzie prezydenta Andrzeja Dudy* 2021), Mariusz Kamiński, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration restated that Poland acted within the limits of what was customary for the protection of the Schengen Area borders, remaining in daily contact with and relying on exchange of information with Frontex on the same day (*Kamiński o stanie wyjątkowym* 2021), even though some voices argue these acts were passed in defiance of both the Geneva Convention of 1951

and Polish Constitution (Górczyńska 2021; Pałęcka 2022). Another Decree of the President of the Republic on the extension of the state of emergency was issued on October 1, 2021. In practice this meant a ban on public meetings, mass events, including artistic events, restricted access to the area to all who were not residents of the zone, including humanitarian organization activists, curtailed access to public information, and a ban of recording by technical means. More than a dozen exceptions to the prohibition of free movement of citizens could be applied to residents of the locality (allowed to move freely only in the vicinity of their locality) and various military and paramilitary formations (Górczyńska 2021; Pałęcka 2022). These restrictions were restated in the amended State Border Law of November 17, 2021, extending the limits on movement until June 30, 2022. Thus, as if following the principles underlined earlier in Philip Zimbardo's 1971 experiment⁶, Poland did to the border zone what Belarus did to the whole country.

Another coincidence can help us shed some light on KEP's noteworthy intentions to provide a solution to the humanitarian crisis. On October 18, two days prior to the dismantling of the migrant camp in Usnarz, the local paper *Głos Wielkopolski* published excerpts from the 2021 Corpus Christi sermon by archbishop Stanisław Gądecki who, addressing the migrant crisis, expressed the necessity for the migrants "to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated" by means of a humanitarian corridor (Ossowski 2021). The article went on to describe the program of humanitarian corridors, implemented by the Italian Community of Sant'Egidio and its intention "to help the most needy: persecuted, ill and families with children" without overwhelming local communities. In addition, it depicted the practicalities of providing "shelter, security and basic services", offering "opportunities for work and formation", and fostering "family reunification and protection of young people" (Ossowski 2021). With its reasonable tone, the article was clearly meant to appeal to the voters of the ruling party by recalling how Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS leader and a puppet master of Polish politics, supported the idea of humanitarian corridors in 2017, and President Duda visited the community of Sant'Egidio in Rome in September of 2020, exemplifying the President's previously benevolent stance. However, it sank in a flood of evidence of the refugees' aggression of October 20 and November 7. The newcomers were evidently threatening the integrity of the Polish border; for this offence they had to be condemned to "a game of ping-pong" (the term "ping-pong pushbacks" denotes being pushed back and forth by both Polish and Belarusian guards) until death from hypothermia (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021). Winter was inevitably coming.

⁶ An experiment into how social context can influence a person's actions. College-aged men volunteered to become either prisoners or guards in a mock prison environment. The study, originally scheduled to last two weeks, was cancelled after six days because of the cruelty and abusive behaviour shown by the guards. Also known as the Stanford Prison Experiment [editor's footnote].

Meanwhile, the group Researchers on the Border was established in the first half of November, 2021 (the ban on free movement did not explicitly forbid research). Activists participating in the first hybrid seminar (out of four) organized by Researchers on the Border in the spring of 2022 recalled an acute sense of unreality when being stopped and searched by unidentified yet uniformed service personnel: long searches, questioning, and intimidation based on a suspicion that they might be assisting refugees. They also experienced a sense of unreality upon having helped someone fill out an asylum application only to be informed in the course of a few days by the Border Patrol that such a person did not exist. The forest, previously a welcoming area, became a site of trauma and danger for the volunteers, and while this danger was often symbolic, limited to harassment (like the stop-and-search routine performed at check-points several times a day), the excessive presence of the state combined with a lack of clear guidelines was apparent, contributing to an atmosphere of ostracization for anyone inclined to become involved in support networks (Researchers on the Border First Hybrid Seminar January 22–23, 2022; *Die Here or Go Back to Poland* 2021).

Despite the continuing arousal of xenophobic sentiments, KEP did not abandon the issue. The debate in Warsaw of November 24, 2021, *The Church in Poland in Relation to Migrants and Refugees*, promoted an inclusive approach based on the 2013 document of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Travelers and the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, *Welcoming Christ in Refugees and Forcibly Displaced Persons*, which states: “Each of us must have the courage not to look away from refugees and forcibly displaced persons, but to let their faces penetrate our hearts, and to welcome them into our lives. If we listen to their hopes and despair, we will understand their feelings” (*Abp. Polak: Stanowisko Kościoła* 2021). But neither the November debate, nor the December 22 *Declaration of the Permanent Council of KEP regarding the appeal of Pope Francis on the Admission of Refugees* (*Oświadczenie Rady Stałej KEP* 2021), signed, this time, by the President of the Polish Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Gądecki, under the patronage of Pope Francis, brought even the slightest change in border practices.

