With and Against Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle: A Case Study of Live Earth, its Politics, its Contradictions, and its Political Potential

by

Jasmine North
B.A., University of Victoria, 2006

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the environmental movement’s controversial use of spectacular media to incite socio-ecological change. An analysis of Al Gore’s 2007 Live Earth event forms the basis for an exploration, critique, and reformulation of spectacular theory within the context of the climate crisis. An exploration of Guy Debord’s influential theory of spectacular society, as articulated in his 1967 text *The Society of the Spectacle*, engages Live Earth’s spectacular environmentalism with the following theoretical problem: does the spectacle simply reiterate a discourse and mode of interaction that re-inscribes the destructive network of capital and consumption by existing as a consumable object, or are the effects of the spectacle less predetermined? Furthermore, if there exists within the contemporary spectacular event some recoverable political potential, does this potential outweigh the negative material waste created by the event? In the first part of this thesis, Debord’s understanding of spectacular organization provides a forceful critique of an event such as Live Earth; however, three limitations to an Debordian understanding of the contemporary spectacular commodity are identified: the suggestion that the spectacle, in the last instance, produces and reproduces a universal homogeneity that erases and negates its underlying difference; the elision of the particularly ecological question of the technology of the spectacle; and the failure to adequately theorize human agency. Given these limitations, a turn to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s 1987
publication, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, as well as Anna Tsing’s 2005 text, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, is initiated in the second part of this thesis in order to construct a more fluid understanding of the way in which spectacular forms might disassemble and reassemble in both form and content. While still acknowledging the destructive influences of corporatized spectacular logic within the contemporary context of late capitalism and post-modernity, this alternative understanding of spectacle favors a more indeterminant understanding of society and spectacle. A spectacular event, such as Live Earth, is reformulated as an assemblage that contains both territories of capture and lines of flight that escape dominant codings. Contrary to Debord’s claims, a spectacular environmental event is consequently identifiable as a site of domination and oppression, as well as a site of resistance and escape.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family for helping me survive and succeed. To my parents for showing me how to find my inner strength and teaching me to appreciate the earth. To my daughter for teaching me to love all sides of life. To my partner for teaching me that love and teamwork are stronger than hate and oppression. To the earth for showing me different ways of being and knowing.
Introduction

Ecological issues are increasingly commanding center stage in the political arena. Dominant economic and political systems, as well as everyday citizens, are consequently being compelled to consider the possibility that significant economic and cultural changes are necessary to eliminate the threat of an ecological crisis. This study intends to explore the possibilities of using media and music to elicit social change within the context of ecopolitics. In terms of a global communication system, television, radio, satellite, and internet technologies are currently positioned by dominant interests as the tools that offer the most efficient mediums of mass communication for a global audience. Music, existing in the twenty-first century within a complex structure of global production and distribution, is often written and performed to entice social change. In these instances, music is paradoxically imbued in creation and implicated in censorship with the power to change the consciousness of society.

Al Gore’s 2007 Live Earth concerts, designed to launch a massive popular movement to combat climate change, provide an example of the use of music and image as spectacular commodities by an environmental movement in order to incite a massive change in public opinion and practice.1 This use of spectacle by environmentalists to initiate a global grassroots movement raises a theoretical question: does the spectacle simply reiterate a discourse and mode of interaction that re-inscribes the destructive network of capital and consumption by existing as a consumable object, or are the effects of the spectacle less predetermined? Furthermore, if there exists within the contemporary spectacular event some recoverable political potential, does this potential outweigh the negative material waste created by the event? To answer these questions, the first section of this thesis will turn to Guy Debord’s 1967 theory of the spectacle, in The
Society of the Spectacle. Although there is much to recover within Debord’s theory of the spectacle, three limitations to an understanding of the contemporary spectacular commodity are identified: the suggestion that the spectacle, in the last instance, produces and reproduces a universal homogeneity that erases and negates its underlying difference; the elision of the particularly ecological question of the technology of the spectacle; and the failure to adequately theorize human agency. Given these limitations, a turn to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s 1987 publication, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, as well as Anna Tsing’s 2005 text, Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection, is consequently necessary in order to construct a more fluid understanding of the way in which the spectacle itself might disassemble and reassemble in both form and content. The second section of this thesis will focus on reconstructing a less determinant theory of the spectacle that fits within the contemporary context of late capitalism and post-modernity. Since an abstract model implies over-generalizations and pushes towards a construction of a universal metanarrative, the limitations of the spectacle according to Debord’s conceptualization of the spectacle, as well as the revised theoretical model of the spectacle that I will sketch out in part two, is ultimately rooted in an investigation of one particular event: Live Earth. This analysis is ‘local’ in the sense that the theoretical critique and reformulation presented here is tied to a specific event; or rather, to multiple specific events, with different locations and different performers, within one particular event.
The Spectacular Event: Live Earth

On July 7, 2007, Al Gore, Kevin Wall, and a number of other individuals and organizations launched a three year S.O.S. (Save Our Selves) campaign for a planet in crisis. Concerned about the rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere since the 1970’s, Gore has attempted to influence American political opinion and policy implementation in regards to climate change for over thirty years. During his 2007 presentation at the Victoria Conference Centre, Gore affirmed that he believes the best way to influence political and corporate policy is to create a “sea change” in public opinion (“An Afternoon With Al Gore”). Stepping out of the Senate and into the spotlight, Gore subsequently aligned his political project with popular culture in order to initiate a grassroots movement capable of exerting massive pressure on global and national political systems. Gore does not argue against the necessity of participating in official political processes; his visit to Victoria drew key British Columbian politicians into attendance and was rhetorically designed to address the issue of political leadership in terms of environmental stewardship and climate change. However, his particular mission with Live Earth was to increase public awareness in order to multiply the individual and collective responses and solutions to global warming.

Featuring nine televised mega-concerts staged on seven different continents, Live Earth streamed live feed through television, radio, the internet, and wireless channels for twenty-four hours; 8,200 untelevised Friends of Live Earth events on July 7th were also held in 130 different countries. In order to attract as many spectators as possible, Gore enlisted the performances of diverse pop culture icons from around the globe. Moreover, Live Earth did not limit its twenty-four hour line up to contemporary favorites, but rather showcased an intergenerational mix of hit
artists and independent musicians. Each of the nine concerts opened with a speech by Gore in which he asserted that human activities, particularly those that occur in wealthier nations, are the cause of global warming and climate change. To “combat” climate change, Gore unveiled a set of seven universal, yet ambiguous, political and personal pledges. These pledges, as well as various energy saving tips for middle class families, were repeated between music sets by environmental activists and movie stars. In the months following the spectacle of Live Earth, environmental groups, the media, and Live Aid organizers, including Bob Geldoff, have questioned the political efficacy of the event and criticized the contradictory excess of the concerts.

Two polarized responses to Live Earth emerge in the aftermath of the spectacular event. First, there was a deeply cynical critique of the hypocritical contradictions embedded within the event. Second, excited participants and bloggers articulated a naive faith in the effectiveness of the event. The first response adheres to the line of critique established by Debord’s history of the spectacle in *The Society of the Spectacle*; the second blindly accepts the illusion of praxis manufactured by the spectacle. In other words, the action to consume is accepted as a ‘revolutionary’ action by the consumers of the spectacle. The binary relationship underpinning the two positions, however, evades a more nuanced understanding of the event in a contemporary context. In Donald Nicholson-Smith’s 1994 translation of *The Society of the Spectacle* Debord outlines the negative implications of the economy of spectacle and contends that the logic of spectacle is indistinguishable from the logic of capital. In relation to Debord’s theory, Live Earth could be viewed as inscribing a generalizing normative discourse of ‘green’ commodity consumption on the environmental movement. While this critique holds true in many instances,
the reduction of spectacle to a purely economic analysis imposes a false commercial unity on the event. The non-critique of the believer, on the other hand, betrays an ignorance of the negation within the event that reproduces capitalist structures by supporting the production and dissemination of the symbolic image as commodity.

Yet Debord’s definition of the spectacular economy alone cannot explain the full impact of a spectacular production. Deleuze and Guattari contend that capitalism operates according to a much more indeterminate set of restrictions. The universalizing rhetoric of Live Earth (S.O.S language of crisis; seven pledges of action; possibilities of technology) attempts to reach for “modernization and unification, together with all the other tendencies toward the simplification of society” (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 9), in the manner typical of Debord’s spectacle. However, the multiplicity of lateral alliances between organizations, musicians, and individuals, and the differences articulated by these allies, rupture this unificatory moment. The application of Debord’s theory in relation to Live Earth exposes the limits of Debord’s theory. Live Earth can be understood not as a one-dimensional economic spectacle, but rather as a spectacular “assemblage” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 326) of alliances between complementary and competing assemblages of music, spectacle, internet, capital, social justice, and ecology. As such, this thesis intends to locate Live Earth as an assemblage of differing and competing multiplicities.
Chapter One

Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle

The first part of this thesis will explore Debord’s theoretical framework in *The Society of the Spectacle*, focusing on the implications of Debord’s theory for an analysis of Live Earth. In chapter one the primary concepts underlying Debord’s understanding of spectacular society will be explored in relation to the tradition of theory that Debord draws upon. The influence of Hegelian and Marxist thought on Debord’s theory of society include Hegel’s Master-Slave narrative and concept of total change through the process of negation, as well as Marx’s theories of alienation and commodity fetishism. Hegel’s and Marx’s influential theories are central to Debord’s conceptualization of society and inform Debord’s understanding of the colonization of consciousness. In addition to Hegel’s Master-Slave narrative, Debord uses Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to support his analysis of class divisions and power relations. Debord’s revolutionary ideas, including the concepts of détournement and dérive, as well as his involvement in the Situationist movement are also explored. Finally, Debord’s eventual pessimism, which closes down the revolutionary potential that he highlighted in his theory of the revolutionary class, is outlined.

The Three Stages of History

Debord’s sociopolitical theory of the spectacle, which extends Hegelian and Marxist thought to include concepts articulated by the Frankfurt school, positions spectacle as a material force of domination. Debord’s critique of the spectacle is therefore also a critique of the
consciousness of human society in the context of early capitalism. As such, Debord’s critical position aligns rather comfortably with the implicit critique of capitalism forwarded in the canons of ecological debate. Charting a three-stage historical process according to a Hegelian-Marxist dialectic, Debord contends that society moves from “being” to “having” to “appearing” (*Society of the Spectacle* 16). In the first moment, society exists in a pre-modern time with a lived relationship to the land, to time, and to memory. In the second instance, society exists in the context of early industrialization, theorized so intensely as Marxist alienation. In this context, happiness is displayed through material signs and time is quantified. In this shift from *being* to *having*, Marx identified a diversion and reduction of the subject’s “creative praxis” away from “imaginative transformation” and toward the “mere possession of . . . object[s]” (Best and Kellner 5). The subject’s “need for the other,” in the form of community and interpersonal relations, is “reduced to greed of the self” (5). This greed is satisfied through the consumption of material goods and the display of material wealth. In the third historical moment identified by Debord, spectacle and capital converge to “subject” society to the “will” of the economy (*Society of the Spectacle* 16). Through the consumption of images and signs, society is colonized by an “autonomous movement of non-life:” the artificial reality of the spectacle (12). In this shift, Debord furthers the Hegelian-Marxist reduction of lived experience from *having* to *appearing*. Marx situated the consciousness of society along the axis of production; Debord advanced this notion to assert the dependance of the consciousness on the logic of consumption. Society’s fascination with the “material object” is replaced by a fetishism for the “semiotic representation” of the material (Best and Kellner 5). The image of the material object is elevated and consecrated in the “society of the spectacle” and appearance, “style, and possession” are deployed as “signs
of social prestige” (Debord *Society of the Spectacle* 8, Best and Kellner 5). In its spectacular context, society is separated and alienated from its own consciousness and therefore also separated from its creative and transformative potential. The artificial reality produced by the circulation of officially sanctioned semiotic discourses replaces and confuses the authentic experience of everyday reality. Debord’s understanding of the alienation of society and the means by which this alienation could be overturned is immersed in a distinctly Hegelian framework. A return to Hegel's dialectical logic is subsequently necessary in order to understand the means by which the discourse of spectacular society, understood in terms of Barthes’ inversion of Saussure to include all "sign systems,” (Macey 347) works to produce false subjectivities and therefore to maintain power.

*The Influence of Hegel on Debord’s Thought*

Marx and Engels used Hegelian philosophy in their theoretical exposition of a society enslaved by the demands of production; Debord followed the dialectical path carved out by Hegel and Marx to further posit the existence of a society whose consciousness was riveted by the image of happiness. In Debord’s view, the real, yet unrecognized disenchantment and fury of an already oppressed society is captivated and tranquilized by the frenetic circulation of a semiotic discourse that enforces a logic of consumption - of images, bodies, and products - on society. This hegemonic discourse is disseminated by an elaborate, and distinctly spectacular, communications framework that is owned and controlled by a Master class. The binary Debord establishes between the passive spectator and the active oppressor thus descends into the primeval battle between the Master and the Slave that Hegel identifies in *Phenomenology of*
The class division that Debord establishes between the bureaucratic ruling class and the consumer working class is thus conceptualized in terms of self-consciousness and power. In Debord’s thought, the self-consciousness of the proletariat is enslaved by the ideology of the bourgeoisie consequently separating the proletariat not only from his own body, but also from his own mind, or spirit. In contemporary spectacular society, Debord’s revolutionary subject is fundamentally alienated from his own cognitive processes and material actions.

While Hegel posits the further evolution of the subject’s consciousness, Debord’s theory of the spectacle holds that the attainment of a higher level of consciousness is stymied by the constant bombardment of spectacular images that promise transcendence through consumption. In the society of the spectacle, the consumer believes he is fulfilling his own desires, but according to Debord, is in effect only fulfilling the desires of the Master. Fundamental to both Hegel’s and Debord’s thought is the idea that freedom consists not in the ability to choose among a series of “preferences,” but rather in the ability to live “self-consciously and in a fully rationally organized community or state” (Blackburn 161). For Hegel then, history is conceptualized on the basis of progress and in direct relation to freedom. This progression toward the absolute freedom of self-consciousness, in Hegel’s view, is the goal of a “proper theory of knowledge” (162). In his expositions on the necessity for an alignment between theory and practice, Debord echoes the Hegelian desire for the complete freedom of self-consciousness. However, Debord asserts that this freedom of self-consciousness can not be attained by a society governed by spectacular images. From Hegel to Marx to Debord, “negation is a constant process that proceeds according to the logic of dialectics” (Bracken 11). According to this philosophical position, the “latest birth of time is the result of all the systems that have preceded it” and it
“must include their principles” in order to become what it was always meant to be: a total knowledge (13). Like Hegel, Debord believed that there was a direct relation between spirit and history; consequently, any disjuncture in society is a result of a disjuncture in the spirit. Hegel asserted that the contradictions of the mind were “embodied” in real events, therefore giving life to the contradictions of the spirit (Blackburn 162).

**Debord and Hegel**

In his own text, Debord picks up a number of Hegelian themes, including the dichotomy of power established in terms of the self-consciousness of subjects. As a result, Debord saw “mutual recognition and self-consciousness through action” as key elements to revolutionary practice (Bunyard). In his own theory, however, Debord discards external transcendence and the Absolute spirit of Hegelian thought. Following Feuerbach’s lead, Debord critiques the spiritual preoccupations of Hegelian thought by situating religion as an emotional interpretation of events. Seeing a separation from the “actions of finite beings within time” in Hegel’s distinction of the “eternal and the infinite,” Debord sought to move beyond Hegel’s preoccupations with the Absolute (Bunyard). According to Bunyard, Debord critiqued Hegel for creating a “circular system,” wherein there is a desire to return the subject to the state of “being,” and sought to construct an alternative understanding of history in terms of a distinctly “irreversible” time of transformation (Bunyard; Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 9). Instead of reaching back in time for a lost self-consciousness, Debord looked into the future for the recovery of the same lost self-consciousness. Debord’s historical dialectic sought the celebration of “finite human perspectives of history’s protagonists,” rather than their transcendence (Bunyard). Instead of “pursuing the
eternal truth of an Absolute that stood above history, Debord argued that truth was to be found in the necessity of human self-constitution in time” (Bunyard). Like Marx, Debord also believed that the proletariat was the subject that was capable of seizing the moment of revolution. Taking a Marxist stance, Debord consequently asserted the primary importance of “subjectivity and class consciousness” for any revolutionary movement (Bunyard). Debord thus sought to situate the development of self-consciousness in the context of a progressive time of transformation, rather than in a cyclical return to a lost self-consciousness.

*Debord’s History of Society in Terms of Time*

In Debord’s history of time, the first stage is identified as a state of *being*. According to Debord, nomadic men and the settled agrarians gained a consciousness of time in a cyclical sense through their “immediate experience[s] of nature” (*Society of the Spectacle* 93). Although both conceptions of time centered on the cyclical regeneration of natural phenomena, the foundation of each was defined on entirely different terms. For the nomad, “cyclical time” was defined through “a time bound return to similar places” (93). With the foundation of permanent agricultural settlements, society’s conception of cyclical time shifted to enable the “pure return of time [to] a single place” (93). These conceptions of time align with a green perspective that articulates a desire to return to a cyclical experience of nature. However, far from positing that these societies represent the existence of a pre-modern utopia, Debord critiques the development of cyclical time for its refusal of the pure essence of time. Indeed, cyclical time was “a time known to the peasant masses,” which are defined as an undifferentiated herd of commoners “who never change” (96). According to Debord, in its natural state, time passes rather than returns; as
such, an authentic revolutionary consciousness must “embrace” the passage of “irreversible time” in a “playful” manner that allows for the existence of multiple “individual and collective” independent times (116). Bracken maintains that “irreversible time is intricately linked with Debord’s vision of revolution - a moment when time is used differently by various groups and individuals” (9). Although the bourgeois revolution instituted an official irreversible time it is not an authentic irreversible time wherein subjects possess their own minds. Instead, it is a “time of production” that forces a state of possession onto society (9). This is important to Debord’s understanding of spectacle because it describes a controlled time of production that is orientated toward a specific kind of psychological colonization. A spectacular event, such as Live Earth, is a product created in both the time and space of commodity production; as such, it operates according to the temporal and spatial rules that govern this time of production. In other words, a spectacle operates in and through a time of production that is specifically designed to reproduce not only a state of production, but also a state of possession within society.

The state of having is typified by Marx’s interpretation of the material economy; according to Anselm Jappe, Debord is particularly fond of George Lukacs’ development of minority Marxist ideas. For Debord, the “emergence of political power” led to the dissolution of the traditional “bonds of kinship” that held cyclical societies together into two conflicting populations: a mass of laborers and a citizenry of management (Society of the Spectacle 95). In place of the natural constraints imposed by family lineages, the new bureaucratic power imposed the bonds of production and commodity onto society. The advent of “human labor,” as an instrument of the ruling class, enabled the “social appropriation of time,” as well as the “production of time” (93). This first form of separated power consequently provided the initial
conditions for the material and “temporal” theft of the proletarian’s “limited surplus value” (94). The ruling class also held a monopoly over history, which it defended by providing the conception of time with a foundation wrapped in mythology. Through the use of myth the new ruling class instilled history with a “direction” and “meaning” specifically geared towards the progress and development of the material world (96). Freed from the constraints of cyclical time, the new time of labor sought to institute a time of irreversible progress which “modified nature” and “transform[ed] historical conditions” (104). Defined according to strictly economic proportions this new conception of time was created by quantifying time into a tradable currency; as a result, the qualitative value of time and labor receded and the exchange-value of a quantified time came to dominate the use-value of both time and the product of that time. The generalization of labor as a quantitative unit of value “erase[d] all differences” and removed considerations of quality (Jappe 13). This new quantitative time, under the banner of “time-as-commodity,” constituted an unnecessary alienation from time because it was an abstract irreversible time (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 110). Furthermore, society’s departure from the “natural realm of the . . . cyclical” to a “purposeful succession of events” marked the embryonic appearance of a pseudo-cyclical time that eventually led to the current subsumption of time to the pseudo-cyclical time of consumption (95, 96). The events manufactured by the ruling class, however, serve primarily as a “mechanism for the transmission of power” which preserves the existence of history in a “sphere separate from common reality” and erases all “practical communication” between ordinary people who possess “a unique present” (96, 97). The abstract discourse of national development replaces the localized discourses of communities, consequently alienating subjects from one another. According to Jappe, this early separation of
power also provided the foundations for each subsequent form of external authority, complete with the primary templates for all future “institutional” and “spectacular” methods of preserving itself (9). In other words, Debord’s text asserts that the hegemony of the Master class and the alienation of the masses is preserved through spectacular events such as Live Earth. The creation of a grassroots movement that is capable of establishing an authentic ecological community is impossible according to Debord’s understanding of the temporal conditions of spectacular production and the process of psychological colonization that accompanies a spectacular event.

