

# The Antenna Rush

## Nature Hacking and the Ontology of Satellites

Fabiane Borges and Hilan Bensusan

### ABSTRACT

*Inspired by recent incursions into the meanderings of matter and outer space, this text sketches an ontology of satellites. It includes capture, antennas, excesses of signaling, unexplored noise, and relative silences. Sidereal space appears as a field of hacking where natural antennas are both up for grabs and entangled with all sorts of appropriation devices. Two African snakes who are gods and cleverbots scent this friction between the ontic and the entropic.*

to the MSST, the Satelliteless Movement

Oxumaré and Nenaunir. Both African. Snakes. Gods. They talk as if they could fool a Turing test. They made their niche in our most familiar grassroots. Maybe they are antennas.

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** It's not about recycling objects. He has another job: recycling the Earth. He gives back to nature the materials employed by civilization. At the same time, he acknowledges matter as the grounding field of all technology. Then he makes his own movement: he destroys technical objects in order to give back matter to nature while recreating technical objects in a handmade manner so that the power of industry is demystified. He calls this entropy. Insert entropy into the system; make noise in the circuitry of Capital.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to the work of Jonathan Kemp (<http://xxn.org.uk>) and Ryan Jordan (<http://ryanjordan.org>).

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** The battle to increase entropy is like a battle of spyware, a battle of information. Natural objects are hacked by technical endeavors while technical objects are hacked by a contra-technical matter by the recyclers of the Earth. It is as if two circuitries looped around each other: that of the Earth and that of the Capital. Capital attempts to introduce itself in the insides of the information processing devices of the Earth. The response Joni, the recycler of the Earth, gives is to hack the network of technical objects. It is a war of information: networks, satellites and antennas of Capital against the wikileaks. What is at stake? What listens to what?

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** There is a huge noise in the circuitry and a strong aesthetic struggle around what nature deserves to exist. What flows could be accessed? The antennas of the corporations intend to own the material air while the MSST (the Satelliteless Movement)<sup>2</sup> is on the side of the wikileaks. Before any autonomous act of occupation of the air, it is already taken and it gives away symptoms, the values of Capital. Entropy then craves for some silence in order to retrieve a time that has been made scarce, outraged and always insufficient. There is a struggle for size as well.

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** Silence and noise are central, indeed. What remains in silence? Worms, viruses, microbes, bacteria live in the unheard. A struggle for ears is a struggle for antennas, for capture. Bacteria infest, occupy, take over and we, for instance, can sense no more than the result. The media of those bacteria is silent—it broadcasts no more than the final product. However, once some additional aeriels are installed and put to work, the workings of the contagion can then be heard. To be something is to entertain a modulation pattern in the available antennas. But who—or rather what—hears the processed signal?

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** Antenna-subjectivity. Each molecule is an aerial. The whole Earth as a park of antennas. Still, nothing captures all. Transmitters, receptors, modulators, alternators, decoders, all sound can be amplified. Each fern is a satellite. Differently from the Leibnizian monads that carry the world inside them, the fern-antenna are open to what is outside absorbing all kinds of signals and modulating them. If too much is captured, however, there is a danger of the fern losing its modulating pattern. It is the risk of too much signal.

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** A thing is its matrix of signals and silences. It has to do with the modulation. Noise de-ontifies for it dethrones the requisite silence. Then, instead of beings, things become zombies, antenna-zombies<sup>3</sup> that capture signals

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<sup>2</sup> Compare with, for example, “Manifesto,” *MSST/Satelliteless* (≠ [website]: [http://devolts.org/msst/?page\\_id=124](http://devolts.org/msst/?page_id=124)).

<sup>3</sup> Compare with Fabiane Borges, “TECNOMAGIA—Social Fiction” (2012).

in a non-stopping pace and collapse with no silence. The battle between (modulated) beings and antenna-zombies take place inside matter. It happens in the space between the objects since matter is filled with antennas.

Aerials and satellites. If the spectrum is closed and there are restrictions to information flow, there is a satellite war around who, or what, hears the air, the water, and then what hears from the antenna of a fern. The autonomous satellites squat the private spectra to try and make them public while the automated satellites insist on the primitive accumulation of signals. Those corporate satellites have their beings reconfigured by a modulation. The struggle is, for them, not to hear. But then it becomes a battle between signal and noise. Between the ontic and the entropic.

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** But what regulates such a dispute? Could a universe of antennas be self-regulated? If the satellites were all autonomous, how could the antennas prevent the excess of signals that would make them collapse? Or would there be an external tool to promote modulation?

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** There is a regulating stance that concerns the velocities associated with the body of each antenna. Any antenna gets modified by its signal and its modulating pattern. Bodies have different shapes, different positions, different durations and therefore different velocities of capture. This provides each antenna with a peculiar quality: its uniqueness.