Meanwhile, the schism between the church and the state must have become obvious to the sensitive instrument of social media because both Bishop Zadarko and Primate Polak found themselves “flooded by a wave of online harassment” (*Abp. Polak: Nauczanie Kościoła* 2021), the latter following his sermon on November 11, the day of the usually volatile celebration of Polish Independence Day dominated by nationalistic groups. Only a few days earlier, on November 8, as if goaded by an impeccable albeit fatal sense of timing, a large group of migrants was announced to be planning to cross the border between Belarus and Poland. When the migrants appeared at the border crossing point, Polish police and the military were at the ready. The situation quickly turned into a skirmish, following which

the material evidence of the refugees' aggression against Poland was shared and retweeted for several days and helped to turn the November 11 march into a patriotic upheaval (*Orędzie prezydenta Andrzeja Dudy* 2021). Against Primate Polak's November 11 conciliatory sermon, Prime Minister Morawiecki's announcement of the sacredness of the border on his Facebook account (Morawiecki 2021) and in the press (*Morawiecki: Ta granica jest świętością* 2021) was enthusiastically received by nationalists.

Conclusion: the border sanctified, its crossing a sacrilege

The end of 2021 marked an apparent disunion; the migrants continue to be pushed back into the territory of Belarus where they are beaten, injured, harassed, robbed, dispersed, denied help, pushed back; finally, if they survive yet another attempt, locked in Polish centers for foreigners where, according to the recent reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, they suffer further isolation, abuse, and mistreatment. Even an unexplained failure of imagination could not prevent the Polish authorities from envisioning the dire, potentially lethal consequences of pushbacks to the migrants. The Usnarz case was perhaps the first instance of the ruling party defying the Church since the 2015 electoral victory, most likely carefully considered, as divorcing an ally at a pivotal moment always carries a certain risk. Moreover, the dividing line between the Church and State is not obvious; some church officials align themselves with the governmental hardliners. As Bishop Zadarko (2021a) revealed to *Więź*, even a certain faction of the religious press ignored the August 22 message, never quoting from it or reprinting it. Considering how welcoming the Jasna Góra sanctuary had been to fringe elements in the nationalistic movement, opening its gates to their pilgrimages and eulogizing their militaristic traditions, and how consistently and ardently useful the Church had been, joining the government in its crusade against gender equality, pride marches, and ecological awareness, while also faithfully supporting the ruling party at all local and national elections, this sudden turnabout, and such a manifest governmental unwillingness to listen to and follow episcopal guidance, must have been a humbling experience to the nation's spiritual guardians from the Conference of Polish Bishops (*Dotychczasowy apel o przyjęcie uchodźców* 2021)⁷.

⁷ It must be added, however, that one year later, Bishop Zadarko and the KEP Council for Migration, Tourism and Pilgrimages did not veer from its course, in a communiqué for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in the Church stating that the situation of incoming migrants and refugees "is increasingly opening up the prospect of creating a common future in Poland. The appeal for humane treatment of all those seeking refuge and a better life in Poland, regardless of their status,

Common internet trolls and perhaps also respectable citizens attacking Primate Polak in the aftermath of his sermon on November 11, continued to reiterate their leaders' rejection of "humanitarian corridors" and other conciliatory policies offered by KEP. The Christian ideal of charity was in the course of winter 2022 officially replaced by the idea of the "sacredness of the border", reiterated on February 16, 2022, at the construction site in Kuźnica, where Prime Minister Morawiecki assured the public that the 186-kilometer-long border barrier would "bring stabilization" and was intended as "a strategic investment to protect our border and citizens". This is how the idea of the "sacredness of the border" found its way from a Facebook post to an official announcement on the Chancellery of the Prime Minister webpage (*Morawiecki: polska granica to świętość* 2022). The turning point is not towards the secularization of the state; quite to the contrary, the state invites its citizens to reshape themselves as followers, as they shift their religious sentiments to embrace not the words of the Gospels, or even the cult of John Paul II, but the cult of the border. The border, through the filter of patriotic feeling, is transformed, redeemed by the sacrificial blood of those who have fought for it. Such a border is no longer a matter of secular agreements. Crossing it is a sacrilege (Girard 1977). From the cult of the border, we are only one step to the cult of the state itself.

Epilogue: an unexplained failure of imagination

On February 24, 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine, and the stagnation of the Polish-Belarusian border zone faded into the distant background. Refugees began to arrive from a neighboring country; people whom at last we were allowed to help. After hearing for almost the entire year that if we wanted refugees so badly, we could welcome them into our homes, we did just that. Meanwhile, in the border zone, "the removal of foreigners" solidified into an expression rooted in the November 2021 Polish law and entered the official language of Border Guard commanders (*Violence and Pushbacks* 2022). The continued expulsions of the Afghans, Iraqis, and Syrians contrasted all the more sharply with the warm welcome offered to the people fleeing from the war-ravaged areas in Ukraine (*Witamy w Guantanamo* 2022; *Violence and Pushbacks* 2022; Miniszewski 2022; Ciobanu 2022b). All throughout the spring, some activists supporting refugees at the Polish-Belarusian border had to clear their names in courts of law, even though the same assistance earned praise when extended to the people fleeing war in Ukraine (Rumieńczyk 2022).

nationality, or place of crossing the Polish border, is timely. Their dignity must never be curtailed or suspended by any law"; communiqué of September 21, 2022 (Zadarko 2022c).