Alienation in Spectacular Society

According to Jappe, Debord follows the primary preoccupation forwarded by minority strains of Marxism which argue that the concept of alienation is a crucial aspect of capitalist development (6). Although Debord agrees with Hegel’s injunction that “time is a necessary alienation,” in which man “realizes himself while losing himself, becomes other to truly become himself,” the alienated time that manifests under the technological time of industrialization is an unnatural alienation (Society of the Spectacle 115). Alienation is a result of the individual’s inability to perceive that the world in which he lives is a product of his own labor. Feuerbach placed alienation in a religious, as well as a philosophical, context; Debord draws upon this distinction in his analysis of the development of separation and alienated time during the middle ages. In this phase of development, religious societies and certain philosophers removed power from man’s reach by placing all power in a force external to man. Marx interprets the alienation of man as an estrangement between man and his “sensual and material existence” (Jappe 11). For Marx, capital and the state bureaucracy extends the religious domination of man by alienating
him from the product of his labor. In addition, the advent of labor power created an abstract labor force which enabled a massive increase in the material wealth of industrialized populations. Although the proletariat was finally allowed access to the realm of wealth via the material abundance fabricated by industrialization, the generalization of labor left “men estrang[ed] from one another and from the sum total” -- from the value -- “of what they produce” (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 26).

Even though the advances made by technology removed the immediate threat to man’s survival that is posed by nature, man’s alienation from the natural world expanded in the age of technology and the social alienation of man was made stronger through the mastery of dominant discourses by the ruling class. The discursive hegemony instituted after the bourgeois revolution was constituted by a “partial ideological consciousness” that was “constructed by a segment of the bourgeoisie class” (89). The bourgeois consciousness is thus a fragmented false consciousness that is founded on a set of capitalist principles which alienate man from his creative potential. For Debord, capitalism began as a machine of industrial production which mutated into the commodity form of the image. Where material goods once circulated, now images and information are circulated and exchanged. Indeed, desire itself is quantified in Debord’s abstract logic of economic symbolic exchange.9

*Hegemony and Alienation in the Society of the Spectacle*

In Debord's theory, spectacular society has perfected the means by which to impose the discourse of the Master-Slave dichotomy, thereby protecting the separate power of a specific ruling class. To explain the solidification of class consciousness in contemporary society Debord
turns to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. In Gramsci’s understanding of power, the “separation of powers . . . is a product of the struggle between civil society and political society” (245). Gramsci’s analysis situates this struggle in a particular historical moment wherein the relationship between classes is imbalanced because a portion of the intellectual class retains significant affiliations to the dominant classes that preceded them. The concept of hegemony “denotes the concealed domination of all the positions of institutional power and influence by members of just one class” (Blackburn 162). In the political appearance of liberalism a separation between power occurs wherein the bureaucracy is identified as a “caste” which “exercises coercive power” through three primary “organs:” the legislative, the judicial, and the executive branches of society (Gramsci 246). These cornerstone institutions enable the bureaucracy to constitute a monopoly over political practice. Although these hegemonic organs are situated so as to appear as democratic institutions set in place to serve the people, the democracy the bureaucratic class offers is merely an illusion that is constructed to safeguard its position as a hegemonic power. The hegemony exercised by the dominant class thus blocks the development of revolutionary subjects and stalls the advent of a revolution. Gramsci subsequently contends that “revolutionary activity” should “infiltrate and weaken the structures that it occupies” (Blackburn 162). In the context of Debord’s theory, the bourgeoisie’s hegemonic hold on ideology is perpetuated by maintaining a monopoly over the discursive signs that are circulated throughout society. According to this framework, spectacular events, such as Live Earth, disseminate a predetermined set of discursive signs that protect the hegemony of the capitalist ideology over all other ideological frameworks. This entails that a spectacular event cannot incite an authentic green revolution because it is ultimately bound to the ideology of
capital. Rather than producing a revolutionary grassroots movement, as Gore intended, Live Earth can only reproduce a set of discursive signs that are ultimately oriented toward the preservation of existing systems of production and consumption.

The concept of discourse is consequently central to Debord’s understanding of the psychological domination of society. According to the definition of discourse outlined by Macey, discourse “produces subjectivity by positioning [individuals as] subjects” (100). Discursive formations, as more complex organizations of discourses, are the “products of discourses and of their formation of objects, subject positions, concepts and strategies” (101). Furthermore, discursive formations always involve “relations of force and power”(101). Debord’s interpretation of the way in which society is dominated by the bureaucratic class similarly posits that the semiotic control of society involves the exercise of physical and cognitive violence. According to Barthes’ structuralist interpretation of Saussure’s theory of semiotics, semiology plays a significant part in the construction of “signifying units of discourse” (347). Barthes expanded Saussure’s original ideas to include “all sign-systems, including images, gestures, and melodic sounds” (347). In turn, Debord’s theory investigates the discursive regime of a power that enslaves society through the circulations of signs and images that impose false needs on society. Debord expanded Marx’s conception of alienation by proposing that society was seduced by the pseudo-needs proposed by the ruling class. The spectacle colonizes the mind of the individual though the seductive language of the spectacle. What might be considered as an authentic mode of revolutionary action is complicated by the circulation of false - inauthentic - models of revolutionary action. These false revolutionary models reproduce economic forms of action rather than enabling the creation of autonomous and self-determining forms of action and
self-consciousness. Highlighting the idea that the “economy, once it has achieved autonomy, and
go no matter what form its development takes, can only be antagonistic to human life,” Debord
argues that the modern economy has “brought human life under the sway of its own
laws” (Society of the Spectacle 6). Moving by itself and for itself, the “economy transforms the
world, but it transforms it into a world of the economy” and consequently enables the modern
form of separated power to “extend its domination to every aspect of life” (Jappe 9).

Through the manipulation of semiotic discourses, the spectacle “incorporates[s] all older
forms of alienation” and extends the reach of external power in order to preserve the privileges
of class division (Debord, Society of the Spectacle 12). Separated power in Debord’s society of
the spectacle is an “external authority” which appears as an internal authority; indeed, the
spectacle appears “as society itself” (12). However, what it signifies is a separation between
reality and illusion. In Debord’s argument, reality is defined as total “social practice” (13). The
image, on the other hand, simply reproduces forms of hierarchy that enforce the hegemony of an
economic consciousness onto society. This pseudo-consciousness limits the power of self-
determination by positioning consumption as the primary means by which subjects establish their
identities. The “totality” of reality is divided by a fragmented knowledge that is mapped onto the
whole of society, as well as by forms of “hegemony,” “hierarchy,” and “specialization” (87). This
separation is even mimicked in the forms of organization (workers’ councils) assumed by
Marxist revolutionaries. The principle of separation is maintained by the circulation of images
and signs that capture all consciousness and mediate the social relationships between people.
Indeed, the spectacle is both a material entity and an “ideology;” it is a worldview which has
been “transformed into an objective force” (151, 13).
Central to Debord’s critique is an understanding of the spectacle as false consciousness. The images and signs that are issued forth from the spectacle justify the existing system and provide a set of legitimate choices for society. Subjects believe they are making their own choices and determining their own realities, but their reality has already been predetermined and their choices have already been manufactured by the Master class. As such, the choices that are perceived by the subject as legitimate are in fact false because they enforce a logic of consumption on society. Rather than a population that is capable of making its own decisions and constituting its own reality, the population ruled by the spectacle is a population of colonized subjects.

Image Fetishism and the Spectacle

The material economy and the symbolic economy both operate according to a logic of production and accumulation that alienates society from everyday reality, as well as from its creative and imaginative potential (Best and Kellner 12). In both the material and the symbolic economies, society is dominated by material things and visual signs that are quantified for consumption. Marx identifies this domination, in a material sense, as the “fetishism of commodities;” (Marx, Capital sec. 4, ch. 1) Debord extends Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism to the symbolic phase of capital to position the society of the spectacle as an externalized and abstracted culture alienated from life. Marx’s logic of commodity fetishism, interpreted by Debord as the “domination of society by things,” is “absolutely fulfilled in the spectacle” (Society of the Spectacle 26). In Debord’s society of the spectacle the concrete and the real are defined against the abstract and the artificial (Best and Kellner 12). The current mode of
production and the form currently assumed by the spectacle “echoes the basic traits of a real production process that shuns reality” (*Society of the Spectacle* 26). In the world of spectacular commodity fetishism, the “perceptible world is replaced by a set of [false] images that are [situated as] superior” to reality; in this world, the commodity reigns “over all lived experience” (26). Spectacular society replaces the authentic needs of humans, which include concrete interactions between members of a community and the concrete exercise of creative praxis, with an endless set of false needs fabricated to ensure a perpetual cycle of consumption. Indeed, the creation of pseudo-needs enables the acceleration of consumption. More importantly, however, the spectacular circulation of abstract images constitutes an inauthentic reality of technological relations and “commodity fantasies” (Best and Kellner 12). Like the material economy, the spectacular economy also operates according to its own internal logic; as such, the spectacular economy autonomously produces and reproduces itself and its modes of operation.

*Spectacular Alienation*

In Marx’s theory of material exchange, industrial society is an alienated society that quantifies and sells dead labor; that is to say, industrialized subjects are continually laboring in a technological conception of time and alienated from their bodies. For Debord, this alienation enters the body and the pre-existing external division of labor is expanded to include an internal division of the mind. Cognitively divided from oneself and physically split from society the spectacular subject is thus a fractured subject. In the “second industrial revolution, alienated consumption is added to alienated production as an inescapable duty of the masses” (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 29). Thus, in the economy of the spectacle, commodities are no longer
comprised of material objects; instead, images are commodities and identity is bought and sold. Since the economy is the “material basis of social life,” man does not create his own identity; instead, he is determined by the identities already manufactured by an autonomous, strictly economic power (28).

The language of the spectacle in Debord’s capitalized symbolic economy is the image that constitutes false desires: the spectacle is a “sight machine” that quantifies, colonizes, and universalizes the psychological territory of society. In the society of the spectacle false needs are situated so as to appear to fulfill the needs and desires of the subject; however, the happiness and identity attained through the practice of consumption creates false happiness and inauthentic identities. The content of the spectacle is irrelevant for Debord; what is important is that the colonization of the perceptions, desires, and appetites of the subject results in the subject’s alienation from his own cognitive processes and bodily actions. Individuals are caught in a web of images and signs that trap them in a contemplative state. Instead of determining their own actions and thoughts individuals are determined by the symbols plastered over everyday reality. The images and signs that are authorized for dissemination by the spectacle are determined by self-serving hegemonic powers, and as such, are a “negative force” of political and capitalist domination (Crary 105). The spectacular economy, as “a new kind of power of recuperation and absorption” which has the “capacity to neutralize and assimilate acts of resistance by converting them into objects or images of consumption,” extends the hegemonic power of the bureaucratic class through the mass dissemination of an artificial ideology of freedom (106). For Debord, spectacular events, such as Live Earth, always operate according to processes of alienation, capital accumulation, and colonization. As such, the spectacle is “more than a synonym for late
capitalism, mass media and communication technology, or the culture/ consciousness industry” (Crary 97).

Crary places the origin of Debord’s spectacle in the late 1920s because it aligns with the “technological perfection” of film and the appearance of an entirely new mode of product dissemination that surpassed all previous forms of mechanical reproduction (101). During the early stages of modernism, forms of the spectacle became “inseparable from [the] new kind of image” that was circulated by film technology (101). In the latter half of the 1920s film prototypes were broadcast to the public for the first time. The speed of transmission and the volume of potential audiences caught the attention of powerful administrative, corporate, and military interests. Seeing a potential for profit and propaganda, as well as a potential for the transmission of radical ideas, dominant forces quickly enforced a regulatory approach to film. The late 1920s also saw the addition of audio recording innovations to silent film technology.

The advent of “synchronized sound” and image in film led to a “transformation in the nature of subjective experience” (102). Referring to the 1927 movie The Jazz Singer, Crary suggests the collusion of image and sound “institute[s] a more commanding authority over the observer [and] enforc[es] a new kind of attention” (102). As a result, Crary indicates that Debord’s ideas on “spectacular power cannot be reduced to an optical mode,” but rather are “inseparable from a larger organization of perceptual consumption” (102). In the 1890s, psychology began to study the dynamics of attention. This fascination lasted well into the 1930s and explored the “relation between stimulus and attention,” the intricacies of “concentration, focalization, and distraction,” the “number of stimuli that could be simultaneously attended to,” and how to assess “novelty, familiarity, and repetition” (102). With the advent of film and the
“emergence of a social field saturated with sensory input,” this psychological preoccupation with attention accelerated (102). Since the synchronization of visual and audio mediums signaled a new and “crucial way of organizing space, time, and narrative,” film was quickly subsumed by controlling interests. Indeed, by the 1930s the majority of the “territory of the spectacle” had already been “diagrammed and standardized” by a “vast interlocking of corporate, military, and state” forces (101). These regulatory measures were interpreted by Debord as a means of capturing a spectacular medium in order to establish a hegemony over its fascinating power to attract and psychologically colonize the masses.

The Concentrated Spectacle

The rise of fascism, Stalinism, capitalism, and the “way in which they incarnated models of the spectacle” are key to Debord’s understanding of the spectacle (104). Two main types of spectacle exist in Debord’s 1967 text. The first is the “concentrated spectacle,” which emerged alongside the State bureaucracies set in place by German, Russian, and Chinese forms of communism (Debord, Society of the Spectacle 12). According to Crary, the lead established by Germany in the development of film technology is central to Debord’s perception of the spectacle. Although the full potential of the spectacle was not initially realized by the Nazi regime, film and radio were both used as a means to control society during the reign of fascism in Germany. According to Debord, this control was achieved by imposing an “image of the good” on society (75). Through this image the concentrated spectacle predetermined a legitimate reality.
This false representation of the good is generally focused on one particular person whose role is to ensure society’s total identification with the ideology of the bureaucracy. In other words, in a society dominated by the concentrated spectacle, subjects are required to identify with an “absolute celebrity” that is manufactured by the Master class (Crary 104). Constructed as a figure of “infallible leadership,” the centerfold of bureaucratic power thus provides the necessary means for the concentrated spectacle to maintain its monopoly over the social mores that inform the (re)production of society (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 74). Failure to align oneself with this ultimate leader results in the death of the subject - both socially and physically - for the society ruled by the concentrated spectacle is also a society that is ruled by the perpetual threat of violence (Crary 104).

*The Diffused Spectacle*

The society that is controlled by the ideology of the concentrated spectacle is thus a society ruled by violence. There was, however, a fundamental rift between the evolution of film technology on the terms set by fascism and the development of film on the terms set by early models of capitalism. On the one hand, the Nazi Party favored public theaters that could seat large audiences. In Debord’s view, ultra-authoritarian models of power identified group reception as the form of reception that was most likely to “mobilize and incite the masses” (Crary 104). Corporations at the time, on the other hand, favored private reception because it increased profits and maintained the isolation of the masses (105). In the eyes of capitalist power, privatization, division, and molecularization were seen as the most effective ways to manipulate and control the masses. By imposing a “model of cellularity” onto society,
corporate executives eliminated the threat of interpersonal communication and thereby perfected their means of domination (105). The second form of spectacle identified by Debord is consequently the “diffused spectacle” that exists in the context of American capitalism (Society of the Spectacle 12). The diffused spectacle is “accompanied by the abundance of commodities” and is the form that drew the majority of Debord’s attention (Crary 104). In his own time, Debord saw a collusion between the two distinct kinds of spectacle in order to form an integrated spectacle. The integrated spectacle operated primarily through diffused channels, but reverted to its concentrated form when the ruling class was threatened by dissent.

The Integrated Spectacle

The production of subjects as consumers and as consumable, according to Debord, is achieved through the production of a unitary vision that functions to conceal the existing fractures within society. Through a combination of diffused and concentrated channels the integrated spectacle manufactures a unified technological illusion to replace the loss of unitary vision once sustained by the illusion of monotheistic religions. Debord thus extends Feuerbach’s conception of alienation to his own formulation of the spectacle in his contention that the spectacle is the “material reconstruction of the religious illusion” (Society of the Spectacle 18). Under the rubric of Christianity, original sin split the body and soul from its supposed unity; this split is reconciled through an internal unity provided by the redemptive death of Christ. With Martin Luther’s decisive repudiation of the corrupt mother church, this internal unity was rent asunder. The fracturing of the church into increasingly divided sects triggered a crisis that was echoed within the self. Voided of meaning, Debord contends that the manufactured subject
needed a new principle of unity. The Master class consequently reformulated the ancient paradox of Christianity on technological terms and retold the story of creation through the evolutionary lens of technology. In other words, a spectacular myth of salvation was constructed to replace the biblical salvation myth in order to reproduce a population ideologically bound to the birth and rebirth of technology. What the spectacle ultimately asserts is a belief that technology will save humanity. Live Earth echoes this precept by positioning technology as the force that can solve the climate crisis and therefore save humanity from its own excesses. As such, the environmental movement encased within the official territory of Live Earth is bound to the unitary myth of technology.

Time was also re-inscribed on technological terms by the Master class. Emptied of cosmological meaning, time was evacuated of all prior content so it could be quantified as an abstract and vacant unit of value to be used solely for production and consumption. Debord does not mourn the loss of cosmological time; instead, Debord contends (in a Marxist sense) that the obligation of humanity is to bring about the next stage of history by using culture against itself through the practice of détournement. In Debord’s contemporary society, however, technology triumphs as a totalizing religion that provides a redemptive, and distinctly technological, knitting of unity over a fractured and disillusioned population (Kroker). The spectacle functions to provide an external code for unity that invades the body and glosses over contradictory, fragmented experiences. However, it is only a unity of appearances that ignores the differences of class, labor, race, gender, and sexual orientation. In addition, Debord argues that the unity imposed by the spectacle masks the “deeply contradictory” divisions between the real conditions of material exchange and the symbolic exchange of the image (Kroker). In the material economy,
material goods are produced and circulated. However, access to these goods, as well as to the material wealth that is produced by the sale of these goods, is unequal. In the symbolic economy, it is symbolic exchange that is consumed through networks of connectivity as capital congeals in the image. Access to symbolic capital is relatively equal because it is the medium through which the population’s false desires are both whetted and satiated. The authentic desires of the subject are pushed to the side by the constant bombardment of images and signs that delineate consumption as the means by which subjects transcend poverty. Moreover, in Debord’s view, poverty of the body is not the only lack society possesses. Poverty of the mind is enhanced in the society of the spectacle because the poverty of the body is falsely and unequally answered through practices of consumption. Furthermore, by consuming the contemplation of action society consumes an illusion that enables individuals to believe they exist and participate in a democratic and enlightened community.

The society of the spectacle is also bound to an uneasy and contradictory tension between the logic behind capital and the logic that drives technology. Capital operates according to a powerful discourse of production and accumulation that alienates the subject from a lived reality. However, the logic of capital is intersected by the logic of technology. This collision is deeply contradictory: technology cannot exist without capital accumulation, yet the predominant concern for technology is not with the accumulation of capital or with efficiency, but rather with innovation. This includes the development of codes and networks, as well as the exchange of data and improvements to the style and speed of transmission methods. The facilitation of knowledge trumps the distribution of capital in the logic of technology, yet this relative autonomy is dependent on the existence of a class of people who are dispossessed. Indeed, the
poor are the necessary Other in the “moral binary” of the society of the spectacle (Kroker). This is the point at which Hegel’s Master-Slave dichotomy is most evident. The Master relies on the recognition of the Slave; in the same type of binary relationship, capital relies on visceral poverty. In other words, poverty entails a lack that can be filled by the plethora of material goods offered forth by the corporate world. The technological employee of the symbolic economy is also bound to the proletariat laborer of the material economy through a material need that is ignored and rejected by the spectacular unity imposed on society. Technology cannot exist without the monetary investments and the productive capacity of capitalism. A class of laborers must be present in order to fulfill the demands constructed by the innovations of technology. Thus for Debord, what the society of the spectacle unifies and contains is class struggle. However, this dependance is obscured by the seductive language of spectacular discourse. The false spectacle of unity elides the reality of class divisions. This division and false unity create a condition in which humanity is alienated from not only nature, but also from itself. In Debord’s words, the spectacle is “not something added to the real world . . . it is the very heart of society’s real unreality” (Society of the Spectacle 13). According to this understanding of spectacle, the Live Earth spectacle is bound to a deeply embedded set of contradictions that nullify the revolutionary trust of the event. In addition, the Live Earth environmental movement’s reliance on technological solutions increases society’s alienation from nature, as well as from its own humanity.
Although Debord argues that spectacular power has effected the colonization of the social mindscape, he also asserts the independence of the mind. Debord believes that individuals desire freedom and seek out forms of resistance when threatened with oppression. Debord further posits that the material basis of the spectacle provides opportunities for subjects to subvert dominant discursive formations. Against the passive spectator, Debord and the Situationists posit the existence of a “radical subject which constructs its own everyday life against the demands of the spectacle (to buy, consume, conform)” (Best and Kellner 11). This radical subject, unlike the spectator subject, is “active, creative, and imaginative” (11).

