

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



I composed this monograph to the rhythm of my daughter's growing into a schoolchild. She is on every page of this book.

I read most of Mezzadra and Neilson's *Border as a Method*, referred to in the introduction, on Viennese playgrounds while looking after Maren and her older brother, Lew. After Maren found in my backpack a book with drawings of Polish-speaking children in refuge depicting their experiences of the First World War, she had problems falling asleep. My attention was triggered by the account of the girl writing an essay in German while using Polish orthography, mentioned in one of the chapters of this book, because a few days earlier my trilingual daughter had decided to stick to her neologism 'poestijn' – a combination of the Dutch word 'woestijn' and the Polish word 'pustynia' – even after finding out it was wrong, because she considered it more beautiful. An original source copy from the German Archive in Koblenz contains a hole Maren made after grabbing it from my desk. The archival documents from Katowice were gathered during a research summer Maren was too small to remember, but her four-year-old brother did. He put the city at the centre of his mental map of Europe and long continued to ask when we would finally move there.

Many of the books on the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy were gathered during a library visit to Eupen five months into my high-risk pregnancy, a trip that felt like an expedition to the moon but was made easier thanks to a librarian allowing me to borrow more than the maximum number of books. My daughter was with me, asleep in her pram, when I was denied access to the national libraries in Austria, Belgium and Poland in order to make copies of pre-ordered books. I gave up on trying the same in the German State Library in Berlin, where I may have had more luck. When research assistant Boris Stamenić called me to ask whether to copy the archival materials concerning the transnational

fairy-tale books discussed in chapter five, I was with Maren in the waiting room of her paediatrician, a place where we spent much time after she was born prematurely. My greatest source of inspiration has been the eagerness with which Maren has pursued the task of catching up with children her own age, practising on a daily basis in a way that probably only a child is capable of, as if yesterday didn't exist.

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