



palgrave▶pivot

Antinormative Interpretation

Elin McCready

palgrave
macmillan

Antinormative Interpretation

Elin McCready

Antinormative Interpretation

palgrave
macmillan

Elin McCready
ICREA / Universitat Autònoma de
Barcelona
Barcelona, Spain

ISBN 978-3-031-94585-4 ISBN 978-3-031-94586-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-94586-1>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer
Nature Switzerland AG 2025

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: © Melisa Hasan

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been a long time in the making. The general thought it expresses might have had its first overt realization on July 20, 2005 (I looked this up just now) when I started a community called ‘Katte-na Installation’ (Unsolicited Installation) on a now quasi-defunct Japanese social media network called mixi. The idea of this group was to find random configurations of things in the world that could be parsed as art installations and post them on the site. Here, the eye of the interpreter replaces the intent of an artist in the interpretation of some object(s) as art. This is a first, though limited, example of the main idea of this book: using the space of possible interpretations as a sandbox for artistic practice.

The initial insight that led to the specific project reported on here happened in the Swedish forest. In March of 2020, I was in Gothenburg and found myself unable to return to Japan, which had COVID-19 closed its border to anyone without a Japanese passport. I spent some months in the forest in Dalsland watching winter turn to spring and to summer, swimming, walking, writing. One evening as I walked down a small road in late sunlight among large pines I asked myself: what would ‘blue’ mean if it was a determiner, i.e., a generalized quantifier, i.e., a relation between sets, i.e., something like ‘every’? My head started to spin and the whole shape of the structure for transformations described in Chapter 3 came into view; it was all written down within 12 hours in one of those occasional blazing inspired moments. The system presented here

is an extension and reconceptualization of this work, an earlier version of which appeared as McCready (2022), though I have made some substantial changes from that version of the work. The rest of the book, in a way, extends that idea into different domains, generalizes it, and explores its significance.

I thank Elis Ottosson and Midori Morita above all, for all the conversations, love, inspiration, etc.; thank you both for everything in this life. I also thank Matt Brand, Lisa Bylinina, Thomas Dabbs, Jesse Darling, Chris Davis, Patrick Elliott, Orion J. Facey, Annette Gilbert, Erin Honeycutt, Yoshiyuki Ishikawa, Dolly Jørgensen, Finn Arne Jørgensen, Martins Kohout, Vincenzo Latronico, Yuki Masami, Lukas Rieser, Kanae Tanikawa, Grégoire Winterstein, Yiqing Yan, and everyone else I spoke about these things with but have apparently forgotten at this moment for discussions of embodiment, experimental literature, grammaticality, normativity and precision, plants, somatics, truth, and other things, for their interest and support, and for everything else. I especially thank Daniel Levin Becker for kindly presenting the initial stages of this work to the Oulipo annual meeting in 2022. Finally, I thank audiences at xCoAx 2022 (Coimbra), Critical Misanthropy (AIHR), ANEST ‘Teaching Through and with Environmental Storytelling’ Workshop (National Taiwan Normal University), AGU Environmental Humanities Forum (Aoyama Gakuin University) and Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze for helpful comments and questions, and various institutions for giving me money that allowed me space to work on this project, knowingly or not.

CONTENTS

1	Experimenting with Interpretation	1
	<i>Goal</i>	3
	<i>Plan</i>	5
	<i>References</i>	7
2	Normative Meanings	9
	<i>Toolkit</i>	15
	<i>References</i>	26
3	Transformations Beyond Grammar	29
	<i>Text Transformations</i>	29
	<i>System</i>	33
	<i>Transformation 1</i>	43
	<i>Transformation 2</i>	44
	<i>Transformation 3</i>	51
	<i>References</i>	57
4	Self-Intervention	59
	<i>Coordinates of Performance</i>	61
	<i>Intervention: Autofiction of the Other</i>	64
	<i>Putting Embodiment in Context</i>	67
	<i>Intervening in Embodiment</i>	72
	<i>More-Than-Human Reembodiments</i>	75
	<i>References</i>	81

5 Other Antinormativities	85
<i>References</i>	88

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	Attested types in natural language	20
Fig. 2.2	Derivation of ‘Every plant grows towards the sun’	22
Fig. 3.1	Substitutions for Transformation 1	43
Fig. 3.2	Text transformation 2: list of substitutions, deletions, reinterpretations	46
Fig. 3.3	Free verse translation of (25)	52
Fig. 3.4	Before my eyes	55