With the Situationist International, Debord sought to create anti-spectacular strategies to fight against the internal domination of the mind. For Debord, the Situationist movement was a movement of artistic resistance in which the Situationist not only fought against capitalist and fascist forces, but also acted as an agent of creative emancipation. The Situationist created events to disrupt the normal flow of human traffic, using strategies such as détournement and dérive, demanded free forms of consciousness, established a tenuous transformable solidarity, positioned the personal as political, and attempted to return humanity to a lived time and a lived relationship to labor. The Situationist subject recognized that an authentic and total revolution required the destruction of pseudo-needs and the reinstatement of authentic desires. Desiring the restitution of authentic forms of communication within a “more vivid and immediate social reality,” (6) Debord and the Situationist political program sought to “free the passions” of colonized subjects (Marshall 1).12 These aims were achieved not by departing from capitalism, which Debord posits is impossible, but by imploding culture through the creation of disruptive situations, as in the
practices of détournement and dérive. The Situationists consequently created situations, defined as “revolutionaries constituting themselves as a dialectical moment in the totality,” that conflicted with the mindless flow of consumption and urban planning, consequently disturbing the stultifying normalcy of capitalized life (Black 6).

Avant-Garde Art Influences

The avant-garde art movements of Letterism, Dadaism, and Surrealism deeply influenced the philosophy articulated by Debord and the Situationists. Surrealism’s ideas on “revolutionary self-transformation,” which held Freud’s understanding of the interrelation between the “conscious and the subconscious” in high esteem, provided the foundation for Debord’s revolutionary theory and Situationist practice (Black 1). Walter Benjamin credited the Surrealist movement for its ability to perceive that the “residues of the dream-world” lay scattered amongst the products of bourgeoisie consumer culture and that these objects and images could be used in the “waking” process of “liberation” (Black 1; Benjamin qtd. in Black 1). Benjamin viewed the practice of Surrealism as an “expression of dialectical thought” that operates as an “organ of historical awakening” (2). Contending that each age “dreams the next” and in the process “impels it towards wakefulness,” Benjamin asserts that the present “bears its end with itself, and reveals” its death in a “ruse” (2). Surrealist poetry acted on this belief by subverting and diverting the legitimate “roles and properties” of discursive formations and symbolic meanings (1). In 1957, Debord attributed the discovery of the autonomy of “desire and surprise” to Surrealism’s vision of a different way of living; however, Debord also critiqued Surrealism for placing too much emphasis on the unconscious power of the imagination (qtd. in
The theoretical and practical impetus of Situationism sought to disarm the hypnotic power of the “false dreams and distractions” of spectacular capital, as well as to promote the pursuit of authentic desires and life practices (Von Bark).

In his theory of détournement, Debord composes a negation and reformulation of “collage theory” as it was articulated by the Dadaists. Taken in its broadest definition, the collage was a “conglomeration of different materials” (“The Dada Movement”). In the art of collage, the Dada movement discovered an “ideal means of expression” and explored all of the different ways the art of collage could reformulate new meaning out of old materials (“The Dada Movement”). Debord situated his interpretation of collage art within a strictly political framework by experimenting with the “idea of using cleverly compressed aphorisms, catch-phrases, and revolutionary slogans fitted into the contest of images borrowed or stolen from advertising and comic books” (Von Bark).

The avant-garde Letterist movement fought against what they saw as the erosion of poetic language in the Surrealist and Dadaist movements (Black 3). The experimental “sound-poems and paintings made up of written words” that were composed by the Letterists sought to return the power of symbolism to words, but it was the avant-garde films created by the Letterists that caught Debord’s attention (3). Although Debord was initially drawn into the new movement he later split away from the Letterists to form the Letterist International. Ensuing correspondence between the Letterist International and other radical artists led to the creation of the Situationist International; however, Debord retained the idea of détournement from the original Letterist movement. Indeed, the Letterists were the first to introduce the term “détourn” into avant-garde art forms (4). With the Situationist International, as well as with *The Society of the Spectacle,*
Debord sought to create a revolutionary avant-garde movement that was capable of twisting and negating the symbolism of dominant discursive formations.

*Détournement and Dérive*

Using strategies of détournement and dérive, the subject works within spectacular society to turn what it has produced against spectacular society. Détournement practices negate the official meaning of events and images and redirect the content of the image or event to a critique of corporate and administrative systems of domination. By flipping or reversing the meaning of the semiotic regimes belonging to dominant discursive formations Debord and the Situationists sought to negate the passivity of society. In his own text, Debord pushes Hegelian-Marxist thought forward by transforming his theory of détournement into a practical application. By frequently détourning - or negating - phrases written by Hegel, Lukacs, Marx and Engels, as well as by a number of other authors, Debord moves critical revolutionary thought forward in a dialectical process. Reaching for a reconnection with the soul of man - for a synergistic collusion between action and self-consciousness - Debord pushes the theory of freedom ever closer to the spontaneous enlightenment of revolution-in-action. For example, the first thesis of *The Society of the Spectacle* turns Marx’s contention that happiness and value of being are displayed through an “immense accumulation of commodities” - through possession - to a new meaning that pushes the concept further to assert that in modern day societies life itself is not lived, but rather displayed through an “immense accumulation of spectacles” (Marx qtd. in NotBored!; Debord *Society of the Spectacle* 12). Debord still moves against consumption, but he raises thought a step higher by positing the existence of another, more deadly moment of consumption: the
consumption of the image, of appearance, of illusion, and therefore of false consciousness. Debord’s fourth thesis reiterates this point in its inversion of Marx’s assertion that “capital is a social connection established by the intermediary of things” (Marx qtd. in NotBored!). Arguing that the spectacle has replaced capital as the means by which “social connection[s] between people” are established, Debord positions the image as the filter that predetermines the identities and actions of subjects (Society of the Spectacle 12). In his ninth thesis, Debord inverts Hegel’s preface to The Phenomenology of Spirit, which states the “false is a moment of the true (but no longer as false),” to a new meaning in which the “true is a moment of the false” (Hegel qtd. in Debord, Society of the Spectacle 14; Debord, Society of the Spectacle 14).

This type of reversal, in which original meaning is negated and new meaning is discovered, is repeated throughout Debord’s preemptive text. Debord thus demonstrates through his use of textual, and therefore discursive, détournement the dialectical manner by which thought and practice successfully collide to productively produce a revolutionary mode of action. Debord also attempted to create “media practices that would transform the media” (6). Debord consequently advocated the “development of alternative media and use of media technologies against existing society and culture” (6). Debord’s film, The Society of the Spectacle, takes the sexualized bodies of women that were initially manufactured by the marketing strategies of early capitalism and turned them into a critique of the illusions perpetuated by the visual language of seduction. In his film, Debord clearly associates a sexualized mode of seduction with the society of the spectacle. Marketing strategies exploit sexualized bodies to manipulate the desires of subjects. These bodies also create subject positions because they are manipulated semiotic images belonging to a discursive regime. These images are consumed and as they are being
consumed they also consume the authentic identity of the subject. Through the act of consumption the subject becomes the image. In addition, the creative desires of the subject are subsumed to the desires of capital. In Debord’s view, however, the authentic subject resists this domination.

A more physical method of détourning the constructs of consumer society is the act of dérive. As the art of walking the city without a predetermined path or destination - of wandering aimlessly and letting the unconscious flow of movement subsume and invert the managed movement of urban planning - the idea of dérive cuts against the prescribed patterns of traffic that govern the movements of the city. Like the concept of dérive, the forms of action advocated by the Situationists include the physical subversion of the objects of contemporary society. Indeed, Debord and the Situationists viewed “vandalism, wildcat strikes, and sabotage, [as creative] gestures of refusal” (Marshall 2). The value of action does not reside in the destruction wrought by rebellion; instead, it is the insubordination itself that can transform society and spontaneously ignite a positive project that asserts the power of the imagination (Black 5). Style, or the assumption of generalized characteristics of differentiation, cannot “effect the sort of reversal of the coherence of the world” that Debord demands is necessary (Bracken 11). This failure of style or individuation, according to Debord’s perspective is inevitable because the forms of action practiced by the revolutionary subject are rooted in a need for “total change,” rather than fragmentary change (8).
The Revolutionary Class

Arguing that Marx’s revolutionary theory pertains only to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, Debord contends that the bourgeoisie revolution is “a fait accompli” and the proletariat revolution is “a project” (*Society of the Spectacle* 58). Although the bourgeoisie is the “only revolutionary class that has ever been victorious,” the bourgeoisie revolution is an alienated revolution because it is a revolution wherein society is imprisoned by the fragmented ideology of the economy (56). According to Debord’s Marxism, the proletariat is the only *authentic* revolutionary class. Indeed, the proletariat is the “negation” that capital “accumulates” alongside itself (84). In the battle with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat escaped death by submitting to the bourgeoisie Master. This encounter ultimately freed the proletariat from his fear of death. Possessing the consciousness of the Slave, the proletariat is thus the subject that is capable of ascending to the highest level of self-consciousness. Through a critical negation of dominant systems of thought the proletariat can break free from the stupor and passivity that are induced by the systems of thought that enforce a logic of consumption on society. In the encounter with oppression the Slave consciousness is elevated through a series of critical challenges to each moment of false consciousness. The final goal, of course, is the attainment of an authentic consciousness in which community and intellect are accorded a primary position. However, a global “reversal [of the] coherence of the world” is yet to occur (Bracken 5).

The fundamental separation that alienates the proletariat from his own revolution is the primary separation between theory and practice - between mind and body - that is instituted by authoritarian models of organization and spectacular forms of control (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 20). This essential division completes the immobilization of the proletariat’s action by
alienating him from his own consciousness. The proletariat is divided from the actions of his body and divided from his own consciousness; in this ultimate separation, the individual’s soul is alienated from its true being. Captivated and paralyzed by the seductive language of false semiological discourses, the revolutionary subject is separated from his own actions, as well as from his own thoughts as to what action he should occupy. The Master class protects its position of power over the ideology of society by setting in place an authoritarian level of management that disseminates its officially sanctioned discourse through spectacular means to a necessarily “passive” mass of uneducated commoners (60, 66). These passive learners are distracted by the spectacular contemplation of power and revolutionary action; as a result, they are rendered incapable of acting in a revolutionary manner. The authentic revolutionary subject must collapse this separation between theory and practice, in its own organizational forms, as well as in all other forms of social organization. Indeed, the proletariat is charged with the duty to “dissolve all separation” (48).

Debord critiqued Hegel for achieving this dissolution “in thought only,” as well as orthodox Marxist thought for reviving Hegel’s “detached . . . contemplation of a supreme external agent” in the form of an objective contemplation of the economy’s development (49, 51). Debord contends that this is a betrayal of Marx’s original thought because Marx’s revolutionary theory desired a “qualitative appropriation of history” (51). The ultimate goal of the Situationists was consequently to bring about the conditions that would allow the “living” to possess their own “world” and their own “history,” as well as to “exist as consciousness of [their] own activity” (48). Thus, the only authentic revolution is a proletariat movement, in which the reproduction of the movement itself is the result and the proletariat himself is his goal. However,
in order to realize a life directly lived, the authentic proletariat must “recognize itself as radically separate from the world of separation” (87). The revolutionary subject cannot “combat alienation by means of alienated forms of struggle” and therefore cannot replicate the “conditions of division and hierarchy . . . within” its own forms of organization (89, 88). Echoing Hegel’s critique of classical preoccupations with the fragment, Debord contends that an authentic revolutionary project “cannot make use of any ideology designed to pass partial goals off as general ones” (58). Instead, the revolutionary subject must institute a “truly historical thinking,” in which a “fusion of knowledge and action” is “effected within the historical struggle itself” and “applied to the totality of the world” (49, 59, 50).

The emphasis placed on a Hegelian-Marxist totality entails that an authentic revolutionary movement must oppose the “totality of the existing order with a total critique and a total practice” (Bracken 5). According to Bracken, the “act of reversing or disrupting [the] coherence of the world is a moment of real history and thus constitutes the movement of irreversible time” (7). In 1967, Debord believed in the “historically transient” nature of capitalism and attested to the “irreversible and successive nature of change” (7). By becoming “dialecticians,” and subsequently “inscribing their thought upon practice,” Debord argues that the proletariat can dissolve the separation between theory and practice (Society of the Spectacle 89). The moment of revolution occurs when the “practical condition of consciousness is assembled” (59). In other words, the “theory of praxis” is confirmed when it is transformed into “theory-in-practice” (59). In Debord’s view, “revolutionary practice [is the] only true agent of . . . negation;” as such, any form of revolutionary ideology that confines itself to the contemplation of action on a theoretical basis is a form of false consciousness that perpetuates the alienation of
man (56). An authentic revolutionary movement occurs when the “rhetorical expressions of the cognitive aspect of dialectics” are connected to a “moment of activity” (Bracken 10). Revolutionary practice entails not only a “total critique,” but is also a “moment of total history, of irreversible time that both creates humans and the world they live in” (10). Failing to recognize this essential link between thought and concrete action confines thought to mere contemplation.

Closing Down Revolutionary Potential

Although Debord believed in 1967 that it was still possible to escape the domination imposed by the spectacle, in 1988 Debord articulates a much more negative view of the spectacle (Comments). In the preface to Nicholson-Smith’s 1995 translation of The Society of the Spectacle, Debord clarifies and reaffirms his contention in Comments on the Society of the Spectacle that the “former ‘worldwide division of spectacular tasks’ between the rival realms of the ‘concentrated’ and ‘diffuse’ forms of the spectacle had now given way to a combined form - to an integrated spectacle” (8).14 Debord further contends that the “unified practice of the integrated spectacle has ‘transformed the world economically’ as well as ‘us[ed] police methods to transform perception’” (8). In other words, this newer integrated spectacle “irradiate[s] into everything and has absolute control over production, . . . perception, . . . [and] the shape of the future and the past” (Crary 105). Operating through “a flexible arrangement of global power adaptable to local needs and circumstances,” the integrated spectacle officially unifies the world “so that it might function as one bloc in a single consensual organization of the world market, at once travestied and buttressed by the spectacle” (Debord, Society of the Spectacle 9).
Debord’s preface, as well as his 1988 text *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, collapses the revolutionary potential of the proletariat by claiming that the spectacular economy has integrated its concentrated and its diffused elements and consequently eradicated all other forms of communication and community. Workers’ councils, in Debord’s earlier thought, were positioned as the organizational “power destined to supplant all other powers worldwide” (88). The democratic methods of organization represented in workers’ councils provided the means by which the authentic revolutionary class could negate the “spectacle’s negation of life” (88). By the time Debord published his *Comments* in 1988, however, the authentic form of organization established by worker’s councils had already been eradicated. As a result, the potential for the proletariat to assume his vocation as *the* revolutionary subject and seize the moment of revolution is also subsumed. Although Debord retrospectively admitted in *Comments* that at the time of his 1967 publication spectacular society had not yet executed a full colonization of society, in 1988 he contends that the spectacle had completed its alienated colonization of society. As such, Debord firmly shut the door on revolutionary potential in general.
Chapter Two

*Live Earth as A Negative Force of Capture*

An application of Debord’s theory to a media event intended to incite an eco-revolutionary movement exposes the dangers of such an approach. From the perspective of a Debordian analysis, Live Earth appears as a force of colonization that degrades and captures the green movement.15 By pulling the movement away from a debate about forms of organization, social mores, and patterns of living and focusing instead on forms of (in)action within existing economic and political modes of organization Live Earth merely enables the reproduction of destructive power structures and economic systems. A Debordian inspired analysis of Live Earth identifies Live Earth as an integrated spectacle that reproduces economic development and centric power systems according to the abstracted terms of sustainability and green consumerism. Live Earth is thus analyzed not only as a concentrated spectacle, but also as a diffuse spectacle. Gore’s reasons for turning to the spectacle are also explored, as are his lingering ideological affiliations. The corporate sponsorship of the event, its claims to green consumerism, and the contradictions of popular music are further analyzed according to the principles outlined in Debord’s theory of spectacular society. In the end, however, this analysis emphasizes the process of colonization and capture at the expense of the processes of escape that the event might also hold within itself. Live Earth does indeed contain signs that mark it as a project of co-optation; however, this analysis fails to account for the productive disruption created by the friction of alliance. As a result, chapters three and four will construct a different
understanding of society and the Live Earth spectacle. This restructuring will be enabled by the concepts of Anna Tsing, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari.

_Gore and Spectacular Media_

The Live Earth concerts spearheaded by Gore were designed to engage a global public paralyzed by the lack of political and corporate leadership in relation to the issue of climate change. After years of trying to attack the issue of climate change through political channels, Gore shifted his efforts to the public sphere in order to garner the support of the people. Gore’s attempt to elicit a political response to scientific concerns surrounding climate change relies heavily on the use of spectacle to attract the attention of the mainstream media and the general public. Even though Gore critiques the pervasive “serial obsessions” of mainstream media newsrooms and the passive state that the image enforces on the viewer, he also believes that the medium of television can be used to trigger a productive emotional response in spectators. In *The Assault on Reason*, Gore cites advances in neuroscience to explain the impact of television on the cognitive processes of individuals. Gore contends that although television is a lesser form of communication it can still be utilized by the environmental movement to incite change. In his argument, Gore delineates a distinction between cognitive responses to print media and cognitive responses to visual media. Drawing an evolutionary lineage from print media, to reason, to democracy, Gore contends that the freedom of knowledge is rooted in a fundamental relationship between the written word and the faculty of reason. According to Gore, the “reasoning centers of the brain” are activated in the dynamic conversation that is established between the author’s textual vision and the reader’s interpretation of the author’s words (*Assault on Reason* 9). With
the constant visual stimulus offered by television these rational processes are short-circuited and the “instinctual” response patterns of the brain are instead stimulated (19).

Citing Dr. Vilayanur S. Ramachandran’ discussion of the brain’s “orienting response” in his explanation of television’s claim to inducing passivity onto citizens, Gore describes the orienting response as an instinctual mechanism that evolved as a means of species preservation (21). Over time, the brain developed strong neural pathways specifically designed to instantly alert the body to movement within its “field of vision” (21). Since the attention of the subject is unconsciously drawn to movement, these neural pathways are repeatedly stimulated by the constant motion of images across television screens. According to this theory, the repetitive animation of the orienting response causes a “quasi-hypnotic state” to descend on the spectator (35). Subjects are “partially immobilized” and become addicted to the repeated stimulus that targets the sections of the brain that control memory and contextualization (35). The constant visual stimulus that is incurred as a result of watching modern television programming overrides the logical reasoning processes of the brain and instead influences the instinctual, and thus also the emotional systems of subjects. Citing the discovery of “mirror neurons,” which enable the psychological conditions for an empathetic response to images of suffering, Gore argues that logic and reason are not entirely incompatible with the use of images because images can be used to stimulate empathy in the spectator (31). Like Debord, Gore believes that image can be used to transform the conditions of oppression. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two approaches. In Debord’s view, the disruption and subversion of the medium itself is a precondition for revolutionary change. A critique of the society that produces and consumes the image, even the revolutionary image, is always embedded in Debord’s symbolic reconstructions
of dominant images. Gore, however, turns to neuroscience to support a claim to the emotional appeal of visual media. Simple, unmediated images of human poverty and suffering, or of environmental degradation, are displayed in order to appeal to the empathetic side of the human brain. The same instinctual type of emotional response that is elicited by the politics of fear in wartime is appealed to in the fearful future painted by the science of climate change. Images of ecological damage from severe storms, such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2001 Tsunami, as well as the emotional testaments of poverty stricken inhabitants from severe drought regions play on the instinctual response patterns triggered by fear and empathy.