The astonished Ukrainians, albeit grateful, also protested about this double standard, calling the pushbacks of families coming from outside Europe “shameless and cruel” (*Apel organizacji ukraińskich* 2022).

A press conference of June 30, 2022, by the completed border wall, at first glance presents a rational narrative; the government has every right to praise its efficiency and foresight upon bringing a difficult project to a completion. But why **efficiency and foresight**? According to Minister Kamiński, Poland successfully dismantled Putin’s plan to destabilize Poland, the Baltic states, and even Europe itself (*Premier Mateusz Morawiecki: zaporę na granicy z Białorusią* 2022); *Mateusz Morawiecki, Mariusz Kamiński, Maciej Wąsik* 2022). Poland prevented the emergence of an eastern European illegal migration route to destabilize the political and social situation in that part of the world. Instead of multiplying problems, we solve them, which is why, the Minister concluded, “we can now boldly support Ukraine” (*Mateusz Morawiecki, Mariusz Kamiński, Maciej Wąsik* 2022). In this narrative the refugees from Asia and Africa figure as both weapons of destabilization and unfortunate, misguided individuals, and Polish border guards as their kind-hearted supporters, saving their lives by bringing them to the hospital (*Mateusz Morawiecki, Mariusz Kamiński, Maciej Wąsik* 2022). Not a word was said about the practice of separating families on such occasions, reported by the HRW in November 2021 (routinely, only one person was allowed to stay with a sick family member; all others would be promptly subjected to pushbacks) (*Die Here or Go to Poland* 2021).

And yet the border wall is a miracle of transubstantiation. Its task is to symbolically separate us from the evil whose kernel is Belarus. The steel barrier (made of Polish steel, manufactured by state-owned companies) will be supplemented with an electronic barrier: sensors and cameras, completed in a timely manner in defiance of the opposition’s doubts and criticism. Its timely completion stands for the end of all crises. Not a promised land, but a promised border wall is delivered to the people. Any distress sparked in part by war and in part by inflation; more precisely, by the 15.6% inflation rate in June (Szymański 2022) will be appeased by the announcement that a 186 km (115 miles) long and 5.5 metres (18 feet) high structure is cutting through the wilderness at a cost of 353 million euros (\$407m) (*Poland completes Belarus border wall* 2022). The question of moral obligations, drawn from the Kantian morality rooted in human reason, as opposed to Machiavellian efficacy, whereby the goal (effective defense of the borders) is the only measure that should be applied to actions, and therefore justify the means, is not even raised (Parekh 2020: 50–56).

In the alternative reality of the border wall press conference, time has a circular movement – just as sacred time is wont to do – as if no formidable enemy emerged in the meantime, as if Russia was not keen on aiming its rockets, always

“by accident”, at all kinds of outstanding architectural achievements and other manifestations of national pride in the neighboring country of Ukraine, as if no threats had just been verbalized by Belarus, no attacks on Polish military targets announced (*Szef białoruskiego wywiadu ujawnia* 2022). “Roads have been built along the entire border so that it can intervene in a flash”, the Prime Minister proudly announced (*Morawiecki przed zaporą* 2022). The “it” most likely refers to the Border Guard, which is presently opening new career opportunities in the Polish-Belarusian border zone. Henceforth, the rest of Poland can sleep soundly because the symbolic construction of political reality is complete.