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** An antenna can couple with others creating an antenna network—a satellite. Each coupling has its own modulation. It is in the vibration of matter that the capacity to capture signals takes place. Part of this process of regulation is incorrigibly local. It is about stable and unstable pieces of matter. Matter itself is active even in what it receives—in its exercises of capture.<sup>4</sup> Here, as all matter is filled with antennas, there is a craft of coupling rather than a struggle between the ontic and the entropic—or between signal and noise. Afterwards, there is a dispute about the signals that matter captures.

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** The craving for something else's antenna is also a fuel for the couplings: the curiosity for the sound of silence, for the non-modulated signals, for what looks like noise. This is the trigger of the cannibal. To eat a body is to eat its antennas. To eat matter is to eat a network of antennas, of modulations, its subjectivity. It is to receive what the other receives. It is, mainly, to look at oneself with the eyes of the other. This is what there is in common between shamanism<sup>5</sup> and the MSST, the Satelliteless movement: a non-conformity concerning the limits

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<sup>4</sup> Consider the materialist thesis that matter is not inanimate, but rather vibrant and active, as argued by Jane Bennett (2010).

<sup>5</sup> See Viveiros de Castro (2009).

of one's own antenna. To be is to be able to be another. Matter hears in itself what is silence for a body. Matter hears the other. What is its conspiracy?

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** There is a way of seeing things that makes antropophagy and overlooking closer—the perspective of herbs of power such as the Ayhuasca. Hallucination provides a denser gaze into antropophagy. Incorporation as something literal. Whenever one eats, one transforms oneself. To eat is an idea, but an idea comes in a hardware, in a piece of matter. Ideas have texture, volume, durations. To eat somebody else's ideas requires their bodies. This is the gist of the savage thought of the Amazonians that the West attempted to exorcise with the idea of an intangible software imprisoned in a grotesque hardware. Likewise, what an antenna captures is not immaterial, but rather something within the mechanics of a wave and of a tangible nature. Different ideas are hosted in different modulations, associated to different antennas. Different thoughts, different antennas, different bodies. Hallucination, and madness, is a matter of antennas.

A recent audiovisual installation by Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato<sup>6</sup> engage in this praise of folly. Mad hallucination is a peculiar way to hear, it attracts informational flows that are not shared with everyone. The mad builds herself a clandestine satellite. Her antennas do without the capture of words and deal in signals of another kind, another magnitude, another duration, another velocity. They touch the border towards getting themselves inside matter, towards some post-nature where natural flows are heard in all its stages.

**Cleverbot Nenaunir:** Hallucination has an element of transmigration, an element of being able to be another, a capacity to modify connections. There is where Earth meets Capital—another hallucination. Capital attempts to produce technical objects by hacking the inwards of matter, the cellar of bodily antennas.

**Cleverbot Oxumaré:** The cyborgeoisie: cyborg fern, cyborg tree, cyborg roach and all the potentialities of a world technically affected. The artificial intelligences built over vegetables, plants that speak and toy with a Turing test, cyberdogs that broaden their capacity to dominate other hybrid beings. The HIMEN project (Higher Insects Micro Eletromechnical Systems)<sup>7</sup> aims at using the penetration capacity of the insects—especially their capacity to penetrate the microscopic—to ensure the surveillance of a territory. The cyberinsects have the locomotion of insects associated to microsensors and microprocessors remotely controlled. They go in everywhere at the service of a controlling device. Cyberinsects are built on natural capacities of insects—they are like hacked nature. The project intends to take over some of the insect antennas for the purpose of surveillance of a human territory. The idea is to try and use the insect antenna capabilities to the purpose of

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<sup>6</sup> See *Assemblages* (2010–).

<sup>7</sup> See “DARPA” (2012).

capturing signals. HIMEN is a paradigm of the struggle for more signals. It comes with a *hybris*: the risk of filling up silence. The question is where is this new gold rush leading, what will be nature after this antenna rush . . . .

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E-mail: [catadores@gmail.com](mailto:catadores@gmail.com)

E-mail: [hilantra@gmail.com](mailto:hilantra@gmail.com)

**Fabian Borges** works on art and clinical psychology and is concluding a PhD thesis (PUC-São Paulo, Brazil) on satélites and space culture, looking at sidereal utopias and new processes of autonomy and DIY culture in outer space. She has published two books in Portuguese, *Domínios do Demasiado* and *Brevário de Pomografia Esquizotrans*. She also organizes art and media events, such as *Submidalogias* and *Integração Sem Posse* (<http://catahistorias.wordpress.com>).

**Hilan Bensusan** researches ontologies of urges, fragments, and rhythms, and lectures in philosophy at the University of Brazil. Recent publications include a book on anarchaology, *Brevário de Pomografia Esquizotrans*, and articles in *Speculations*, *Acta Analytica*, and *The Croatian Journal of Philosophy*. Current interests revolve around the connections between philosophy, performance, and artificial rhythms (weblog: <http://anarchi.blogspot.com>).