*Live Earth Under A Debordian Lens*

In light of Debord’s critique of the use of spectacular strategies by corporate and political forces, the use of mass media to forward an ecological revolution begs the question as to whether or not this type of strategy can incite an authentic ecological revolution.\(^{17}\) According to Debord, mass media is the spectacle’s “most stultifying superficial manifestation” (*Society of the Spectacle* 19). In other words, the mass media represents the lowest form of spectacular presentation in the society of the spectacle. Although the media appears as an innocent platform, there is “nothing neutral about it” (19). Rather, the media obeys the laws set by the “spectacle’s internal dynamics” (19). As such, the media provides the means by which the managerial class imposes its logic of division onto society (19). Seen as a form of one-way communication by both Debord and Gore, the media is the primary instrument by which the ruling class presents a series of diffused choices which it has officially sanctioned.
Internal Separation of the Diffuse Spectacle

In Debord’s view, television and radio enhance the isolation of individuals by replacing real community relationships with a fabricated image of community. Although the geographical space between individuals is collapsed by the connections created by massive communication infrastructures, Debord contends that capitalist society “eliminates geographical distance only to reap distance internally in the form of spectacular separation” (Society of the Spectacle 120). Indeed, Debord argues that the global reach of mass media increases the ruling class’s ability to effectively control the population. Quoting Machiavelli in the heading to his chapter on the spatial development of the conditions of separation, Debord posits that the modern economy has proven, with total success, Machivelli’s contention that if “citizens are disunited or dispersed, they . . . forget . . . the name of liberty,” as well as their “old customs” and “institutions” (119). Contending that the “effort of all established powers, since the . . . French Revolution has culminated in the suppression of the street itself,” Debord reserves the perfection of this suppression for the spectacular economy (121). In other words, the development and advancement of systems of domination is complete in the spectacular stage of history. As previously discussed, the Marxist stage of history, identified by a desire to display wealth and power through the possession of material goods, is an important stage in Debord’s genealogy of domination. In the stage of possession, the “accumulation of commodities mass-produced for the abstract space of the market . . . shattered all regional and legal barriers,” as well as any restrictions that were put in place to “preserve the quality of craft production” (120). This accumulation also eradicated the “independence and quality of places” by imposing an homogeneous set of economic and development relations on societies across the globe (120).
These goods and strategies liquidated traditional forms of community through the development and consumption of technologies that inhibited contact between individuals. Defined as a “circular process,” wherein the goods offered by the system are designed to produce and reproduce the isolation of the masses, the modern economic system is both “founded on isolation” and “designed to produce isolation” (22). Debord extends this critique by positioning technology as similarly based on isolation and equally designed to produce isolation among crowded populations. In order to maintain control over these newly disconnected populations; however, the forces of economic production required a means by which to effect “a controlled reintegration” of isolated individuals “based on the planned needs of production and consumption” (121). Through the use of spectacular images and signs, the logic of commodity fetishism thus seeks to “recapture isolated individuals as individuals isolated together” and redirected toward the inauthentic pursuits of a false community (121).

The hegemony of the official image over lived experience in Debord’s analysis of the society of the spectacle enables the stable reproduction of existing forms of economic organization, property distribution, and power. Like Debord, Gore contends that the hegemony television exercises over the flow of information has changed the way people communicate with each other, as well as the way they define reality. Both see a lack of interactive debate in the public sphere based on the one-directional nature of television media. In Gore’s words “individuals receive, but they cannot send. They absorb, but they cannot share. They hear, but they do not speak. They see constant movement, but they do not move themselves” (Assault on Reason 16). Indeed, Gore argues that the increasing monopoly over communication networks affects what Jurgen Habermas identified as a “refeudalization of the public sphere” (qtd. in Gore,
Assault on Reason 18). In Debord’s view, the imperatives to participate in a community of consumption “pursue the isolated individual right into the family cell, where the generalized use of receivers of the spectacle’s message ensures that his isolation is filled with dominant images, . . . which attain their full force only by virtue of [his] isolation” (Society of the Spectacle 121). In other words, the isolated consumer is psychologically colonized by the constant movement of advertising schemes, political propaganda, and ideological entertainment projects within the private sphere. In spectacular society, the dictates of corporatized culture pursue individuals into their homes in order to enforce a state of isolation and passivity onto the masses. The very medium itself enforces a state of isolation on the public by replacing interactive face-to-face communication with impersonal one-way directives. Through this mutilated form of communication, according to Debord, individuals are connected to each other through a “one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another” and which dismantles any pre-existing communal boundaries (22). The increasing trend toward the global conglomeration of media syndicates further ensures the ruling classes’ hegemony over the production and circulation of ideas and products.

Live Earth projects an abstract community of 2 billion spectators; but this pseudo-community is an inauthentic representation of community because it is inherently founded on isolation and separation and designed to maintain hierarchical systems of power. By using a medium that follows the consumer into the very sanctity of the mind within the privacy of the home Live Earth follows a pattern of communication that flows from a central point into an isolated crowd. As such, Live Earth can be seen as a hierarchical organization that predetermines the cognitive and practical environmental choices of the uneducated masses. The seven pledges
outlined by the official discourse of Live Earth reads, under a Debordian framework, as a set of politically and economically non-threatening directives legitimated not only by the event organizers, but also by hegemonic corporate and political programs. Through the mass dissemination of its images and signs, the spectacular economy manufactures false needs and desires, as well as a series of false goods to fulfill these pseudo-needs and desires. In Debord’s view, the spectacular economy also proposes a set of “false models of revolution [for] local revolutionaries” (*Society of the Spectacle* 37). The images of revolutionary action that are distributed by the media are “designed to maintain the existing order as a whole;” according to a Debordian inspired analysis, Live Earth is thereby inherently unable to provide an authentic model of revolutionary action (37). As the material existence of a pseudo-reality, the spectacular commodity of Live Earth imposes a hegemonic, universalizing, and reductive set of social and ecological relations onto society which Debord would argue contradicts and obscures the revolutionary impulses of the movement. As a spectacular production, Live Earth’s official discourse does not ascend to a discourse of total self-consciousness, but rather preserves the psychological conditions of oppression through the practice of isolation and separation in order to reproduce, in the face of a growing radical green challenge, the social conditions necessary for the maintenance of the existing system.

*Situating Live Earth in the Green Movement*

Although Live Earth forwards a self-limiting discourse of environmental action there is a distinction that can be drawn between different forms of green ideology within the global debate. The forms which the green movement assumes across the globe are as diverse as the
geographical and social landscapes from which they emerge. Multiple responses to ecological issues emerge within a singular location; nonetheless, it is possible to delineate two deeply opposing streams of thought within the recorded canons of green development. On the one hand, a radical position that rejects dominant forms of economic and political organization, as well as capitalized social mores marks the ideology of movements, such as Deep Ecology, and the practices of organizations, such as Earth First! and the Animal Liberation Front. On the other hand, a position of compromise and co-optation by hegemonic models of economic and political organization stains the ideology of popular environmental movements, such as Live Earth, and organizations, such as the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund. The first form of environmental ideology, which will hereafter be referred to as ecologism or radical environmentalism, supports an ecological critique of corporate democracy that aligns with a Hegelian-Marxist theory of total revolution. For radical environmentalism a total reevaluation and global restructuring of dominant social mores and hegemonic modes of organization is necessary for an authentic ecological revolution. Mainstream environmentalism, on the other hand, has been delineated by critical environmental scholars as an ineffectual platform on which the economic and political status quo subsumes the authentic concerns of a radical green critique. Environmental positions attempt to work within the predetermined frameworks of society. In doing so, they refuse to ask crucial questions about the ecological impacts of hegemonic forms of social, political, and economic organization. In terms of Bruce Morito’s distinction between environmentalism and ecologism, the official discourse of Live Earth is a discourse of administrative or “managerial” environmentalism which, unlike ecologism or other radical interpretations of green theory, “retain[s] as much of the conceptual and methodological status
quo as possible” (5). The seven pledges proposed by the official rhetoric of Live Earth advocate actions within the present legal structures of political society, not a radical restructuring of the way people interact with the natural world. Live Earth is consequently identifiable as a mainstream environmental movement that forwards an official discourse of pseudo-change. Small shifts in the patterns of consumption, from traditional products to green or sustainable products, keep the movement within the existing political and economic order. According to Debord’s analysis of revolution, Live Earth is inherently incapable of implementing a total critique and therefore also fails to incite a total revolution.

Andrew Dobson’s critique of conservative interpretations of environmentalism asserts that mainstream environmentalism’s primary flaw is its failure to recognize that “fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption” are necessary in order to rectify present ecological concerns (364). Since mainstream environmentalism does not disturb the foundations of political and capitalist empires, Dobson contends that it is easily grafted onto existing political platforms. A diluted form of environmentalism is consequently the dominant ideology adopted by existing corporate and government complexes in response to current environmental concerns. Brian Tokar’s discussion of modern American environmental organizations positions these institutions, such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Wilderness Society, as “incapable of adequately defending the integrity of the natural environment” because they operate according to a politics of compromise that protects their own interests, as well as the interests of the economy and a false democratic power (xi). Indeed, Tokar identifies America’s major environmental groups as sites wherein the environmental debate is shifting away from a productive dialogue to assume a “self-limiting mainstream agenda” and a position
of compromise (xviii). According to Tokar’s analysis, mainstream American environmental organizations currently operate according to a “politics of moderation and compromise” because they desire influential positions among political and corporate “decision makers and power brokers” (xi). Instead of exacting a total critique and rejection of dominant political and economic systems, as well as of hegemonic forms of social organization, mainstream environmental groups pursue a constrained approach that focuses on the “efficient management of environmental problems within the limits imposed by present political and economic realities” (xi). In Tokar’s critique of mainstream environmentalism, major environmental organizations share an internal political agenda that includes “moderate political priorities” and similar “fundraising methods, organizational style[s], and media image[s]” (xx).

Established environmental organizations also receive donations from corporate entities; these funds are secured at a critical cost to the revolutionary force of an ecocentric approach. By subordinating concern for the earth to the special interests of corporate groups and political organizations, mainstream environmental organizations safeguard existing economic and political systems, and therefore also their own institutionalized position of power. The wealth and power of the dominant class is thus secured in the face of capitalism’s biggest threat. What should be articulated as a challenge to the economic process that has brought humanity to the brink of collapse is instead reformulated as a position of negotiation and compromise. The deficiencies of mainstream environmentalism, in Tokar’s view, are a natural consequence of “dominant political culture, which has become . . . subservient to the dictates of corporate America” (xi). In an era dominated by the pursuit of unlimited profit, established environmental organizations are rendered incapable of challenging the status quo and are reduced to lobbying
for lenient laws that preserve miniscule tracts of land and a few endangered plant and animal species. In its official capacity, Live Earth does not articulate an official coherent ideological position that is significantly different from dominant neo-liberal or conservative ideologies preoccupied with the logic of capital. In this analysis, the official discourse of Live Earth is comparable to existing mainstream environmentalism in that it fails to activate an authentic critique of economic, political, and cultural systems of domination. The universalizing rhetoric of Live Earth attempts to reach for economic “modernization and unification, together with all the other tendencies toward the simplification of society,” in the same manner in which spectacle does (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 16). As such, the dominant discourse of Live Earth reinforces Debord’s analysis of the spectacle as a site of domination and colonization.

*Economic Science and the Co-optation of Revolution*

One of the primary ideological sources funding the global discourse on climate change is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2007 climate change report. Although the designation of the panel is global, the IPCC is comprised of scientists that are trained in Western scientific discourses. Through the authority of science, complete with its impersonal methods of Western rationalization, the IPCC attaches itself to the universal claim to truth and logic that science aspires to. In *The Assault On Reason*, Gore positions science and law as the “twin daughters of reason” (46). Although Gore views this as a positive genealogy, Debord critiqued Marx for his “scientific determinism” because it allowed his theories to become “vulnerable to ideologization” (*Society of the Spectacle* 54). According to Debord’s analysis of Communist forms of organization, a focus on “economics, the historical science par excellence,” distorted
subsequent interpretations of Marxism by shutting “revolutionary practice” out of theoretical
debates (55). Indeed, Debord contends that Marx’s “scientific conclusions . . . later [became] obstructions to proletarian consciousness” because Marx’s argument claimed that the proletariat would gain freedom through a “linear . . . development of the modes of production, according to which, at each stage, class struggles would end” (56). As such, the discourse of economic science adopted by revolutionary theory enabled a separation between theory and practice that could only prevent the realization of a proletariat revolution.

In relation to Live Earth, the discourse of climate change is a scientific discourse of crisis that is discovered through the lens of technology. As Debord contends, this technological lens is contradicted by its reliance on capital, as well as by its theoretical dependance on a science that is owned by economic ideology. For instance, when interviewed on The Colbert Report, Climate Change 2007 co-author Michael Oppenheimer from the IPCC asserted that global warming could still be solved, although “some sacrifices” would be necessary (Oppenheimer). Stating that “uncertainty [has been] removed” from the debate over whether or not humans are the main source of atmospheric pollutants and that the evidence is “unequivocal,” Oppenheimer maintains that ignoring this evidence will place the entire globe at risk (Oppenheimer). However, Oppenheimer’s solutions are directed toward the “citizen-consumer,” (Scammel 125) as are many of Live Earth’s solutions, and therefore not only fail to account for the strain that production itself places on ecosystems, but also fail to acknowledge the fact that state and corporate activities are decisively responsible for a significant amount of the toxins present in modern ecosystems. Instead, the divided state of society is cloaked with a false popular unity that claims global warming can be solved if the everyday citizen consumes the correct products.
Although the predominant marketing theory that emerged after the second world war operated according to a “philosophy of the free market” and a conception of the consumer as a customer who was “divorced from the more overt political considerations” of economic development, Scammell argues that the “category of citizenry” established by Progressivism (1890s - 1920s) is re-emerging in the twenty-first century: that of the “citizen consumer” (125). Unlike the “customer consumer,” the “citizen consumer” invests in products that have aesthetic value and which have been produced by a company that adheres to socially and environmentally responsible standards. Moreover, Scammell contends that a new market theory that “puts the customer at the beginning rather than at the end of the production-consumption model” is emerging in corporate discourse (119). Corporations are subsequently responding to consumer activism, protest action, critiques by NGO advocacy networks, increased corporate visibility, technological developments, and market saturation and are scrambling to polish tarnished images and recreate themselves as “beautiful corporations” (119). Thus, the development of seemingly ethical corporations, such as Starbucks, the Body Shop, and Aveda, the introduction of Socially Responsible Investments (SRI), as well as the emergence of commercial fair trade and organic products. The set of environmental standards for spectacular media productions, such as Live Earth, can also be grouped under this definition, as can solutions proposed by the event. Although the revamping of corporate behavior may be seen by environmentalism as a step in the right direction, adherents to a radical green theory would view the greening of capitalism and the development of ethical purchasing empires not only as inadequate, but also as a perversion of ecological theories. Advising the public to replace older, inefficient cars with energy efficient vehicles, to use compact fluorescent light bulbs, and to plant trees in their backyards,
Oppenheimer and Gore “endorse the serious science behind the problem,” but do not also endorse a drastic change in political, social, or economic paradigms that radical green activists claim are ultimately necessary to create an ecologically sustainable society (Oppenheimer; Live Earth, “Pledges”). The energy saving tips and faith in technology articulated by the discursive formula of Live Earth indicates a refusal to acknowledge that larger changes are required in order to effect positive ecological change. As such, the scientific determinism of climate change links with the economic determinism of capitalized society. Dobson contends that these types of environmental management practices misread and misinterpret the “possibilities,” as well as the “constraints” that are “inherent in . . . an interrelated biotic and abiotic community” (365). A radical green perspective, on the other hand, forms a distinct ideological framework that questions the legitimacy of dominant political and personal ideological constructions, such as economic development, central governance, and military activities.

Society’s perception of nature is constructed through the discourse of climate change, as are the means of addressing the threat of climate change. Science first delineates the means of understanding the threat and then provides the appropriate solutions to deal with this threat. According to Kate Sopher in What Is Nature?, certain images of nature are constructed and imposed on society by the official lens of power. Hierarchical bureaucratic systems of management and colonization construct perceptions of nature that are relevant to ideological processes that protect the growth of free-market democracies. In the post-utopia of the material boom, nature is projected by climate change discourse as a dangerously polluted force that will inevitably respond to its willful degradation through a deadly global-warming backlash. The modified nature of post-modernity is also manufactured by the discourse of Live Earth as a
source of danger precisely because it is a product of the progress of modernity. In other words, the colonized nature of contemporary society is positioned as a threat because it has been managed and exploited by capitalized modes of production. Yet at the same time, this threat is situated as manageable through the simplified act of consumption. Nature is reconstructed as a manageable threat and the salvation of the earth is placed in the hands of the technological economy. Consequently, the “environmental imperialism” (Hardt and Negri 279) disseminated by the spectacle of Live Earth projects a future in which minimal conservation efforts give birth to a reformed and unified “affluent” environmental and “technological . . . service society” (Dobson 368). The solutions pre-offered by the IPCC and Live Earth forward an official discourse of green consumerism and technological innovation that protects and reproduces the existing economic system in the context of the climate crisis. As such, the official environmental position of Live Earth is incapable of articulating a believable critique of the social, political, and economic causes of climate change.

Live Earth as Concentrated Spectacle

According to Debord, in “moments of crisis,” modern capitalism resurrects the concentrated form of the spectacle in order to facilitate the unification of society (Society of the Spectacle 41). Capitalizing on the fear produced by the climate crisis the spectacle “sells . . . society’s survival” back to the public through a series of strategies designed to stimulate economic growth and protect political positions of power (41). Within the context of Debord’s critique of spectacular society, Gore flourishes as the ultimate figurehead of Live Earth. His extensive participation in the American political scene infuses his image with a definitive
political legitimacy; indeed, Gore embodies the image of a political leader. With the mass dissemination of *An Inconvenient Truth*, Gore’s status expands to include the role of movie celebrity. Gore thus assumes the position of the “infallible” leader of Live Earth in terms of both the culture industry and the political sphere (74). As the personification of an official “image of the good,” Gore appears as the “heroic” savior of a decadent society perched on the brink of destruction (42). Assuming the legitimate identity of an officially sanctioned revolutionary subject, Gore’s character acts as the guarantor of Live Earth’s generalized unity (42). However, Gore’s appointment as the figurehead of Live Earth demands an investigation into the form of ideology to which he subscribes in previous publications and appearances. In his 1992 text, *Earth In Balance*, Gore discloses his ideological affiliations when he outlines the main components of the “Global Marshall Plan” (Gore 295). Justifying his global strategy in a move faintly reminiscent of the requirements of a Hegelian-Marxist position of total revolution that Debord contests is necessary, Gore contends that the ecological “crisis we face is . . . a global problem” that “can only be solved on a global basis. Merely addressing one dimension . . . will, in the end, guarantee frustration, failure, and a weakening of the resolve needed to address the whole of the problem” (295). Yet, the “strategic” goals and environmental rhetoric of Gore’s first international blueprint for environmental salvation expose persistent mainstream ideological affiliations. Furthermore, Gore draws on the same set of solutions in the official solutions presented throughout the Live Earth concerts.
Gore's Lingering Ideological Affiliations

A primary point of interest in relation to Live Earth is the fact that Gore justifies his expansion of the post-World War II American Marshall Plan by appealing to the hegemonic global success of Western economic and political ideological models. Gore cites three international developments that have changed the face of global geopolitical relations: democracy, which he posits “will be the preferred form of political organization on this planet;” modified free markets, which he contends “will be the preferred form of economic organization;” and the appearance of a truly global civilization, which he cites “most individuals now” identify with (Earth In Balance 298). Gore also contends that the “resounding philosophical defeat of communism (in which the Marshall Plan itself played a significant role) has left an ideological vacuum that invites either a bold and visionary strategy to facilitate the emergence of democratic government and modified free markets throughout the world -- in a truly global system -- or a growing chaos that is already too common.” (298)

Rather than challenging the principles on which these hegemonic global changes are predicated, Gore positions these developments as positive conditions of change that will enable the implementation of a global plan, not only to combat the climate crisis, but also to eradicate political instability and social chaos. Indeed, Gore states the “scope and complexity of” the Global Marshall Plan “will far exceed [that] of the original” (297). The Marshall Plan, which was forwarded by the American government to reconstruct a system of trade between European countries devastated by World War II, is positively defined by Gore as a generalized blueprint
that “developed strategies to serve human needs and promote sustained economic progress” (297). Gore argues that these same strategies must be implemented on a “global scale” to combat the growing problem of climate change (297). Ironically, the rhetoric of economic progress is embedded in Gore’s environmental discourse so as to position economic development as a prerequisite to ecological stability.

Yet a radical green critique suggests just the opposite. The canons of ecological debate are rife with scientific and discursive evidence that Western economic models, buttressed by Western forms of political organization, are the cause of current ecological concerns, not the solution to the climate crisis (Tokar; Escobar; Morito; Dobson). As such, Gore’s environmental ethic cannot be said to be anything other than a diluted and co-opted form of mainstream environmentalism that enables the expansion of economic development across geopolitical boundaries. Gore further perpetuates the image of the United States as an international leader in times of crisis. Citing the original Marshall Plan as a brainchild of American politics, Gore contends that it is once again “time for the United States to take the leading role -- because no one else can or will” (Earth in Balance 297, 314). Gore’s statement consequently places the globe’s largest waste machine as the only nation with the capacity and drive to manufacture ecological change. In this rhetorical magnification of American political ideals the existence of other ways of healing and protecting the ecological integrity of essential ecosystems are diminished in both visibility and value. An authentic critique of the American worldview and official American practice is not even considered; neither is an examination of a radical green ideology or an Indigenous worldview. Instead, the debate is distracted by the principles of a
democratic free-market and sustainable economic development. This distraction is completed by an army of green products that are marched out as solutions to the threat of ecological collapse.