References

- A Year of Dismantling Civil Society in Belarus*, 2021, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/08/year-dismantling-civil-society-belarus> (accessed: 8.08.2021).
- Abp. Jędraszewski: Zwolennicy ideologii LGBT próbują nam odebrać naszą polską i chrześcijańską ziemię*, 2020, “Więź”, <https://wiesz.pl/2020/06/19/abp-jedraszewski-zwolennicy-ideologii-lgbt-probuja-nam-odebrac-nasza-polska-i-chrzcijanska-ziemie/> (accessed: 19.06.2020).
- Abp. Polak: Nauczanie Kościoła o przyjmowaniu uchodźców spotyka się z odrzuceniem*, 2021, “Więź”, <https://wiesz.pl/2021/11/25/abp-polak-nauczanie-kosciola-o-przyjmowaniu-uchodzcow-spotyka-sie-z-odrzuceniem/> (accessed: 25.11.2021).
- Abp. Polak: Stanowisko Kościoła w kwestii uchodźców jest bardzo mocno kontestowane*, 2021, Polskie Radio PiK. PAP, <https://www.radiopik.pl/3,96986,abp-polak-stanowisko-kosciola-w-kwestii-uchodzco> (accessed: 24.11.2021).
- Act on Foreigners of 12 December 2013, 2013, “Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland”, Item 1650, https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/sites/default/files/aldfiles/EN%20-%20Poland%20act_on_foreigners_en_0.pdf (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Agamben G., 1995, *We Refugees*, “Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literature”, vol. 49, issue 2, Periodicals Archive Online, <https://countermovements.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/we-refugees-agamben.pdf> (accessed: 28.01.2021).
- Anzaldúa G., 1987, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1st ed., San Francisco: Aunt Lute.
- Apel organizacji ukraińskich w Polsce do Rządu RP i Straży Granicznej. Z całego serca dziękujemy za wspieranie uchodźców z Ukrainy, ale nie zgadzamy się na segregację rasową uchodźców na granicy. Związek Ukraińców w Polsce i Fundacja „Nasz Wybór”*, 2022, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,162657,28311431,z-calego-serca-dziekujemy-za-wspieranie-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy.html> (accessed: 7.04.2022).
- Arendt H., 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Meridian Books.
- Arendt H., 2007, *We Refugees* [in:] J. Kohn, R.H. Feldman (eds.), *The Jewish Writings*, New York: Schocken Books.
- Avcı J., Galdamez J., 2022, *Człowiek na granicy. Bezpośrednie relacje migrantów i osób udzielających im wsparcia na polsko-białoruskiej granicy od lipca 2021 do lutego 2022*, “Karta”, nr 110/2022.

- Barker H., Zajović M. (eds.), 2020, *Black Book of Pushbacks*, Border Violence Monitoring Network, <https://www.borderviolence.eu/launch-event-the-black-book-of-pushbacks/> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Baroni R., Revaz F. (eds.), 2016, *Narrative Sequence in Contemporary Narratology*, Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- Barthes R., 1993, *Mythologies*, New York: Vintage.
- Belarus Authorities Purge Human Rights Defenders*, 2021, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/07/belarus-authorities-purge-human-rights-defenders> (accessed: 7.10.2021).
- Belarus Parliament Votes to Suspend Readmission of Migrants*, 2021, Associated Press, <https://apnews.com/article/european-union-alexander-lukashenko-poland-europe-belarus-4c39e7def6408319747ff89b1a8052fa> (accessed: 5.10.2021).
- Beznec B., Speer M., Stojić Mitrović M., 2016, *Governing the Balkan Route: Macedonia, Serbia, and the European Border Regime*, Beograd: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe.
- Bill S., 2020, *Counter-Elite Populism and Civil Society in Poland: PiS Strategies of Elite Replacement*, "East European Politics and Societies and Cultures", vol. 36, no. 1, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0888325420950800> (accessed: 16.09.2020).
- Borodaj D., 2022, *Pamiętacie o Usnarzu? Tkwili uwięzieni na granicy*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/pamietacie-o-usnarzu-tkwili-uwiezieni-na-granicy-wiecie-co-sie-z-nimistalo/> (accessed: 16.01.2022).
- Bužinkić E., Hameršak M. (eds.), 2018, *Formation and Disintegration of the Balkan Refugee Corridor: Camps, Routes and Borders in the Croatian Context*, Zagreb: Centre for Peace Studies.
- Chojnowska A., 2021, "Bezwzględna polityka Białorusi nie może usprawiedliwiać nieludzkiego traktowania". *Naukowcy apelują do polskiego rządu*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", <https://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,27706191,bezwzglesna-polityka-bialorusi-nie-moze-usprawiedliwiac-nieludzkiego.html> (accessed: 19.10.2021).
- Ciobanu C., 2022a, *Polish Forest Full of Fear: The story of migrants on the EU-Belarus Border*, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, <https://balkaninsight.com/polish-forests/> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Ciobanu C., 2022b, *Selective Sympathy: Poland's Contrasting Treatment of Those Seeking Refuge*, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/03/03/selective-sympathy-polands-contrasting-treatment-of-those-seeking-refuge/> (accessed: 3.03.2022).
- Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, United Nations Human Rights Office of High Commissioner, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Degering J., 2021, *Violence in Numbers: 100 Pushback Testimony Recorded by BVMN*, Border Violence Monitoring Network, <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-in-numbers-1000th-pushback-recorded-by-bvmn/> (accessed: 2.04.2021).
- Derrida J., 1999, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, P.-A. Brault, M. Naas (transl.), Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press.
- Die Here or Go to Poland. Belarus' and Poland's Shared Responsibility for Border Abuses*, 2021, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/11/24/die-here-or-go-poland/belarus-and-polands-shared-responsibility-border-abuses> (accessed: 24.11.2022).

- Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on Common Standards and Procedures in Member States for Returning Illegally Staying Third-Country Nationals, 2008, European Parliament, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32008L0115> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Dotychczasowy apel o przyjęcie uchodźców nie spotkał się z odpowiedzią godną ucznia Chrystusa, 2020, "Więź", <https://wiesz.pl/2020/09/18/dotychczasowy-apel-o-przyjecie-uchodzcow-nie-spotkal-sie-z-odpowiedzia-godna-ucznia-chrystusa/> (accessed: 18.09.2020).
- Düvell F., 2006, *Introduction* [in:] F. Düvell (ed.), *Illegal Immigration in Europe: Beyond Control?*, New York: Palgrave Macmillian.
- European Convention of Human Rights, 2013, European Court of Human Rights, Council of Europe, https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Fotiadis A., 2021, *Death by a Thousand Derogations: The Geneva Refugee Convention and the EU*, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/07/28/death-by-a-thousand-derogations-the-geneva-refugee-convention-and-the-eu/> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Gatrell P., 2013, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Girard R., 1977, *Violence and the Sacred*, P. Gregory (transl.), Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (first edition: *La Violence et le sacré*, Paris 1972).
- Glińska K., 2021, *Barbara Kurdej-Szatan pokazuje dramatyczne nagranie i uderza w rząd. 'Trzęsę się i ryczę', 'Onet Plejada'*, <https://plejada.pl/newsy/barbara-kurdej-szatan-pokazala-wstrzasajace-nagranie-z-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej/ytcebq9> (accessed: 4.11.2022).
- Górczyńska M., 2021, *On the Other Side of the Law: An Analysis of the Situation on the Polish-Belarusian Border. Situation on 9 September 2021*, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights Poland, <https://www.hfhr.pl/en/on-the-side-of-the-law-an-analysis-of-the-situation-on-the-polish-belarusian-border/> (accessed: 9.09.2021).
- Graff A., Korolczuk E., 2022, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Movement*, New York: Routledge.
- Grupa Granica, 2021, *Humanitarian Crisis at the Polish-Belarusian Border: Report by Grupa Granica*, <https://www.grupagranica.pl/files/Grupa-Granica-Report-Humanitarian-crisis-at-the-Polish-Belarusian-border.pdf> (accessed: 10.12.2021).
- Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2019, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/legal/5ddfcdc47/handbook-procedures-criteria-determining-refugee-status-under-1951-convention.html> (accessed: 7.07.2021).
- Hyndle-Hussein J., 2021a, *Kryzys migracyjny na Litwie*, Centre for Eastern Studies, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/node/29013> (accessed: 23.07.2021).
- Hyndle-Hussein J., 2021b, *Lithuania's Reaction to the Escalating Migration Crisis*, Centre for Eastern Studies, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2021-11-10/lithuanias-reactions-to-escalating-migration-crisis> (accessed: 10.11.2021).
- Kaczyński J., 2015, *Nie może być Polski bez kościoła*, Radio Maryja, <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/jaroslaw-kaczynski-nie-moze-byc-polski-bez-kosciola/> (accessed: 5.12.2015).
- Kamiński J., 2021, "Nie wpuszczać", "Strzelać jak do kaczek", "Noizz", <https://noizz.pl/opinie/migranci-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-oblewamy-egzamin-solidarnosci/he6q98c> (accessed: 26.08.2021).

- Kamiński o stanie wyjątkowym: Funkcjonariusze na granicy potrzebują swobody działania, 2021, "Gazeta Prawna", <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8236797,mariusz-kaminski-mswia-stan-wyjatkowo.html> (accessed: 2.09.2021).
- Koczując na granicy polsko-białoruskiej. "Sytuacja jest patowa", 2021, TVN, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/migranci-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-obozowisko-w-usnarzu-gornym-wideo-5196641> (accessed: 18.08.2021).
- Kogovšek-Šalamon N., 2016, *Legal Implications of the "Humanitarian Corridor"* [in:] N. Kogovšek-Šalamon, V. Bajt (eds.), *Razor-wired. Reflections on Migration Movements Through Slovenia in 2015*, Ljubljana: Peace Institute.
- Komunikat Prezydium KEP oraz oświadczenie zaangażowanych środowisk katolickich, 2016, Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, <https://pl.aleteia.org/2016/09/15/komunikat-prezydium-kep-oraz-oswiadczenie-zaangazowanych-srodowisk-katolickich/> (accessed: 15.09.2016).
- Kotwas M., Kubik J., 2019, *Symbolic Thickening of Public Culture and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Poland*, "East European Politics and Societies & Cultures", vol. 33, no. 2, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332460537_Symbolic_Thickening_of_Public_Culture_and_the_Rise_of_Right-Wing_Populism_in_Poland (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- KRASP apeluje do rządu w sprawie sytuacji na polsko-białoruskiej granicy, 2021, Nauka w Polsce, <https://naukawpolsce.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C89903%2CKrasp-apeluje-do-rzadu-w-sprawie-sytuacji-na-polsko-bialoruskiej-granicy> (accessed: 24.10.2021).
- Krępa M., Fiałkowska K., 2022, "Researchers at the Border", or on Social Responsibility of Researchers in Documenting Border Crisis, "Spotlight", vol. 36, no. 2, <https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Spotlight-FEBRUARY-2022.pdf> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Kuschminder K., 2021, *Frontex: Should EU Agency Be Linked to Thousand of Deaths from Border "Pushbacks" Be Responsible for Migrant Safety?*, "The Conversation", <https://the-conversation.com/frontex-should-eu-agency-linked-to-thousands-of-deaths-from-border-pushbacks-be-responsible-for-migrant-safety-156542> (accessed: 10.05.2021).
- Lakoff G., 2008, *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st Century Politics with an 18th Century Brain*, New York: Viking Books.
- Majewska E., 2011, *La Mestiza from Ukraine? Border Crossing with Gloria Anzaldúa*, "Signs", vol. 37, no. 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/660173> (accessed: 30.09.2021).
- Makarewicz N., 2020, *Abp. Jędraszewski nie odpowie za słowa o „tęczowej zarazie"*, TVN, https://www.rmfm24.pl/fakty/polska/news-abp-marek-jedraszewski-nie-odpowie-za-slowa-o-teczowej-zaraz,nId,4529622#crp_state=1 (accessed: 1.06.2020).
- Mateusz Morawiecki, Mariusz Kamiński, Maciej Wąsik podczas konferencji prasowej o zaporze granicznej, 2022, Kancelaria Premiera, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTui-p93dgM> (accessed: 30.06.2022).
- Mikołajewska B., 2021, *325 milionów złotych z publicznej kasy na „dzieła" Tadeusza Rydzika [wyliczenie Oko.press]*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/325-milionow-rydzika/> (accessed: 31.03.2021).
- Miniszewski M., 2022, *Czaban robi raban*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKZn2Y-Kidc4&t=1905s> (accessed: 5.07.2022).
- Morawiecki M., 2021, *Ta granica jest świętością*, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/MorawieckiPL/posts/420141689476894/> (accessed: 8.11.2021).
- Morawiecki przed zaporą na granicy polsko-białoruskiej. „Wyras naszej skuteczności i dowód przezorności", 2022, "Wprost", <https://www.wprost.pl/polityka/10765999/>