In the context of Live Earth, Gore’s ideological affiliations to his earlier text are evident in several key instances. The primary preoccupation with the need to develop green technologies that is presented in Live Earth presentations, as well as in the overarching discourse of hope and possibility, reaches back to the economic and technological core of Gore’s earlier thought. The seven pledges demonstrate this affiliation clearly, particularly pledges four, five, and seven. These pledges work within the parameters of the existing system, not against them; as a result, present systems of economic and political domination are perpetuated in the official discourse of the event. Pledge number seven, which asks spectators “to buy from businesses and support leaders who share [their] commitment to solving the climate crisis and building a sustainable, just, and prosperous world for the 21st century,” demonstrates the limits embedded within Live Earth’s official discourse of environmental action (Live Earth, “Pledges”). In online and mobile pledge statements the explicit meaning of this proposed mode of (in)action, as a “shopping solution,” is readily embraced (Live Earth, “Pledges”). The only action actually perpetuated by pledging to “shop for the most energy efficient electronics and appliances” is the action of consumption (Live Earth, “Pledges”). Rosario Dawson’s reiteration of pledge number seven, in which she declares, if “we vote with our pocketbooks and ballot box . . . nothing can stop us from stopping global warming,” further ensures the perpetuation of dominant economic and political systems by infusing the pledge with her celebrity status (Live Earth, “Concerts”). The seventh pledge assumes the guise of action but in reality it extends the psychological and ecological colonization perpetuated by capitalist development by fabricating a need for an
additional layer of development. This pseudo-need for an increase in innovation and development, in order to create ‘sustainable’ technologies that will enable the continuance of a ‘prosperous’ economic process, replaces the authentic need to reclaim the natural ecological conditions necessary for regenerating a healthy planet. Rather than critiquing the principles on which economic development and technological innovation are based, Live Earth positions technology and economic development as the means through which humans can ‘solve’ the problem of the climate crisis. Furthermore, these strategies are mapped onto a global audience, consequently homogenizing the list of officially sanctioned actions across multiple cultural and ecological divides. Through a Debordian lens, the official rhetoric of Live Earth is a one-way directive that emerges from a central point and pursues the individual into the private catacombs of human experience. Indeed, the overarching “goal” of Gore’s first global plan was the “establishment, especially in the developing world -- of the social and political conditions most conducive to the emergence of sustainable societies” *(Earth in Balance* 307). These conditions, as the Global Marshall Plan initially outlines, are enabled by Western models of democracy and free-market economies. Live Earth extends this strategic goal by articulating a discourse of action that is embedded in the discourse of economic and social development.

*Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability*

One of Gore’s primary concerns in 1992 was the need to stabilize populations in developing countries. This is thought to be achieved by developing the country’s education, economic, and political infrastructures according to Western models. A radical green critique, on the other hand, argues that developed countries are in fact primarily responsible regardless of any
attempt to control population growth in developing countries. Although Live Earth acknowledges that developed countries are accountable for a significant portion of global ecological devastation, this acknowledgement does not translate into the strategies proposed by Gore’s original Global Marshall Plan or by Live Earth. Both still define certain countries as underdeveloped and therefore in need of development according to the Western model. In a Live Earth presentation by two women from Kenya at the Johannesburg Coca Cola Dome, the drive for population stabilization and economic development in Africa is readily visible. In their presentation, the women assert that patterns of consumption in Western societies are causing an increase in droughts in their region of residence; however, they also reiterate a need for economic and technological development in their own country. In _Encountering Development_, Arturo Escobar positions development as a discursive formation. According to Escobar’s understanding, “development discourse is a rule-governed system held together by a set of statements that the discursive practice continues to reproduce” (154). Drawing on the methodology of Foucault, Escobar exposes the way in which this particular “order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible” (5). In his investigation into the “development gaze,” Escobar finds a process of “displacement” which transforms “peasants, women, and the environment into spectacles” (155). Through the use of what Escobar calls “regimes of representation,” the discourse of development paints a picture of the Third World as underdeveloped -- poor, illiterate, and in need of “systematic” development (162). However, Escobar argues that the actual object of this discourse is the “underdeveloped economy” (73). The solution to the underdeveloped state of chaos and poverty in the Third World is a specific kind of development that includes the advancement of technology, capital,
communication, transportation, democratic government, and the free-market economy. A radical ecological critique would argue that these same precepts are the precise ingredients that have created the current condition of ecological crisis. The “construction of the world” according to the gaze of development is a consequently a discursive and representational strategy that perpetuates an ideological hegemony over the conditions of survival by highlighting one discursive schema while repressing others (62). The relations between people, and between society and nature, are brought under the lens of management and any pre-existing cultural and ecological relations are subsumed under the discourse of development.

Escobar cites Harry Truman’s 1949 “fair deal” as a founding point for this “new” program of international “management” (3). According to Truman, “greater productivity is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge” (qtd. in Escobar 3). The intention behind Truman’s program was to “bring about the conditions necessary to replicating” the order of “advanced societies” on a global scale; namely “high levels of industry and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values” (Escobar 4). The three “main ingredients” that were to enable Truman’s developmental “revolution” were “capital, science, and technology” (4). Indeed, according to Truman’s report, a complete “restructuring of underdeveloped societies” was necessary (4). The forward momentum of socioeconomic development from 1950s to the 1970s resulted in the elevation of the discourse of development to an “omnipresent” force that enabled the “colonization of reality” (5). The post-World War II correlation between Truman’s ideas and the original Marshall Plan betrays an ideological
affiliation between economic theory and the politics of poverty; as Debord suggests, both the material economy and the symbolic economy are nourished by the concrete and emblematic existence of poverty. Gore’s support of a Global Marshall Plan, as well as his belief in an essential connection between poverty and environmental degradation reproduces the hegemonic discourse of economic development. In the context of Live Earth, both the underdeveloped and the developed nations are situated as ecologically impoverished dominions, but only in terms of sustainable, or green, development. This can be viewed as a second, and more intensive stage of cultural and ecological colonization by the ideology of economic development. The rhetoric of economic development burrows into environmental discourse in order to determine official ideas about how individuals should interact with the natural world. These ideas, in turn, determine the legitimate actions that can be taken. In the end, the debate is caught between the discourse of management and the discourse of development. Instead of changing the systems and practices that perpetuate the exploitation of natural resources, the management debate centers on the management of ecosystems for a sustainable economy and the preservation or conservation of select ecosystems that are considered threatened. At the same time, the development debate centers on the development and reproduction of the economy. In the end, the final goal centers on the reproduction of the economy as the basis for human survival in the face of an ecological threat.

*Live Earth as Integrated Spectacle*

Perhaps the best example of the insidious and fractured nature of Live Earth is the “diffused” product endorsement that extends into the “concentrated” content of the event itself
(Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 12). To attract the attention of the public Live Earth featured a platform of movie celebrities and popular culture icons. According to Debord, “media stars” are “spectacular representations of living human beings” (38). The “opposite of an individual,” the figure of the star is the “enemy of the individual,” both within himself and within others (39). Hegel believed that individuals were only able to recognize value in themselves if they received recognition from others. In the society of the spectacle, this need for recognition is satisfied not through a mutual exchange of respect, but rather through a one-way exchange in which the individual merely assumes the static image of the ethical green consumer that is disseminated by the semiotic directives of corporate environmentalism. The diversity of star identities prefigure the legitimate “images of possible roles” for the rest of society; in doing so, the media star “renounces all autonomy in order . . . to identify with the general law of obedience to the course of things” (38). By personifying “various styles of life and various views of society” the stars of spectacular society provide the official roles which the public is “supposedly free to embrace and pursue” on a global stage (38). According to Debord, they embody the “full range” of socially acceptable qualities; nevertheless, “all official differences between them are . . . cancelled out by [their] official similarit[ies]” as representations of subjects within the constraints of a democratic free-market (39). The star is nothing more than the embodiment of the “inaccessible . . . byproducts” of the division of labor; namely, the “power to decide and the leisure to consume” (38).

Power and leisure, in Debord’s society of the spectacle, are the source and the goal of the hegemonic process of economic development. Since this process is not critically examined by Live Earth or other mainstream environmental organizations, neither are its products. Media stars
appear to possess the power to determine their own realities and the leisure to freely pursue their desires; however, the roles they assume are manufactured by the media industry to prefigure the product choices that have already been made by corporate forces. As such, the use of media figures detracts the spectator from any real revolutionary action. According to Debord, “none” of the activities staged in the roles of the stars “are truly global, [nor] do they offer any real choices” (39). Rather, celebrities offer a “false choice:” all identities assumed and choices made by the actor have already been manufactured by the economic system to perpetuate existing models of production and consumption (40). The continuous global circulation of an economically innocuous selection of possible roles and consumer choices blurs the distinction between an authentic revolutionary role and an inauthentic one. Since authentic choices are not embodied by the media star in commercial advertising and hollywood blockbusters, neither are they in Live Earth. Only choices that protect and sustain the power of the ruling class and the means by which they preserve and finance their power are circulated in the spectacular glamour of mainstream media. Moreover, Debord argues that this is not due to intention or design, but rather is an autonomous function of the economy. Economic ideology has become so entrenched in society that its media subjects cannot help but replicate and reproduce the ideology that underpins the system, as well as the system itself. What Debord is illuminating here is the result of an analysis wherein the actor procures an affluent living by assuming the guise of a false identity; this temporary and illusory role-playing automatically casts a shadow on the authenticity and the reality of the event or identity that is depicted. The existence of such ambiguous individuals in the scripted portion of Live Earth (the presentations of the Seven
pledges and other official statements) casts suspicion on the authenticity of the participants’
commitment to revolutionary action.

Consequently, under a Debordian interpretation the parade of stars endorsing Live Earth
marks the event as a production designed to map a false consciousness onto society. This false
consciousness intends to shift responsibility away from the actions of corporations, governments,
and militaries onto the actions of individuals, not only to prevent an authentic critique and a total
revolution, but also to reproduce hegemonic systems of social, economic, and political
organization. Tokar contends that by deeming the public “responsible” for ecological problems,
corporations can conceal their own involvement by positioning themselves as capable of
providing solutions to the climate crisis (xiv). These solutions are primarily presented in the form
of products that are labelled as natural or recycled. These ‘green’ products are priced and
marketed for the wealthy; meanwhile, cheaper products made with questionable ingredients are
still made available to the wider, and significantly poorer, public. In addition, many of these
green products still contain ecologically harmful ingredients and use conventional marketing
tools, such as excessive spectacular packaging, to sell their products. For example, staged
celebrity endorsements of CFL light-bulbs permeate a number of Live Earth presentations, yet
the CFL light-bulb is a technological innovation that is fractured by its reliance on a toxic
material economy. Despite the fact that CFL light-bulbs decrease individual energy consumption
by “60 to 75” percent, they contain more components than traditional light-bulbs. One of these
additional components is mercury (Live Earth, “Green articles and photos”). The existence of
mercury in the new ‘green’ bulbs is justified by the decrease in mercury released by coal
factories generating electricity for older bulbs. Traditional light-bulbs, which CFL light-bulbs are
theoretically supposed to replace, are constructed out of more simple materials and are also still available in the marketplace for a significantly cheaper price. The promotion of alternative products, such as hybrid automobiles for the individual and alternative energy for the masses, perpetuates the systems of innovation and production that safeguard the wealthy. The power and leisure of the ruling class is therefore also sustained. No longer ruled by a monarchy or even a democratic government, the people are ruled by an illusion that protects the special interests of the spectacular economy. Indeed, subjects in the society of the spectacle are governed by an ideological framework that positions consumption as a revolutionary action.

The particular characteristics of each new product that is consecutively paraded across global television screens, billboards, and magazine pages is irrelevant in the context of an economy that is nurtured by the constant novelty of new products in the marketplace. Indeed, the economy requires novelty to sustain the attention of consumers. In Debord’s expansion of Marxism, the media also relies on ‘the new’ to sustain itself. The media quickly latches onto each product and generates “waves of enthusiasm for [each] particular product” (Society of the Spectacle 44). This is due to the media’s reliance on the same kind of perpetual consumption that the logic of the material economy relies on. According to Debord, both material commodities and image commodities are temporary products that are quickly discarded. What is actually sustained is the “commodity as [an] abstract form” (43). The fixation with a continual stream of particular products contaminates any attempt to create a holistic form of ecologically sustainable consumption, specifically because the “consumer can only get his hands on a succession of fragments” (43). These fragments “lack . . . any of the quality” the “whole” might possess (43). Furthermore, each particular commodity “fights for itself” and therefore cannot acknowledge the
existence of other commodities (43). Each commodity thus imposes a separate “pseudo-need” on society; these artificial needs have no correlation to each other or to any “authentic need[s] or desire[s]” (44). In fact, Debord contends that an “abundance of commodities [belie] an absolute break in the organic development of social needs” (44).

In the context of the Live Earth environmental movement, the distraction of the essential debate over modes of action to a conversation over which green products to purchase removes the threat of an authentic ecological critique or a radical green revolution and replaces it with the act of consumption. According to Tokar’s analysis, the economic ideology that has infused mainstream environmentalism has detracted the debate to insignificant details, such as “tradable ‘rights’ to pollute,” energy efficiency, “industrialized ecology,” and “campaigns to privatize public lands,” which simply protect the interests of corporations (xix). The most telling statement of Live Earth came from Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who declared that “we have the technological capacity to avert” global climate change (Live Earth, “Concerts”). The hype to develop technologies to avert the climate crisis draws awareness away from the existence of dwindling natural ecosystems that already perform the same functions perfectly. What is at stake here, therefore, is not the health of the earth, but the maintenance of the economic system in the face of an ecological crisis. The commodity itself becomes the recipient of a “religious zeal” which is only capable of paying homage to the “commodity’s sovereign freedom” (Debord, Society of the Spectacle 43). The image enforces a “blissful unification of society through consumption” thereby nullifying the official push for revolutionary action and diverting the revolutionary impetus of Live Earth (45). An authentic union of community and a conscious appropriation of history by the revolutionary subject is subsequently suspended.
The Contradictions of Popular Music

In the society of the spectacle, the logic of the marketplace exercises a hegemonic hold over the creation and the distribution of music. The popular musicians, actors, and comedians that are brought together by Live Earth are undeniably categorizable as media stars that enable the reproduction of the economy and of power through their tainted representations of reality. According to Debord’s framework, media stars function as empty vessels that showcase the range of desirable lifestyle and material choices available to the public. Under this rubric, corporate forces predetermine the roles assumed and the music distributed by popular musicians, consequently restricting the possible choices to ones that involve forms of mass consumption. Vivian and Maurin’s introductory text on media studies, *The Media of Mass Communication*, similarly contends that the music industry is dominated by recording conglomerates that impose a tightly regulated set of restrictions on music production and distribution. In the context of late capitalism, popular music is a massive commercial endeavor in which major recording companies set standards that generously compensate large album sales in order to instigate competition between artists. The diversity of the marketplace is thus limited by a market logic that drives major record companies to “encourage artists to imitate what is already popular,” rather than to break forward onto new ground (Vivian and Maurin 13). The largest draw for Live Earth consists in the concert playlists; hit artists from across the decades with the capacity to sell out their own solo shows were featured by the dozens at various Live Earth venues. Big names, such as Genesis, Madonna, and the Smashing Pumpkins, produce large crowds and massive profits that line the pockets of recording corporations. The monopoly of power that recording conglomerates hold over the creative potential of musicians, as well as over the distribution of
music, is secured through a hierarchical system that is designed to reproduce itself. More importantly, however, is the sheer number of statements and primary preoccupations that emerge in many of the musical performances which directly contradict and undermine the political drive of the Live Earth environmental movement. For example, in London, the lead singer from the band Kasabian prefaced their performance of “Club Foot” with the following statement: “I just want to address the whole world wherever you are. Save your energy cause I can’t. I try” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). Although Kasabian’s appearance at Live Earth is supposed to suggest that the band has made at least a minimal effort to reduce their carbon footprint, or that they intend to, their statement suggests the exact opposite. In New York, Jon Bon Jovi performs the song “Lost Highway,” belting out the lyrics “heading out on the open road, half a tank of gas . . . hit the gas on this lost highway . . . miles and years flying by,” to a crowd of adoring fans (“Lost Highway”).24 Like the advertisements promoting Chevrolet and Esurance, Bon Jovi’s performance promotes an activity that directly contributes to the increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; as such, Bon Jovi’s performance re-inscribes the very consumption patterns that are being challenged by radical green movements.

In addition to the commodity fetishism embedded within the event, Live Earth contains an ironic and absurd performative aspect that complicates the formation of an authentic revolutionary identity. The attainment of a pure self-consciousness becomes impossible when the series of identity choices pre-offered by the Live Earth spectacle are rendered useless by their direct association with the realm of absurdity. The incongruity of the music star identity with the radical green identity casts the revolutionary authenticity of the movement into an inconsistent disarray. A prime example of this occurs in Petra Nemcova’s speech at the Giants’ Stadium,
wherein she positions the 2004 Great Sumatra-Andaman earthquake as a symptom of climate change, then introduces Ludacris by claiming that he “will answer the call for this environmental ludicrousness” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). The irony of this statement is enhanced as Ludacris proceeds to sell his image and sexuality throughout his performance of “Pimpin’ All Over the World,” “Money Maker,” “What’s Your Fantasy/ Move Bitch,” and “Glamorous” (with Fergie). In Debord’s critique, “as the mass of commodities becomes more and more absurd, absurdity becomes a commodity in its own right” (Society of the Spectacle 44). Consumers, bored with the mundane gloss of perfectly manicured and composed images, seek out the strange and the unreal. The spectator is compelled to watch the novel, the shocking, and the absurd; indeed, the spectator feeds on the scandal and the frenzy that surround the absurd figure. More important, however, the image of the revolutionary subject is attached to Ludacris thereby contaminating the authentic meaning of the revolutionary position. The comical absurdity of Ludacris’ association with the environmental movement weakens the force of Live Earth. The revolutionary integrity of radical green movements that exist outside the semiotics of Live Earth is also polluted by the spectacular association of affluent media stars and green consumerism with the mainstream environmental movement.

The controversy associated with the attendance of spectacular performers draws the public’s attention to the issue of climate change; however, the effect of this attention is not conducive to the development of an authentic ecological revolution. Instead, as Madonna’s closing performance at the Wembley Stadium indicated, Live Earth was a spectacular production designed to please the senses with fireworks, amped up music, gyrating dancers, and flashing lights. Emerging once again as the queen of the “material world,” Madonna did not compromise
her position as uncontested queen of pop in order to green her performance (“Material Girl”). Indeed, after the event, controversy surrounded Madonna’s association with the environmental movement. Her financial investments in major corporate polluters cast the authenticity of her appearance, and its context, into question. Her position as a role model that is committed to the climate crisis and to changing her lifestyle choices to attend this commitment is cast into doubt and thus rendered insignificant. In the context of the ecological debate, the essential element of performativity in Madonna’s role as entertainer becomes obscenely visible. Madonna’s association with Live Earth, like Ludacris,’ may very well attract the attention of the masses, but the message of change emitted by the event is polluted by the controversy and scandal enveloping the event. The attention of the public is distracted by insignificant concerns and the systems of domination and production are concealed from a radical green critique. The discourse of eco-revolution forwarded by Live Earth is thus congealed into a convoluted and contradictory discourse of (non)action. The concept of change is colonized by the discourse of economic development thereby ensuring that the modes of action proposed by the environmental spectacle align with the precepts of a power that falsifies the meaning of democratic political organization.

*Live Earth and Green Consumerism*

The arrival of green consumerism to environmental discourse signifies the entrenchment of economic ideology in the official response to climate change. Tokar identifies the “emergence of . . . corporate environmentalism” and the “rise of environmental consumerism” as a negative force whereby “environmental concerns” are co-opted by the ideology of the economy (xiii). Tokar further contends that the individualized responsibility placed on the public by consumer
solutions alienates the public from political action. These insidious forms of false action, which Tokar categorizes as “corporate greenwash,” negate a more extensive critique of existing systems by persuading the public that the current ecological crisis “will be adequately addressed” by the logic of the marketplace (xiii). Tokar contends that corporate greenwashing not only misleads the public, but also disseminates a false discourse of action that “furthers the notion that environmental issues are largely a technical set of problems” that will be solved without any fundamental changes to existing social and political systems (xiv). Minute technical adjustments to the processes of innovation and production, which preserve the infrastructure while changing inconsequential elements of the process, enable the construction of a public facade of change without actually revolutionizing the processes of innovation and production themselves.

The particular form of (non)action known as corporate greenwash began its attack on Western environmental ideologies more than twenty years ago; by the time Live Earth graced international screens in 2007, corporate greenwashing had already made significant inroads into the ethics of mainstream environmentalism. Tokar’s study of “green consumerism” roots the practice in a myth wherein ecological concerns are primarily the “result of individual consumer choices;” this particular myth conceals “all the ways in which these choices are shaped and constrained by decisions made in corporate boardrooms . . . beyond the reach of public scrutiny” (xiv). The green consumerism that Scammel identifies as a means of expressing public opinion, and which Live Earth eagerly latches onto, is thus the fundamental illusion that protects and reproduces the economic system, and therefore also hierarchical forms of power. In Tokar’s analysis, Chief Executive Officers control the “vast majority of decisions about what is produced and how, [consequently] limiting individual choices [and] shap[ing] patterns of
consumption” (xiv). Tokar’s argument thus aligns with Debord’s critique in which the false choices offered to society by the spectacular economy are made available in order to protect the wealth and power of the current ruling class (xiv). The line between authentic and false modes of action is blurred by the semiotic hegemony of corporate advertising machines. As a result, the threat of ecological revolution is contained before it can even begin to escape. The image of the green consumer - an individual whose very identity is manufactured by his or her ethics of consumption - is positioned by corporate semiotic discourses as the image of the good. By consuming the correct products the subject can also assume the guise of the successful, happy, and environmentally conscious leader. In doing so, modern subjects are led to believe that they are solving the problem of the climate crisis. Other forms of action, such as the rejection of consumption, or even the simple act of consuming less, are dominated by the constant emission of advertisements selling a new kind of ‘green’ product.

In his analysis, Tokar openly contends that the “powerful interests that generally dominate economic policy” are “hostile to environmental protection” (xvi). Debord reiterates this same principle when he argues that spectacular society is hostile to life. According to Tokar, “in a highly individualistic, economically driven society . . . green consumerism makes it possible for people to feel they are doing something for the earth without questioning the lifestyles or the economic systems that have actually brought us to the brink of collapse” (xiv). In relation to Tokar’s argument, the central position that ethically green consumption trends take in the context of Live Earth poisons the official discourse of Live Earth and renders the revolutionary impetus of the event impotent. Similar to Debord, Tokar’s central argument asserts that “neither government regulations nor the capitalist market is capable of providing adequate protection for
natural ecosystems or communities affected by environmental pollution” (xv). Tokar also contends, like Debord, that what is necessary to combat the ecological crisis is a movement that “asserts the integrity of communities of people, and of all life on earth, as an overriding principle for society” (xvii). A total revolution, in which there is a spontaneous global reconstitution of political, economic, and social modes of organization, is impossible with a foundation, such as Live Earth, that is incapable of separating itself from the very modes of production and consumption that it wishes to critique and overthrow.

In terms of Debord’s analysis, the entire premise of Live Earth is rooted in its projection of itself as a spectacular media event that is designed to draw attention to the global climate crisis. This is primarily achieved through a persistent commodification of the Live Earth concerts. In the months before Live Earth Gore and Wall manufactured an intensity for the movement by projecting an abstract “2 billion” potential viewers (Live Earth, “Press Room”). Promotional articles leading up to Live Earth continually repeated the potential demographic scope of the event and newspaper articles after the event called constant attention to the number of spectators that consumed the event. The post-Live Earth website headlined the event as the “largest global entertainment event in history” and reported a record breaking “10 million online viewers” (Live Earth, “Press Room”). This preoccupation with demographics and spectator numbers belies a fascination with consumption, specifically with consumption of the image, as well as with the consumption of subjects. As a live, televised, online, and recorded commodity that was consumed visually by a global audience, Live Earth showed itself to be a fetishized object that displaces direct action in order to circulate a series of officially sanctioned images that demand passive contemplation. Passive contemplation of the spectacular discourse of
consumption and identity performance, as well as of controversy and scandal (the absurdity) of the event shift into a position of hegemony over the active debate about the conditions pertinent to an ecological revolution. In the last instance, a Debordian analysis suggests that the official Live Earth images can only perpetuate the conditions necessary for the autonomous reproduction of the economy and hegemonic forms of power. The fact that televised events, such as Live Earth, are “expensive to set up and operate” entails that the logic of the marketplace dominates the operative logic of the spectacle (Vivian and Maurin 7). In order to meet production expenses and produce a profit, television networks must sell a product; this is typically achieved either through the “direct” sale of a product, such as Live Earth, to mass audiences, or through the indirect sale of advertising space and time (7). According to these criteria, Live Earth is first consumed directly as an “information source,” as well as an “entertainment” source; indeed, Vivian and Maurin affirm that “most mass media are a mix of information, entertainment, . . . and persuasion” (5). In the second instance, time and space are quantified and sold to advertisers of material products who desire “access” to the consumers of the image commodity. In relation to Live Earth, the preoccupation with mass consumption that is posed through the discourse of demographics is thus symptomatic of the logic of capital embedded within the spectacle. Access to media spectators is considered a crucial marketing strategy through which the conditions necessary to the propagation of current production and consumption patterns, not only in terms of material products, but also in terms of the immaterial semiotic product, are created and sustained. In this process, subjects are internally colonized by images that influence their political beliefs and lifestyle choices.
**Corporate Sponsorship and Live Earth**

The neutralization of the political potential of the event by the logic of capital is most obvious in the corporate advertising that supports the MSN Live Earth website. The website, which is the primary site of analysis in this paper, is sponsored by Chevrolet, Sirius Satellite Radio, Zune, and Esurance. The corporate branding of Live Earth also extends to a Live Earth film series sponsored by Absolut Vodka. As an event designed to initiate a movement to combat the rising levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the sponsorship of Live Earth by Chevrolet and Esurance exists as a direct contradiction to the movement’s goals. Despite the loophole created by the Live Earth slogan “We Can Change,” Chevrolet cannot be labeled as a green company and driving cannot be considered a green activity even within the context of new green technologies (Live Earth, “Concerts”). The projection of images and ideals in advertising clips, to which Chevrolet does not yet ascribe, manufactures an illusion of change on the cusp of capital and technology; yet, this is an illusion which nullifies the revolutionary goal of Live Earth. An authentic rejection of mechanized modes of transportation is shadowed by the presentation of a series of spectacular, and illusory, alternative options for individualized transportation. In this illusion, the fact that Chevrolet has historically limited the North American marketplace to fossil fuel consumption by only producing vehicles that rely on fossil fuels is elided; the toxic waste produced during the manufacture of new ‘green’ vehicles is similarly bypassed. Esurance’s celebration of driving, which advocates small adjustments to tire pressure to improve fuel consumption, also displaces the negative impact of driving in general. Any driving increases the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, yet a complete restructuring of society to eliminate vehicle production, consumption, and use is not up for debate in this context.
Instead, the independence achieved through the act of driving aligns with the requirements of isolation and individuality that are crucial to the preservation of contemporary democratic and economic trends identified in *The Society of the Spectacle* as cornerstones to Western identity.

Merchandise for sale on the MSN website and at various concert venues further expose the market logic that dominates the solutions proposed by Live Earth. A number of items are available depending on concert location; products are also available for purchase on the internet. The products offered by Live Earth are said to meet five green criteria; however, these criteria are ambiguous and illusory standards that mask the actual conditions of unfettered production and reproduction. What is sustained by these criteria is not the environment, but rather capital. As the thirty-eight dollar bamboo T-shirt states, “green is the new black,” but only in the sense that spectacular capital has found a new trend to cash in on (Live Earth, “Merchandise”). The green image constructed by the bamboo label and catchy slogan position this alternative fabric as eco-friendly, but in order to do so, the lack of pesticides used on bamboo crops must be positioned to hide the fact that toxic chemicals are usually used to transform the plant into fabric (Lackman). Bamboo in its full context is neither sustainable nor ethical, yet the integrated spectacle must hide its dependence on human and ecological exploitation in order to sustain itself. In the context of Live Earth, consumption trumps all concerns and minute adjustments to the discursive schematic of capital overcome and contain the political pulse of the Live Earth movement. Rather than producing an authentic ecological revolution, Live Earth attaches itself to the form of mainstream environmentalism that is most conducive to sustaining economic relations in the face of an ecological threat. Abstract modes of consumer action, which are positioned as authentic environmental decisions, are highlighted; however, these actions
themselves are so abstract that their actual impact on the climate crisis is invisible. Carbon credits\textsuperscript{27} which are also available for purchase on the Live Earth website, enable the reproduction of the conditions of technological production. Attached to the motto “reduce what you can; offset what you can’t,” the companies Carbon Neutral (UK) and Native Energy (US) offer carbon offsets\textsuperscript{28} for Live Earth related travel, as well as for everyday electricity use, home heating and air conditioning costs, and transportation costs (Live Earth, “Merchandise”). Popular presenters further expand the capacity for technology and capital to reproduce the conditions of production by infusing the illusion of carbon credits with their symbolic prestige.\textsuperscript{29} The conditions conducive to revolutionary social and ecological innovation are pushed aside in favor of technological innovation. In other words, the conditions conducive to the development of technological innovation are reproduced in the carbon credit economy. According to Debord’s analysis, the economic infrastructure both relies on and benefits from this organization of technological innovation. Furthermore, by funding the future development of ‘green’ technologies, consumers displace immediate responsibility by absolving their consumption sins in the future redemption offered by technology. In the case of Live Earth’s Ebay charity auctions, which auctioned off “autographed concert memorabilia” and donated the funds to “benefit the Live Earth concerts and the Alliance for Climate Protection,” the conditions for the spectacular reproduction of Live Earth itself is enabled (Live Earth, “Auctions”). The sale of these items provide the financial basis for future spectacular endeavors. Without these funds the pseudo-cyclical return of Live Earth would be impossible.
Conclusions

Through a Debordian perspective, Live Earth is exposed as another spectacular strategy of the economy that seeks to assimilate the revolutionary potential that a green critique should forward. In *Earth For Sale*, Tokar asserts that the present world is “thoroughly dominated by a global economic system, a consumption driven culture, and an entire way of life that accepts no natural limits to the continual expansion of its reach” (4). Contending that “nearly all of the world’s peoples and natural ecosystems are subject to the whims of a global economy,” Tokar’s argument corresponds with Debord’s in its ultimate critique that the preoccupations of market logic “appropriate life itself to satisfy the insatiable wants of a powerful few” (4). Extending Debord’s analysis of the economy’s internal and external colonization of man to the colonization of all aspects of nature, Tokar insists that “no living being on earth is unaffected by the consequences of human intervention” (4). Although Live Earth acknowledges the devastating consequences of human practices, it fails to adequately address this state of crisis through a critique of dominant economic and political organizations. Rather, Live Earth proposes a set of so-called ‘solutions’ which endorse the perpetuation of existing processes of production and consumption. The wealth, and therefore the power and leisure of the current ruling class, both corporate and political, is thus protected and reproduced by this new mode of green capitalism. The power to make authentic decisions about the forms of social and political organization that govern the people is consequently removed from the power of the people. Any conversation about an authentic ecological revolution is confused and obscured by the circulation of a spectacular semiotic discourse that encourages consumption and perpetuates dominant modes of capitalized democratic organization. Instead of a free public debate, Gore argues for a revival of
the public sphere as a “marketplace of ideas” (*Assault on Reason* 3). In this manner, as well as in the very means through which the Live Earth movement disseminates its message of change and hope, the revolutionary potential of the movement is rendered unintelligible. The goal of Live Earth organizers was to initiate a massive change in dominant consumption patterns, thereby averting the problems of climate change. Yet by inscribing the official discourse of Live Earth into existing discourses of ‘sustainable’ development and ‘green’ consumption, Live Earth reproduces the conditions necessary for the replication of an autonomous economy. Thought cannot ascend to a higher state of self-consciousness because it is caught in a mystifying web in which spectacular constructions of the real replace authentic experiences of reality. Even as the Live Earth spectacular production exposes the inherently destructive nature of existing modes of social organization it distracts the public away from an engaged debate over productive modes of ecological revolutionary action. Rather than operating as a revolutionary movement, Live Earth operates as an integrated spectacle, with both the concentrated and diffuse elements of the spectacle that Debord identifies in *The Society of the Spectacle*. As such, a Debordian inspired analysis would argue that the movement is inherently alien to life itself and therefore cannot realize the conditions necessary for the institution of an ecologically sustainable reality. In Debord’s words, “of arms and the man the spectacle does not sing, but rather of passions and the commodity” (*Society of the Spectacle* 43).

However, this analysis is a one-sided argument that describes the process of capture or coding at the expense of an understanding of the lines of deterritorialization or decoding that might also exist as an immanent threat to democratized capitalism within a spectacular event such as Live Earth. Contrary to Debord’s contentions, each spectacular event holds within itself the
content that is capable of unravelling the event. A turn to Deleuze and Guattari is consequently necessary in order to fully understand the way in which spectacular events continuously assemble and disassemble.
Chapter Three

The Impossible Revolution of Debord’s Society of the Spectacle

In 1967, Debord’s historical analysis still contained a dialectical edge. On the one hand, Debord argued that living in a privatized and corporatized culture of spectacle is the same as living in a “dead time with a dead memory” (Kroker). On the other hand, Debord also posited that spectacular events could turn, please, and transform subjects, as well as flip the meaning of time, space, labor, and identity. The contradictions between the two were meant to institute a series of progressive negations that would eventually return society to a lost authenticity of time, body, and mind. However, in contending that the logic of the integrated spectacle has subsumed the practice of authentic life to the dictates of corporate and state powers, Debord’s later pessimism subordinates all art and revolutionary thought to a totalizing politics of economic and political determinism. Although the historical context of the The Society of the Spectacle places Debord’s theory within an earlier stage of capitalism than currently exists, in the context of contemporary global capitalism the spectacle does indeed appear as a powerful determining force across international boundaries. Yet Debord’s totalitarian fears have not come to fruition; contemporary society today is not totally controlled and colonized by the spectacle. Instead, subjects living within spectacular society have mastered the practice of détournement; subjects of late capitalism can parody and mock the hegemonic semiotics of corporate and political rulers. Subjects are also capable of interpreting discursive formations through a number of different analytical lenses. Society negotiates identity and people “hack their lives;” (Kroker) as such, the unity that is mapped onto society by the economy of symbolic exchange cannot be maintained.
Debord contends that the meaning encapsulated within any form of spectacular production is irrelevant. Yet if this form of production is posited to be a totalizing negative force that colonizes the very identity of individuals, it necessarily entails that the economic ideology of the spectacle, materially manifest in its forms (its content), as well as in its signs and images (its enunciation), is the very force that removes the individual from his or her ability to formulate a so-called authentic identity. This suggests that although the form is highly relevant, so are the specific enunciations of particular spectacular forms. As such, the body and the statements of the spectacle, complicated by a multiplicity of meanings attached to the myriad of signs and images circulated, must be understood not only as a site of contention, but also as a site of connection and becoming. There is a struggle between different forms of understanding and different regimes of meaning. Productive connections are also created between these forms. In this context, class struggle cannot exist as the only point of conflict. There are also struggles over and connections between meanings of gender, race, sexuality, and ideology, as well as struggles fought and alliances built over issues pertaining to the quality of life and of product. Debord focuses on the negative manifestation of the production and consumption of the image and the sign; furthermore, he subsumes the positive elements in his critique by contending that the spectacle has successfully instituted a total domination over both the internal and the external conditions of lived life. Debord contends that society is trapped in a state of total consumption because society is wholly dominated by the fetishism of the image commodity. Yet Debord also constructs a progressive understanding of negation wherein a total revolutionary transformation of society and social practice can eventually be instituted and sustained. Debord’s understanding
of both revolution and oppression thus relies on the principles of totality and negation. These principles betray the inaccuracy of Debord’s musings on society.

Debord’s primary theoretical weakness lies in his inability to reach beyond the limits of Hegelian-Marxist thought. Hegel, Marx, and therefore Debord, in theory at least, require the concept of totality - understood as a final moment of total transformation over the whole of society in a singular, spontaneous moment after a forward, progressive succession of moments - to be embedded within theories of revolutionary self-consciousness. Through Hegel and Marx, Debord and the Situationist International retained an attachment to the requirements of a total transformation of space, time, and self-consciousness through a process of negation. The Revolution of May 1968’s inability to inaugurate an immediate, total, and permanent revolution on the whole of society, or the whole of society’s self-consciousness, is understood as lack or as failure. Yet in yearning for Revolution to hold within itself the same despotic power that once possessed an Absolute power over the right to life and the right to live, Debord misreads totality as a positive condition of revolution. Debord’s attachment to a total revolution of self-consciousness makes his theory awkward and clunky in application, as well as static and impervious to natural states of fluidity. Indeed, in the end it is clear that Debord fails to see the impossibility of totality. Although the 1968 uprising failed to inaugurate and stabilize a new system of revolutionary order, the event still changed the totality of global self-consciousness because a part of society had already and irreversibly forced a new moment onto the whole of social consciousness. Even though Marxist revolutionary thought failed to institute a new global order, global social consciousness, and therefore also global discourse, is forever marked by the moment of insurrection.
Debord misreads progression toward a total revolution as a positive condition of change; yet change rarely occurs as a forward progression toward a total transformation of all forms of social organization. More accurately, change occurs as a fragmented and continuous process through the movement of sporadic lines of flight and consequent reterritorializations. Although the transformation of society is only achieved on partial terms the so-called totality of society is always changing because *a portion of it always is*. Throughout Debord’s postulations on the history of spectacular forms of production, the falsification of time, the separation of power, the development of the forces of production, and the final ascension of the bourgeoisie model, Debord reveals the existence of perhaps his largest theoretical failing. In the end, it seems clear that Debord has misread the way in which capital operates, as well the way in which change occurs.\textsuperscript{32} Total domination of society by one ideological force in a linear and progressive movement of absolute capture is impossible. The logic of the economy may be immanent to the social field, but that does not entail that society is wholly dominated and oppressed by the ideology of the economy. Deleuze and Guattari propose a different model of capitalized society which operates according to a much less deterministic program than the model outlined by Debord. In this model, networks of meaning are continually decoding and recoding. This process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization is not understood through a progressive framework, but rather through an analytical lens that understands change as a process of fragmentation and becoming as a movement that seeks differentiation from unity rather than absolute unification with the center.

Revolution is slow, partial, and haunted, not progressive and pure. This should not be understood in Hegelian terms as a forward and upward movement of amalgamation wherein the
present is knit in with the preceding, but rather a sporadic, impulsive, and scattered movement that is unpredictable, seemingly disconnected, and indeterminant. A small moment that only changes a fragment does indeed change the total. Both consciousness and self-consciousness are constantly changing, but always in a partial or fragmented manner. The fragment is the bearer of change. Or rather, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, it is in the joining of fragments - in the in-between space formed among fragments - that change occurs. It is in this space of “extra-being” that “becoming-revolutionary” is enabled (Lambert, “Expression” 34; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 235). The change that occurs between and within fragments, and on the margins, also transforms the whole. A complete synthesis of self-consciousness in the manner conceptualized by Debord through Hegel and Marx is missing, but this does not entail that change does not occur. There are not partial moments leading to a final moment of total change, but each partial moment, each fragmented moment, in the present of that very moment, irreversibly changes the totality. Furthermore, this change does not move forward in a progressive series of moments that culminate in a state of Absolute self-consciousness and freedom of being.

Although Debord clung to the concept of totality in his theoretical musings, the practices of the Situationist International located their revolutionary praxis in the particular. As an indicator of the particular, the term “situation” functions to denote a singularity of the temporal and physical space that is created within the specific footprint of an event. Debord betrayed this particularity, despite his dogmatic attachment to the dictates of a total imposition of the particular, in the practices of détournement and dérive, as well as in the construction of situations that were manufactured to disrupt the normalized flow of semiotic traffic. According to Berardi,
the Situationists failed to recognize themselves as practitioners of “flight, subtraction, and active
desertion” (Berardi). Debord and the Situationists vehemently denied their own spontaneity and
rejected ideology (Marshall 3). Yet, it is in the singularity of the Situation that Berardi exposes
the limitations of Hegel’s dialect of “historical totality” in relation to the revolutionary goals of
Debord and the Situationists (Berardi). For Berardi, the virtual “social universe . . . is [dominated
by] fragmentation” (Berardi). Total domination of a subject by any identity, even of a pure
revolutionary identity, is an archaic idea; in contemporary society it is apparent that subjects are
more recognizable as assemblages of different experiences and identifications. According to this
understanding, total domination is never a possibility because each recipient of the code is
already an assemblage of different experiences and webs of relationships. As such, the mapping
of the code will successfully transcribe at different points and, depending on the particular
historical, cultural, and geographical contexts33 of each subject, will fail to register at other
points. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, “language is a map, not a tracing” (Deleuze and
Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 77).