- morawiecki-przed-zapora-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-wyraz-naszej-skuteczności-i-dowod-przezorności.html (accessed: 30.06.2022).
- Morawiecki: *Granica państwa jest świętością, za którą przelewały krew pokolenia Polaków*, 2021, "Gazeta Prawna", <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/8287642,morawiecki-polska-granica-imigranci.html> (accessed: 8.11.2021).
- Nayeri D., 2019, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*, New York: Catapult.
- Nelson M., 2011, *Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning*, New York: Norton (mobi).
- Noiriel G., 1996, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Orędzie prezydenta Andrzeja Dudy na Święto Niepodległości. "Polska jest dzisiaj krajem bezpiecznym i stabilnym", 2021, TVN, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/oredzie-prezydenta-andrzeja-dudy-na-swieto-niepodleglosci-prezydent-o-sytuacji-na-granicy-polski-z-bialorusia-5486424> (accessed: 11.11.2021).
- Orwell G., 1946, *The Prevention of Literature*, The Orwell Foundation, <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-prevention-of-literature/> (accessed: 12.02.2022).
- Orwell G., 1952 [1938], *Homage to Catalonia*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Orwell G., 1981 [1946], *Politics and the English Language* [in:] idem, *A Collection of Essays*, New York – London: Harcourt.
- Orwell G., 2003 [1949], *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Penguin Books.
- Ossowski H., 2021, *Polska pomoże uchodźcom? Jedną z możliwości mogą być korytarze humanitarne. Wspólnota z Poznania ma na to nadzieję*, "Głos Wielkopolski", <https://gloswielkopolski.pl/polska-pomoze-uchodzcom-jedna-z-mozliwosci-moga-byc-korytarze-humanitarne-wspolnota-z-poznania-ma-na-to-nadzieje/ar/c1-15641680> (accessed: 18.10.2021).
- Oświadczenie Rady Naukowej Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2021, https://m.facebook.com/ifaipspan/photos/a.570299349989685/1669950776691198/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXUaR_wHQTXJLzrHkEAcFmXrlCZhOgMB5LFLzMnP8Ypx_-NRYb-c6NWo2e0XeYdyDNJqzFXIDuOhdJhZOqp82PcRzWDvSVYUrSBE7q6hvhkN-0BBaBu5AnZO8P7OWBjN0BQ&__tn__=R%5d-R (accessed: 7.10.2021).
- Oświadczenie Rady Stałej KEP w sprawie przyjmowania uchodźców, 2021, eKAI, <https://www.ekai.pl/oswiadczenie-rady-stalej-kep-w-sprawie-przyjmowania-uchodzcow/> (accessed: 22.12.2021).
- Pałęcka A., 2022, *Przemoc państwa i działania oddolne: Raport Fundacji Ocalenie z kryzysu humanitarnego na pograniczu polsko-białoruskim*, Warszawa: Fundacja Ocaleni, https://ocalenie.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Raport-Fundacji-Ocalenie-z-kryzysu-humanitarnego-na-pograniczu-PL-BY_1kor-1.pdf (accessed: 30.09.2022).
- Parekh S., 2020, *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Poland Claims Neighbor Invites Migrants, Pushes Them Across*, 2021, "AP News", <https://apnews.com/article/europe-business-poland-migration-belarus-2d186485981c15e5151749db37f61f83> (accessed: 24.08.2021).
- Poland Completes Belarus Border Wall to Keep Asylum Seekers Out*, 2022, Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/30/poland-belarus-border-completed-wall-to-keep-asylum-seekers-out> (accessed: 30.06.2022).