It also seems clear that Debord positions the potential proletariat in an impossible
situation by presumptuously categorizing them as “men without qualities,” “peasants,” and
isolated masses (Debord, Society of the Spectacle 89). These men are considered to be in
possession of a false consciousness and alienated from their own theoretical principles, as well as
from their own actions. In addition, the workers councils that Debord identified as the
revolutionary form of organization no longer exist (87). The very class that is supposed to
revolutionize society on every level is thus categorized as ignorant and helpless. Debord fails to
account for the concept of agency, and therefore leaves no space for revolution to exist. In The
*Citizen Audience: Crowds, Publics, and Individuals*, Richard Butsch explores the categorizations of audiences that have dominated understandings of the spectator. According to Butsch, audiences have been defined as “good or bad, threatening public order or politically disengaged, cultivated or cultural dupes, ideal citizens or pathological” (1). These terms and definitions constitute “representations of audiences” that have both social and political consequences (1). In Debord’s framework the representation of audiences as masses or crowds of isolated and passive spectators prevents a multifaceted understanding of the spectacular audience and therefore also of society. Defined as a “mass of isolated individuals who [are] vulnerable to manipulation or distracted from their responsibilities as citizens” crowds are identified by Butsch according to principles very similar to Debord’s identifications of spectacular society (1). Crowds are associated with the lower classes and also defined as “unconstrained and dangerous” (4). This perception is influenced by the incorporation of racial theory into crowd psychology.

The mass, a term first applied in the 1920’s with the advent of film, is identified as a “large number of undifferentiated and interchangeable people” (103). Furthermore, this homogenous mass is composed of “low quality, . . . isolated individuals” (103). This type of audience is also considered as a “passive object” that is “easily manipulated” (103). The mass does not act itself; instead, it is “acted upon” (103). The mass identified by Debord is also a pathological mass. The pathological audience is defined according to the stereotypes of the obsessed stalker, the hysterical crowd, and the media addict (104). Debord thus himself falls in with dominant discursive patterns that position the isolated crowd or mass as a negative element that is directly opposed against a “preferred” audience (1). This preferred audience is identified as the “public” and is defined as “people who use their leisure responsibly to to fulfill their civic
duties” (1). According to Butsch, discourses on audiences are constructed around the use of the concept of citizenship. This concept is defined as a form of “civic republicanism in which people are expected to have rights as citizens and a duty to participate actively in their own governance” (4). This type of citizen needs to possess the qualities of “civic virtue” (4). The public citizen thus requires not only a “strong moral character,” but also the “time, ability, and commitment to devote to the community interest” (4). This definition is associated with the “masculine, white, bourgeoisie” category of humanity. A binary is thus drawn between good citizens and bad citizens through the persistence of these representational categories. The isolated mass is categorically opposed to the political public citizen. Debord reproduces these definitions in his rejection of society as an isolated and passive mass of colonized subjects, as well as in his valorization of the proletariat class as the only active revolutionary class. Debord identifies the qualities of the citizen in the proletariat class, rather than in the bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, the civic qualities of the citizen are linked to masculinity, race, class, morality, and political activity. According to Marshall, Debord and the Situationists’ “narrow insistence on the proletariat as the sole revolutionary class, . . . overlooked the revolutionary potential of other social groups, especially the students” (Marshall 3). In Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of revolution there is no assigned class of revolutionaries. Rather, revolution is open to all people at all times.

Debord’s pessimistic analysis in Comments closes the window of opportunity that he had once thought existed for his revolutionary proletariat, yet the presence of instances wherein images of resistance are transmitted through the use of spectacular forms and through dominant media channels suggests that perhaps large scale spectacular events do not operate solely in the
manner outlined by Debord. Applying Debord’s analysis to a reading of Live Earth fails to recognize a marginal evolution of thought at the periphery of the movement. Even the spectacle’s most stultifying form can hold an element of the subversive within it. As such, the organization of spectacular production cannot be held within Debord’s perception of spectacular society without also including the presence of resistance within it. It is consequently necessary to explore the particular within Live Earth and how the concept of the “situation,” in a pluralistic sense, might be worked into an understanding of spectacular production. Spectacular production holds within itself more than just a reproductive discourse of economic power. It is inevitably a form of production that cannot escape that which it seeks to repress. Indeed, it holds its own negation within itself, but not in the totalized form that Debord identifies with. The spectacle is an arborescent multiplicity that holds within itself a rhizomatic multiplicity of resistance which can take flight and enable the partial recoding of networks between people.

It is consequently necessary to develop an alternative conception of the spectacle according to the concept of difference developed by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, as well as the theoretical framework of assemblages forwarded in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari. A reworking of the spectacle according to a Deleuzian reading of difference and multiplicity creates a conception of spectacle as operating within, and as, a “complex of interconnected assemblages where the overriding norm is that of deterritorialization” (Patton 9). As Debord initially recognized but failed to privilege, the contemporary spectacle contains more than just one line of discourse, one idea, or one symbolic representation; the spectacle can be understood more accurately as being structured out of alliances between creative artists, as well as out of multiple images, ideas, and lines of discourse, and as such, as continually decoding and
recoding meaning. Alliances made between different environmental organizations for an event, such as Live Earth, forward a space of difference that escapes the domination of one particular environmental program. However, a limit to Deleuze and Guattari’s theories is also identified at the point of agency. Where Debord traps thought into a deterministic mold, Deleuze and Guattari fall into the chaos of indeterminancy. In both positions the agency of individuals is subsumed to either the rigid, yet autonomous dictates of a hierarchical economic system or to the autonomous and wild abandon of libidinal energies.

An exploration of Live Earth as a concrete example of this reformulation of the spectacle demonstrates that even the most stultifying form of spectacular production is a more complex and diverse assemblage than Debord allowed. The secondary analysis of Live Earth demonstrates the compatibility of this reworking; the contention that there is a recoverable political potential in the spectacle of Live Earth (even though it is diluted by its material contradictions) complicates a Debordian inspired claim that there is none. The reductive universalizing formation of the spectacle that is posited by Debord is complicated by other discourses that are introduced into the spectacle by the presence of multiple musical acts and presenters. Debord’s theory is further contradicted by the link made between grassroots green politics and the spectacle. In the example of Live Earth, the assemblage created by Gore and Wall specifically contains both “collective assemblages of enunciation” and “musical assemblages” (Patton 42). An alliance between these two different kinds of assemblages increases the qualitative multiplicity of the event; consequently, rather than articulating a single reductive and universal imposition of minimalist environmentalism the Live Earth spectacle articulates multiple lines of ecological thought. As we have seen, an application of Debord’s theory demonstrates that there are indeed performances
which disarm the revolutionary goal of Live Earth, as well as performances that reiterate dominant techno-beauracratic environmental discourses. However, it is also possible to excavate performances and presentations that articulate alternative discourses that open a qualitatively different space than the dominant space organized by Gore and Wall. This analysis suggests that a conception of the spectacle in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s mapping of disparate movements of decoding and recoding appears to offer the framework for a more appropriate model of the spectacle in relation to Live Earth. The movements of political potential that escape the reductive tendencies of Debord’s spectacle are as follows: 1) the material reductions in the excess and waste created by the spectacle, which can be read as the beginning of a potential transformation or a “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 235) of a different kind of material spectacle; 2) the formation of alliances between different interest groups in the construction of the event, which inevitably produces lines of flight that break away from the official minimalist environmental rhetoric of the event. These lines of flight fracture the universal and transform it as the multiplicity of connections within and around the event expand. The conditions conducive to the process of becoming are formed through these multiplicities, connections, and lines of flight; as such, the development of new environmental or radical green subjectivities is possible. The existence of these elements within Live Earth expose connections that complicate the universalizing tendencies of the spectacle as identified by Debord.

Although Live Earth does contain a discourse of normative unity that is manufactured by Gore’s managerial and technocratic environmentalism, this discursive unity does not successfully erase or hide the actual fractured nature of society from the fractured gaze. Furthermore, there is a portion of Live Earth that escapes the technologically affluent illusion that is imposed on the
green movement by the official discursive apparatus of Live Earth. Live Earth is an integrated spectacle: it is the concentrated spectacle complete with Gore as a legitimate figurehead; it is the diffuse spectacle in its market preoccupations. But it is also something else; and here, the content does matter, contrary to Debord’s contention that it is irrelevant. Other conceptions of green politics, which argue that existing hegemonic cultural, economic, and political process are inherently destructive and contend that profound social changes, predicated by a fundamental reevaluation of dominant “worldviews,” are ultimately necessary to rectify present ecological concerns, also exist in the context of Live Earth (Dobson 364). The universalizing rhetoric of Live Earth does indeed reach for modernization and unification, yet within the multiplicity of alliances and the friction of encounter between collaborating actors and ideologies, this unified moment is undermined by the unofficial and situational exchange of a diversity of semiotic and discursive fragments. There is no state of total domination or total revolution, there is only partial domination and fragmented revolution.
Chapter Four

Encounters and Connections Inbetween Universal Aspirations and Local Situations

The global green movement is hardly a unified ideological force; rather, it is a uniquely vibrant and fractured movement because it originates in multiple situations and contexts at the same moment. Different sources of ecological colonization and different responses to this colonization and the ecological degradation that accompanies it emerge in each particular locality and context. Although climate change is phrased as a global issue, each particular species, ecosystem, geographical region, or society is impacted differently by the issue. It therefore necessarily entails that each locality that encounters the global discourse of climate change creates different forms of action to address the issue. Live Earth can be viewed as a global event that makes use of mobile and universal environmental discourses, but as Anna Tsing, Deleuze, and Guattari suggest, this does not entail that the universal will reproduce the same conditions in each particular situation or locality. Instead, the alliances made between the universal and the particular situation - between the global and the local - fracture the unity of the universal, as well as the local. In order to read Live Earth as a particular and ambiguous event or situation that is formed through alliance, it is necessary to turn to Tsing’s understanding of the processes of globalization in Friction, as well as to the theoretical framework of difference developed by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. Each situation, as an application of concepts from Tsing’s Friction allows, is a site of contention, negotiation, and connection. In chapter four the primary concepts developed by Tsing will be explored and applied to an analysis of Live Earth. Tsing’s understanding of the universal as aspiration, as well as of the dynamics of
encounter, friction, and connection between the universal and the local, are central to an alternative understanding of spectacular forms that accounts for movements away from the dominant codes that oppress society. Tsing draws on the theoretical framework developed by Deleuze and Guattari to support her understanding of the process of globalization. As such, chapter five will outline the primary concepts that form the ontological foundation for Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative understanding of difference. These include the concepts of multiplicity, assemblage, desire, deterritorialization, and becoming.

Anna Tsing: The Friction of Encounter between Universal Aspirations and Local Situations

Against the totalizing critique developed by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, which positions subjects as dominated and colonized by external forces, Tsing contends that the concept of the universal is misunderstood as a force of absolute domination. In this misconception of the universal the creation of global connections between local situations and universal desires is theoretically homogenized by the abstract dictates of universals. In *Friction* Tsing argues that the generalized and abstract nature of universal ideas shifts attention away from the concrete “successes and failures of universal claims” (7). Rather than endlessly postulating on the global colonization of society and nature, Tsing contends that capitalism, science, and politics “spread through aspirations to fulfill universal dreams and schemes” (1). The conceptualization of the abstract and general form of the universal as an aspiration means that the universal is understood as “an always unfinished achievement, rather than the confirmation of a pre-formed law” (7). Furthermore, the universals of “capitalism, science, and politics all depend on global connections” (1). In other words, universals are indeterminate rather than
determinant and only gain legitimacy through specific connections and historical trajectories that
give them power and meaning. Universal aspirations are always in motion and always crossing
the boundaries of distance and difference; throughout these travels the universal constructs
connective links and complex networks that bridge universal aspirations with local situations.
The universal is also changed as it comes into contact with different local knowledges and
customs.

Against the abstracted power of absolute domination that Debord accords to political and
economic processes, Tsing’s theory thus asserts that the “specificity of global connections is an
ever present reminder that universal claims do not actually make everything everywhere the
same” (1). The universal, in Tsing’s framework, is always a particular aspiration that “can only
be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters” with local situations and
agents (1). As result, the universal must be understood “not as truth or lies but as sticky
engagements” (6). The primary metaphor through which Tsing explains these encounters is
friction. While Tsing allows that subjects are “stuck with universals created in cultural dialogue”
and that “global connections give grip to universal aspirations,” she explicitly asks that theory
“let go of the universal as a self-fulfilling abstract truth” and instead investigate the site of
“friction” that is created in each concrete “encounter” between the universal and the particular
(1). In the materiality of encounter the universal is always already in perpetual motion with the
particular. Indeed, Tsing argues that the universal is “knowledge that moves - mobile and
mobilizing - across localities and cultures” (7). This constant motion produces a useful friction
that wears the universal down into a suitable local fit. In Tsing’s words,
Engaged universals travel across difference and are charged and changed by their travels. Through friction, universals become practically effective. Yet they can never fulfill their promises of universality. Even in transcending localities, they don’t take over the world. They are limited by the practical necessity of mobilizing adherents. (8)

Tsing contends that we cannot escape the universal; indeed, local subjects are inevitably caught into reconciliation with the universal. In Tsing’s view, “every truth forms in negotiation, however messy, with aspirations to the universal” (1). However, this does not inevitably entail that the universal can successfully colonize all of society into a homogeneous mass. Instead, the universal is an aspiration that encounters local situations and agents; as a result, it is in the particular event that the universal is best understood.

Tsing demands that theory examine each particular situation according to its specific local conditions and universal aspirations. Using theoretical concepts developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Tsing’s request for concrete particularity requires an analysis of the site in-between the global and the local, where the global and the local are always in the middle of a trajectory. Working beyond narrow conceptions of the social that highlight the reproduction and quantitative growth of existing political, economic, and cultural forms, such as the economic and political determinism of Debord’s society of the spectacle, Tsing instead emphasizes the site of encounter between different cultures as the primary site that enables the continual transformation of society. In Tsing’s understanding of cultural change, cultural mores and social forms of organization are formed and transformed through the encounters between local and global forms of knowledge, power, and trade.
As a result, Tsing focuses her ethnographic study on an exploration of the “productive friction” that is created in the encounters and connections between the local and the global, the particular and the universal (3). Tsing’s intention, via an ethnographic approach, is to investigate the in-between site that is created by “makeshift links across distance and difference” (2). These links not only “shape global futures,” but also “ensure their uncertain status” (2). Within the productive friction of collaboration Tsing locates a shared space, wherein the incidental and uncertain space of encounter between the universal and the particular shapes the social and ecological relations of communities. The concept of encounter highlights the “unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction” (3). In other words, the connections forged between global aspirations and local situations are both messy and fragmented. In the in-between space of interconnections where the global becomes concrete, Tsing locates and defines friction as a metaphor for the “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (4). Defined as the very “grip of encounter,” friction is accorded a primary role in Tsing’s text because it “reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (5). Through messy alliances and uncertain collaborations knowledge is created and ideas are actualized. Indeed, it is “through the frictions of such collaboration, [that] global conservation projects - like other forms of traveling knowledge - gain their shape” (13).

The in-between space that is created in the friction of encounter adds “new meanings and genealogies . . . to liberalism,” (5) as well as to environmental or radical green discourses. Tsing cautions that this does not give free agency to subjects and asserts that friction is not a “synonym for resistance” (6). Instead, the friction between universal aspirations and local situations creates
both projects of domination and projects of resistance. Citing Etienne Balibar, Tsing contends that “normalization” and “insurrection” are “equally inspired by universals” (9). Old forms of hegemony are undone by new encounters and new forms of hegemony are forged in the friction of these encounters. Universal aspirations are thus crucial for “both imperialist schemes to control the world and liberatory mobilizations for justice and empowerment” (9). Universal ideals enable the expansion of hegemonic forces, as well as marginalized and disempowered forces. According to Tsing, the metaphorical concept of “friction acknowledges this duality” (9) and therefore removes the temptation to interpret the universal as successfully deterministic on a total scale. In other words, the failure of the universal to determine every moment of each particular situation is exposed by the concepts of encounter and friction. Understanding the friction of encounter, or sticky engagements, is thus crucial to understanding sites of ecological contention.

It is at the site of encounter and friction that “unexpected alliances arise, [consequently] remaking global possibilities” (12). In Tsing’s understanding of globalization all connections are unstable and all forms are in constant motion. Friction engenders motion and consequently enables the universal to engage with different meanings. Friction generates “global connection[s],” but more importantly, friction forges these connections into “powerful and effective” forces of change (6). Friction provokes and maintains the momentum of global power. However, at the same time, and without intending to, “friction gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power” (6). It therefore follows that friction most assuredly “refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine” (6). The multiple voices of difference disrupt both dominant chains of discourse and local networks of discourse, causing
“malfunctions . . . [and] unexpected cataclysms” to local discourses and universal aspirations alike (6). In this understanding of the universal it is possible to acknowledge that “difference sometimes inspires insurrection” (6).

Although collaborations between monolithic organizations and local interests enable the creation of new subject positions, these new forms of identification do not benefit all of society or nature. Many negative practices have been carried out in the desire to reach a goal that is determined on universal terms. Universal aspirations have wrought political disasters, a prime example being the spread of Reason or Enlightenment in the context of the colonial encounter. Furthermore, the standardization and homogenization of global knowledge inevitably entails the suppression of irreconcilable truths. Friction is both productive and limiting, creating pathways and boundaries in the same moment. Furthermore, the Western world can “make no exclusive claims to doctrines of the universal” (9). Other examples of the universal exist in post-colonial narratives and human rights mobilizations, as well as in the contemporary environmental movement. Nonetheless, “actually existing universalisms are hybrid, transient, and involved in constant reformulation through dialogue” (9). The universal is not only always transforming the local, it is also always changing itself. It is always in motion and constantly transforming.

*The Universal Aspirations of Capitalism*

Tsing affirms a Deleuzian “heterogeneity,” not only in capitalism, but in “every moment in time” (76). In Tsing’s conceptualization of capitalism, both the forms and processes of capitalism are constantly assembling and disassembling. It is when theory invests concepts with a totalizing force that subjects interpret the particular as a universal. Rather than imagining the
particular as a moment or a particle of the universal, Tsing contends that the fricative and productive connections between universal aspirations and local situations both forge and transform the forms of capitalism in which we live. Capitalist ideals are dispersed throughout the globe in a process wherein “producers, distributers, and consumers strive to universalize categories of capital, money, and commodity fetishism” (4). This process creates networks of capital and commodities that cross national boundaries. As the concepts of friction and encounter entail, these networks are composed of “uneven and awkward links,” rather than a smooth overlay of domination (4). It is in this uneven and awkward linking that Tsing identifies a space of possibility. Citing Stuart Hall, Tsing argues that “new political subjects form . . . as pre-existing groups link” (77). These connections “enunciate new identities and interests,” thereby fracturing the unified foundations of solidified identities (77).

The Spread of Environmental Universals

The diaspora of capitalism is effected through the spread of universal aspirations and discourses. This dispersal decorates capitalism with monetary successes, as well as with ecological and social failures; however, universal aspirations and discourses also foster social and ecological movements. Protest movements, including a broad definition that includes both large-scale operations, such as Live Earth, and molecular grassroots mobilizations, which defend specific areas of local concern, also “rely on universalizing rhetorics of rights and justice” (5). According to Tsing, individuals and societies “know and use nature through engaged universals” (270). Universal environmental aspirations are dispersed throughout the globe “through the friction of engagement, both for commercial users, who tap into its divergences for
capitalist commodity chains, and for advocates, who find in these same divergences the means to study, enjoy, or preserve it” (270). Indeed, for Tsing, the “knowledge that makes a difference in changing the world is knowledge that travels and mobilizes, shifting and creating new forces and agents of history in its path” (8). Universals are important components for environmental movements because universal aspirations are ambiguous and fluid concepts that can move across the globe and transform both themselves and local situations.

Environmental politics are one of the positively defined successes of a universal approach to political problems. During the 1980s and 1990s, environmentalists broke new ground by making use of strategies that crossed national borders. Bridges and networks were created between scientists and environmentalists in different localities. As social actors worked to mitigate ecological destruction they united around a universal belief in “environmental objects of knowledge” (7). These universal encounters strengthened and transformed environmental ideologies and strategies of resistance. In light of the productive friction between the universal and the local, Tsing contends that recent critical shifts to a direct “endorse[ment of] local or indigenous knowledge as the counterpart to universalist expertise” create a useless binary relationship between the particular and the universal that fails to understand the nature of global connection (8). In other words, placing the local or the indigenous in direct opposition against the negative effects of universal categories not only fails to acknowledge the productivity of connections between of the universal and the local, but also falsely suggests that cultural knowledge is completely isolated from external forces.