- Poland: *Parliament Approves 'Legalisation' Of Pushbacks, Council of Ministers Adopt Bill To Construct Border Wall, Another Life Lost At Border With Belarus*, 2021, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, <https://ecre.org/poland-parliament-approves-legalisation-of-pushbacks-council-of-ministers-adopt-bill-to-construct-border-wall-another-life-is-lost-at-border-with-belarus/> (accessed: 15.10.2021).
- Polska: *Okrucieństwo zamiast współczucia na granicy z Białorusią*, 2022, Amnesty International Poland, <https://amnesty.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Raport-Amnesty-International-POLSKA-OKRUCIENSTWO-ZAMIAST-WSPOLCZUCIA-NA-GRANICY-Z-BIALORUSIA.pdf> (accessed: 11.04.2022).
- Ponzanesi S., Merolla D. (eds.), 2005, *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*, New York – Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Premier Mateusz Morawiecki: *polska granica to świętość*, 2022, Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-mateusz-morawiecki-polska-granica-to-swietosc> (accessed: 16.02.2022).
- Premier Mateusz Morawiecki: *zapora na granicy z Białorusią to wyraz naszej skuteczności i przewidywalności*, 2022, Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/premier-mateusz-morawiecki-zapora-na-granicy-z-bialorusia-to-wyraz-z-naszej-skuteczności-i-przewidywalności> (accessed: 30.06.2022).
- Protocol No. 4 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1963, European Court of Human Rights, https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Library_Collection_P4postP11_ETS046E_ENG.pdf (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Researchers on the Border First Hybrid Seminar, January 22–23, 2022 [author's notes, confirmed by short interviews with activists/participants].
- Rodziny bez Granic, 2021–2022, <https://www.facebook.com/rodziny.bez.granic/> (accessed: 12.10.2021–21.02.2022).
- Rogojsz Ł., 2012, *Prof. Hartman o religii na maturze: Obecny rząd klęczy przed Kościołem jak wszystkie poprzednie*, "Polityka", <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jan-hartman-religia-na-maturze-egzamin-maturalny-rzad-kosciol/tpwcrpv> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 20 sierpnia 2021 roku, 2021, Dz. U., poz. 1536, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210001536/O/D20211536.pdf> (accessed: 20.08.2021).
- RPO: *Wstrzymać pushbacki i decyzje o opuszczeniu RP na polsko-białoruskiej granicy. MSWiA odpowiada*, 2022, <http://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/RPO-wstrzymac-stosowanie-push-backow-granica-bialorus> (accessed: 22.04.2022).
- Rumieńczyk B., 2022, *Aktywistka przesłuchiwana w kajdankach. KIK: „Dlaczego są dwie kategorie uchodźców i pomagających?*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/aktywistka-przesluchana-w-kajdankach-kik-dlaczego-sa-dwie-kategorie-uchodzcow-i-pomagajacych/> (accessed: 29.03.2022).
- Ryan M.L., Thon J.N. (eds.), 2014, *Storyworlds Across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, Lincoln–London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Rządowy projekt ustawy o zmianie ustawy o cudzoziemcach oraz ustawy o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2021, druk nr 1507, <https://sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=CD900BBA567B12CAC12587420034332B> (accessed: 21.10.2021).
- Sadura P., Urbańska S., 2021, *Obcy w naszym kraju. Gniew, żal i strach podlaskiego pogranicza*, "Krytyka Polityczna", <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/obcy-w-naszym-kraju-podlasie-uchodzczy-stan-wyjatkowy-reportaz-badanie/> (accessed: 17.09.2021).

- Sadurski W., 2019, *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Said-Moorhouse L., Mortensen A., Chodownik M., 2021, *Migrants Face Hypothermia and Broken Bones in Freezing Forests as Poland-Belarus Crisis Deepens*, CNN, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/11/10/europe/poland-belarus-border-migrant-crisis-wednesday-intl/index.html> (accessed: 11.11.2021).
- Solnit R., 2021, *Orwell's Roses*, New York: Viking.
- Sosnowski J., 2019, "Nie" dla stanowiska mojego biskupa, "Więź", <https://jrzysosnowski.pl/2019/03/12/nie-dla-stanowiska-mojego-biskupa/> (accessed: 12.03.2019).
- Stanowisko Rady Naukowej Instytutu Biologii Ssaków Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Białowieży w sprawie kryzysu na granicy z Białorusią oraz budowy płotu granicznego, 2021, <https://ibs.bialowieza.pl/stanowisko-rady-naukowej-instytutu-biologii-ssakow-polskiej-akademii-nauk-w-bialowiezy-w-sprawie-kryzysu-na-granicy-z-bialorusia-oraz-budowy-plotu-granicznego/> (accessed: 26.10.2021).
- Szczęśniak A., 2021, *Słyszę wycie dziecka na granicy przez całą noc. Miejcie odwagę przyjechać i spojrzeć mu w twarz*, OKO.press, <https://oko.press/slysze-wycie-dziecka-na-granicy-przez-cala-noc-miejcie-odwage-przyjechac-i-spojrzec-mu-w-twarz/> (accessed: 5.10.2021).
- Szef białoruskiego wywiadu ujawnia plany uderzenia w Polskę. „Pierwszy obiekt ataku”, 2022, "Wprost", <https://www.wprost.pl/polityka/10773751/szef-bialoruskiego-wywiadu-ujawnia-plany-uderzenia-w-polske-pierwszy-obiekt-ataku.html> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Szymański K., 2022, *Inflacja w Polsce przekroczyła 15% w czerwcu 2022 roku*, Money.pl, <https://www.totalmoney.pl/artykuly/895864,kredyty-gotowkowe,wszystko--co-musisz-wiedziec-o-inflacji,1,1> (accessed: 11.09.2022).
- Szymański P., 2021, *Reinforcing the Frontier: The Baltic States' Armed Forces in Border Protection Tasks*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2021-12-13/reinforcing-frontier-baltic-states-armed-forces-border-protection> (accessed: 13.12.2021).
- The 1951 UN Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Its 1967 Protocol, 2011, Geneva: UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- The NIV Bible*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/2-samuel/12.html> (accessed: 13.12.2022).
- Uchwała nr 130/2021 Senatu Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego z dnia 20 października 2021 roku w sprawie kryzysu humanitarnego na wschodniej granicy RP, 2021, https://bip.uni.wroc.pl/download/attachment/31472/uchwala-nr-130_2021-senatu-uwr-z-dnia-2021-10-20-w-sprawie-kryzysu-humanitarnego-na-wschodniej-granicy-rp.pdf (accessed: 20.10.2021).
- Violence and Pushbacks at Poland-Belarus Border*, 2022, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/07/violence-and-pushbacks-poland-belarus-border> (accessed: 7.06.2022).
- What Is the European Convention on Human Rights?*, 2017, Equality and Human Rights Commission, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/what-european-convention-human-rights> (accessed: 7.07.2022).
- Witamy w Guantanamo. Okrutne traktowanie na granicy polsko-białoruskiej i w ośrodkach dla cudzoziemców*, 2022, Amnesty International Poland, <https://amnesty.org.pl/okrutne-traktowanie-na-granicy-polsko-bialoruskiej-i-w-osrodkach-dla-cudzoziemcow/> (accessed: 11.04.2022).

- Wizytacja KMPT *ad hoc* w placówce Straży Granicznej w Szudziałowie oraz na granicy polsko-białoruskiej w Usnarzu Górnym. *Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej RPO*, 2021, Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/kmpt/wizytacja-kmpt-ad-hoc-w-placowce-strazy-granicznej-w-szudzialowie-oraz-na-granicy-polsko> (accessed: 24.08.2022).
- Woolley A., 2014, *Contemporary Asylum Narratives: Representing refugees in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zadarko K., 2021a, *Bp Zadarko: Gościnność względem obcego jest jednym z wyznaczników naszej wiary*, "Więź", <https://wiesz.pl/2021/08/22/bp-zadarko-goscinnosc-wzgle-dem-obcego-jest-jednym-z-wyznacznikow-naszej-wiary/> (accessed: 22.08.2022).
- Zadarko K., 2021b, *Komunikat Rady Konferencji Episkopatu Polski ds. Migracji, Turystyki i Pielgrzymek ws. uchodźców docierających do Polski*, <https://www.ekai.pl/dokumenty/komunikat-rady-konferencji-episkopatu-polski-ds-migracji-turystyki-i-pielgrzymek-ws-uchodzcow-docierajacych-do-polski/> (accessed: 22.08.2022).
- Zadarko K., 2022c, *Komunikat Rady Konferencji Episkopatu Polski ds. Migracji, Turystyki i Pielgrzymek na 108. Światowy Dzień Migranta i Uchodźcy. Otwartość i solidarność względem cudzoziemca są dla chrześcijanina moralną powinnością*, <https://episkopat.pl/rada-kep-ds-migracji-turystyki-i-pielgrzymek-otwartosc-i-solidarnosc-wzgle-dem-cudzoziemca-sa-dla-chrzescijanina-moralna-powinnoscia/> (accessed: 21.09.2022).
- Zimbardo P., 2008, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, New York: Random House Paperback.
- Zweig S., 1981 [1946], *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography of Stefan Zweig*, Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press.