The dispersal of environmental universals, in Tsing’s text, does not result in an inevitable mapping of officially sanctioned and culturally hegemonic ideologies over the whole
consciousness of contemporary society. Furthermore, the local does not offer a clearly defined contradiction or opposition to a solidified universal. Tsing asserts that “popular environmental knowledge is diverse and syncretic,” meaning that it is widespread, flexible, adaptable, and heterogenous. Tsing is also adamant that environmental knowledge merges, colonizes, reduces, converts, assimilates, evolves, and reorganizes both itself and that which it comes into contact with (8). Although dominant environmental discursive formations incorporate “multiple forms of expertise,” thereby reducing and homogenizing the semiotic and discursive systems of the environmental movement, Tsing firmly supports a theoretical position which rejects an argument, such as Debord’s, that believes the total colonization and homogenization of society is possible (113). In the site of friction identified by Tsing, the official discourse of the environmental universal rubs against the unofficial discourse of the local, the specific event, or the particular situation. Throughout this process “individuals, including scientists, politicians, and activists, apply their eclectic perspectives” to universal “projects of nature-making” and consequently transform the meaning of the universal (113). In other words, the friction between the universal and the particular engenders a cross fertilization between contact points. This fertile exchange of knowledge creates multiple new forms of knowledge within the global territory of debate. While the universal aspirations embedded within the discursive and semiotic structures of mainstream environmental movements are inevitably “shaped by [the] liberal logics” embedded in universal utopias, these universal discourses do not entirely determine the concrete conditions of particular situations (5). Instead, global environmental movements must adapt their universal rhetorics to fit local contexts, both ideological and geographical.
This necessarily entails that alliances drawn between different social actors and interest groups are the very forces that shape the concrete conditions of action and thought. In order to reach a practical solution these agents must not only work together, but also make concessions and compromises. In Tsing’s text, “social justice goals must be negotiated not only across class, race, gender, nationality, culture, and religion, but also between the global south and the global north, and between the great mega-cities of the world and their rural and provincial hinterlands” (13). In this type of global setting, “coalition politics [are] essential” (13). This does not entail the same form of class solidarity that Debord fights so valiantly for, but rather involves an uneven and messy form of alliance wherein differences are not fully silenced, but rather incorporated, adjusted to, compromised with, marginalized, and excluded. Debord’s own Situationist movement was incapable of allowing itself to transform because Debord himself assumed a rigid and exclusive ideology that caused him to reject the intellectual efforts of other members of the Situationist International or intellectual community (Bernstein). In the end, Debord was afraid of his own ideas changing and consequently remained stuck in the solidified print of his own words. The projects studied by Tsing, on the other hand, are understood as “self-consciously reach[ing] across the world, drawing their substance, support, and legitimacy” from universal discourses and global organizations (267). These projects use the language of universal aspirations, yet at the same time the universal is molded to suitably fit specific projects and local processes. This entails that social justice and environmental advocacy groups can use the universal without assuming it will reproduce a homogenous set of conditions in every context of its use.
In the conflicting encounters and engagements between the universal and the particular, the outcome cannot be predetermined. Local causes are advanced, diluted and co-opted at the same time. Bureaucratic ideals are often imported into debates over ecological use and conservation when collaborations occur between global organizations, universal discourses or aspirations, and specific communities (268). Furthermore, when boundaries are restructured, complementary exclusions are always inevitable. Universal discourses “foreclose other trajectories” by highlighting certain aspirations and ignoring others (14). However, collaborations also create an in-between space that can rearrange ideological affiliations, as well as the concrete organization of property and geographical space.

*The Universal Aspirations of Live Earth*

The particular Live Earth event is forged through its encounter with a number of different universal aspirations. These universal aspirations include the aspirations of capital and development, as well as mainstream environmental aspirations. These official aspirations form a network of connections with the multiple localities of the event itself, as well as with the localities of spectatorship that watched the event. Each of these localities encounter the universal, but each concert locality and locality of receivership connected with these aspirations in different ways.

The universal can be located in the official rhetoric of the spectacular Live Earth event. By viewing the event through an understanding of the universal as an aspiration, rather than as a determining force of absolute colonization, the official rhetoric of Live Earth is identifiable as simply a set of universal aspirations. These official desires encounter local contexts and in the
friction of this particular encounter both the universal and local are charged and transformed. As previously discussed in relation to Debord’s theory, Live Earth’s official rhetoric advocates miniscule changes to current production and consumption patterns without questioning the foundations of the practices of production and consumption. The act of producing and consuming green products, rather than conventional products is highlighted by the dominant rhetoric of Live Earth. In this exclusive official rhetoric actions that reject existing systems of production and patterns of consumption are excluded from the official set of solutions circulated by the event. However, each particular performance articulated a different set of beliefs and strategies in relation to the official set of positions and solutions. In addition, each particular locality that hosted a Live Earth concert produced a different set of environmental concert standards in relation to the universal standards outlined by the official ‘green’ concert standards of the event. For example, the main areas of concern highlighted by Live Earth’s official “Green Production Program” include energy consumption, transportation, and waste. These criteria are ultimately accountable to the overall aspiration to “reduce and ‘design out’ carbon first before finally offsetting” (Live Earth, “Green Production Program”). In other words, the design of both the live and televised spectacular production is transformed by the rewriting of previously unaddressed and ‘unimportant’ ecological particulars of typical events. Guidelines that address the integral elements of large-scale, live spectacular productions incorporate specific precepts that insert an ecological interpretation into the production framework. This new ‘green’ framework involves concert ‘necessities,’ such as “food and beverage, stage design, transportation, energy, lighting, and event site[s]” (Live Earth, “Green Production Program”). In an attempt to meet the environmental universal aspirations of these guidelines, each particular
Live Earth concert addressed each issue in different ways. Renewable energy sources (wind and solar) were used for concert venues that already had access to these alternatives and renewable energy credits were purchased to offset the use of traditional power sources at other venues. Three concert locations - Rio de Janeiro, London, and New York - used bio-fuel to supply the majority of their energy needs. According to the official statement, some of these locations used biofuel for the “very first time” (Live Earth, “Green Production Program”). The coordinated use of LED lighting and recycled materials for stage backdrops is also solidified as a universal aspiration, not only for the specific Live Earth Event, but also for future spectacular productions. The official aspirations of the event also advocate the reduction of electricity use in periphery services, such as in walkways and venue offices (Live Earth, “Green Production Program”). In terms of transportation, the use of public transport systems, such as buses, trains, or subways was encouraged by Live Earth officials. Two concert venues, Sydney and Hamburg, partnered public transit tickets with event tickets in order to increase the potential for spectators to use non-individuated forms of transportation. Concert audiences were also encouraged to carpool, while musicians, media stars, and other Live Earth staff used energy efficient vehicles and carbon offsets to reduce their ecological transportation costs. To deal with the issue of waste, Live Earth activated two key precepts. First, the overall amount of waste produced by the spectacular event was to be reduced. Second, all other waste produced by the event was to be sorted into trash, recyclables or compostables. The use of compostable bioware for disposable food containers and recycled or biological materials for event signs, as well as the use of other sustainable products is also advocated by Live Earth’s official “Green Production Program.” The particular details of how these reductions were to be achieved, however, was left up to the the
concert organizers of each location. Different methods were implemented at different venues and each concert locality had a different measure of success or failure. For example, in terms of the carbon footprint of each concert there were significant differences in the quantities of pollution that were emitted by different locations. China produced the least amount of waste, whereas London produced the most. Johannesburg and Tokyo both “diverted more than 95 percent of their waste from entering landfills through efficient recycling and reuse programs” (Cohen). The largest environmental cost of holding the events involved the pollution created by transportation sources. Spectators and artists both contributed the largest amount of carbon waste to the event’s overall carbon footprint. The company Visible Strategies calculated the carbon footprint of Live Earth using a software program, named “see-it,” that they created. After the data on the three areas of primary concern was collected the company analyzed it and “produced score cards detailing the environmental performance of each of the eight participating cities” (Cohen). These charts reveal the differences between the local interpretations of the official green standards of Live Earth at different concert locations. The concerts in the United States are identified as the largest Live Earth polluter, far exceeding the targeted limits of the green concert standards. The concert location that produced the most waste is identified in the ecological footprint of the New York Live Earth concert. Japan, Brazil, South Africa, China, and Germany, however, exceeded the expectations of the official standards. In these locations the waste generated by the concerts was kept at a bare minimum. The differences between the waste produced by these concert locations indicates that the universal aspirations of the Live Earth green concert standards encounter particular local situations and in these encounters both the local and the universal are transformed.
Live Earth is formed as a global event through awkward and uneven links between universal aspirations and local situations, as well as between different groups. These groups are incredibly diverse and include environmental groups, corporate entities, groups of musicians, film collaborators, and groups of media stars. Each of these groups comes from a different context and is clustered around a different set of universal aspirations. The alliances and collaborations formed between these different groups are consequently both messy and uncertain. However, it is in the friction of encounter between these groups and individuals that new subject categories are forged. This suggests that the encounter between the universal environmental aspirations of Live Earth and the local concert sites and interests is not simply an encounter of domination, but rather a productive encounter of friction and connection that creates new forms of action and thought. This does not automatically mean that the forms of action and thought will be radical or positive; indeed, they may be even more destructive than previous forms. Nonetheless, the fricative encounters between particular groups in specific localities and the universal environmental aspirations of Live Earth inevitably deterritorialize both the universal and the local and thus engender new possibilities and modes of being.

The official discourse of the Live Earth spectacle reproduces existing economic, political, and social systems; however, the event also circulates an unofficial discourse that directly challenges the foundations of these systems. In other words, different green positions jostle for supremacy on Live Earth’s stages of public encounter. The connections made between groups of musicians (150 popular icons and indie bands), media conglomerates (Wall’s company Control Room produced Live Earth and other networks, such as NBC Universal, CTVglobalmedia, and MSN, distributed footage of the live event and additional backstage coverage), corporate
sponsors (Chevrolet, EIInsurance, and Zune), major environmental groups (WWF, The Climate Group, Friends of Nature, and United Nations Environment Programme), groups of presenters (media stars, climate change victims, and environmentalists), support staff (concession providers, sound technicians, and security), and individual activists (each group is composed of a multiplicity of individuals), expand the range of possibilities within the event. Individually these groups represent current categorizations of society according to an understanding of difference that is a derivative of unity. In the in-between space created in the encounters between the individuals within these groups, as well as between different groups, new frictions produce new possibilities for the formation of both revolutionary and anti-revolutionary subjectivities.

Tsing’s understanding of culture and nature reaches back to the concepts of difference and assemblage as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari in *Difference and Repetition*, as well as in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Delueze and Guattari formulate a theory of revolution that is not restricted to the requirements of total transformation. Instead, as Tsing also asserts, there is always a possibility for fragmented change. Indeed, it is the in-between space that is created by the friction of encounter that opens the door to unimagined possibilities. From Tsing we can see that total change, on the scale demanded by Debord’s Hegelian-Marxist stance, is impossible. Contrary to Debord’s position, knowledge is never total and neither is the universal. In Tsing’s words, “global knowledge is neither monolithic nor settled” (13). Within the friction of encounter global assimilation is found impossible. Tsing’s understanding of the connections made between transnational boundaries is therefore one that highlights the fragmented nature of these connections. In Tsing’s view, “global connections are made in fragments - although some fragments are more powerful than
others” (271). Some fragments appear whole; however, this totality is only ever achieved on a superficial basis. Tsing argues that the present is composed of “contests and engagements” that lead to fragmented change and therefore refuse the lie that absolute domination is now, or could ever be, forced onto a society (271).

For Deleuze and Guattari, revolution is driven by an abstract machine of desire that seeks to qualitatively expand and increase the intensities available for consumption. Any movement that moves away from dominant codes of discourse, subjectivity, or organization is a revolutionary movement because it qualitatively increases the kinds of being or knowing that are available for society to consume. Revolutionary desire is present in all situations and encounters and therefore accessible by anyone at any point in time. As such, in every moment in time and in every particular situation there is always a possibility for fragmented change.
Chapter Five

An Alternative Theoretical Foundation For the Spectacular

In order to facilitate a clear understanding of Deleuze and Guattari’s complicated text, it is necessary to examine the concepts that support the “philosophy of difference” as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, as well as by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*. While we will try not to fall into the absence of identity brought on by the schizophrenic subject and the unfettered flow of libidinal energies, it is useful to conceptualize the spectacle of Live Earth as a spectacular assemblage of disconnected and competing subject identities and ideologies which expose and disarm the universal power that attempts a total colonization of nature, time, space, body, and mind. The concepts of difference, multiplicity, desire, assemblage, and deterritorialization are crucial to this new understanding of the spectacle.

Rejection of The Unity of the Lost Object

Deleuze and Guattari, who are disciplinarily categorized as poststructuralist, as well as post-Freudian and post-Marxist, are concerned with the rupture of normative dimensions of structuralist and modernist thought. They desire to dislodge the subject of the Enlightenment project set within hierarchal structures that are “rationally designed” to “operate together according to a central plane” (Kornberger, Rhodes, and ten Bos 59). Articulating a resistance to reductive Platonic, Hegelian, and Freudian structures of thinking that contain privilege the unity of the Same, Deleuze and Guattari “privilege difference over identity” (Patton 4). Deleuze and
Guattari critique the reductive ontology of Platonic thought, the psychoanalytical foundation of
desire set by Freud, and the progression of negation dictated by Hegel.

According to Patton, Deleuze’s concept of difference in *Difference and Repetition* resists
the three-fold system of representation outlined by Plato. This concept of difference provides the
foundation for the concept of assemblage later developed in by Deleuze and Guattari in *A
Thousand Plateaus*. In the Platonic system there are three primary divisions of identity: 1)
“identity of the Form,” understood as the “original” or the “Real;” 2) “imitation of Forms,”
wherein “earthly manifestations” are “copies” that only resemble the originary Form; and 3)
“derivative” difference, wherein difference is understood as a derivative the Real (33). This is the
foundation assumed within a theoretical framework, such as Debord’s, that juxtaposes
appearance against reality and authenticity against inauthenticity. Deleuze and Guattari, on the
other hand, affirm a conception of difference which places difference in a primary position that
pre-exists processes that code difference into recognizable representational forms. In this
alternative framework questions of reality or authenticity are exposed as both incoherent and
irrelevant. The primacy of difference entails that the originary Form which underlies concepts of
the authentic or the Real does not exist prior to movements of coding that create definitions of
reality or authenticity out of the unfettered difference of the world. As a result, any claim to
reality or authenticity is a constructed claim. Indeed, reality is constructed, as is authenticity, out
of the chaotic milieu of qualitative multiplicities. Debord’s desire to return a lost authentic
identity to society is thus exposed as an impossible desire because there is no lack that can be
restituted in order to restore a reality and an authenticity that does not exist prior to its social
construction.
In *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari critique Freud for a similar preoccupation with a reductive philosophy of the Same. Deleuze and Guattari argue that although Freud discovers the multiple he immediately knits it back into solidified categories of derivative difference. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Freud failed to recognize that the “unconscious itself was fundamentally a crowd” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 29). Indeed, there is always a “reduction to the One” in Freud’s understanding of subjects and society (31). According to Deleuze and Guattari,

no sooner does Freud discover the greatest art of the unconscious, this art of molecular multiplicities, then we find him tirelessly at work bringing back molecular unities, reverting to his familiar themes of the father, the penis, the vagina, Castration with a capital C . . . on the verge of discovering a rhizome, Freud always returns to mere roots. (27)

Debord’s connection to Freud in *The Society of the Spectacle* is evident in the link made between sexualized bodies and the diffused spectacle. Debord’s film, *The Society of the Spectacle*, détourns the dominant images of sexualized bodies to offer a coherent and total critique of spectacular society. Unfortunately, this critique is tied to the requirements of a total revolution that desires to return the subject to an original lost identity. Although Live Earth does contain sexualized forms of entertainment (Madonna is a prime example of a sexualized performer) this is not the main focus of this paper. Suffice it to say that Deleuze and Guattari support a position that rejects a negative formulation of sexuality wherein sexuality is returned to patriarchal categories of identity. More important, in this instance, is Deleuze and Guattari’s refusal to return identity to the homogeneous categories that are derived from the category of the Real. From a
Freudian position, it is “always a question of bringing back the unity or identity of the person or allegedly lost object” (28). Deleuze and Guattari argue against Platonic, Freudian, and Hegelian philosophies that reduce all difference to an originary form by supporting concepts that privilege the primacy of difference and a productive interpretation of fragmentation.

According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari’s first collaborative text, *Anti-Oedipus*, can be interpreted as a “theoretical relay of practical resistance to the role of psychoanalysis in the repression of potentially revolutionary expressions of desire” (Patton 5). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari dismiss the Oedipal preoccupation of Freud’s framework for its role in suppressing forms of desire that could be revolutionary and reject theories that privilege structure, order, and the signifier (Clement). In *Anti-Oedipus*, as well as in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari instead focus on the “political effectivity of desire and the unconscious investments which play a part in macropolitical movements,” as well as in the micropolitical nature of social life and the “politics of language and signification” (Patton 6).

Deleuze and Guattari also rejected Hegel “because he represented the culmination of a metaphysical tradition which treated identity as primary and difference as the derivative or secondary term” (Patton 32). As discussed in chapter one, Debord’s understanding of spectacular society is rooted in Hegelian concepts. Against this Hegelian tradition, Deleuze and Guattari sought to understand difference as an affirmative concept in order to usurp the hegemonic position of hierarchy in theory, as well as in society. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari contend that “if the unconscious knows nothing of negation, it is because there is nothing negative in the unconscious, only indefinite movers toward and away from zero, which does not at all express lack, but rather the positivity of the full body as support and prop” (31).
Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of society uses a conception of difference that does not rely on the negative or on negation. The Hegelian connection between “difference and contradiction,” wherein contradiction is the condition that creates difference, is rejected and an alternative framework, wherein difference is the condition that creates contradiction, is constructed (31, 32). For Deleuze and Guattari “opposition is a distortion of difference” (32). As such, Deleuze and Guattari create a new set of concepts in order to free difference from its attachment to the unity of the Real. Believing that philosophy is an explicitly political act wherein the creation of new concepts is its primary vocation, Deleuze and Guattari worked to construct new concepts to enable the creation of new forms of thought, new subjectivities and identities, and new forms of social and political organization. In both of Deleuze and Guattari’s political tomes language is not used metaphorically, but rather is used to create new concepts in order to open a space of possibility (Patton 1, 3).

The chapters of *A Thousand Plateaus* are meant to exist both autonomously and as an assemblage. Each chapter uses the core concepts of Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative theory of society in different ways. This is not only to allow a non-linear and fragmented reading, but also to demonstrate their concepts’ ability to transform. Running counter to the “reductive glee” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 28) of a text such as Debord’s, *A Thousand Plateaus* has neither beginning nor end. Instead, it always begins in the middle and speaks of the site “between things, [of] interbeing, [and] intermezzo” (25). For Deleuze and Guattari, the “only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, is to pass between” (277). According to Clement, this nomadic language and anti-linear structure collapses the “immense rhetoric that has been permanent in philosophy since the Greeks -- the rhetoric of the beginning, of logical
succession, of linking, [and] of causality” (Clement). A philosophy that demands an investigation of the middle, in the middle - without beginning or end - displaces the central and primary position of fixed identity and instead emphasizes the process of becoming-other. Replacing hegemonic linear narratives with a “broken, aleatory logic,” Deleuze and Guattari construct a fragmented narrative that enables the creation of new narratives and new meanings (Clement). Some of these possibilities are developed while some are not. Tsing studies this in-between space and defines it as a space of encounter, engagement, and friction. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Tsing privileges the “processes of creative transformation and the lines of flight along which individuals or groups are transformed into something different to what they were before,” (Patton 2) rather than processes of capture that restore a forgotten unity to subjects and bodies. The concepts forwarded in *A Thousand Plateaus* constitute a “political ontology that provides the tools to describe transformative, creative, or deterritorializing forces and movements” (9). Deleuze and Guattari thus provide a political ontology that supports a critique of Debord’s position on society and the spectacle, as well as of capitalism and the mainstream environmental movement. For Deleuze and Guattari the world is a “complex of interconnected assemblages (earth, territory, forms of deterritorialisation and reterritorialization), where the overriding norm is that of deterritorialisation” (9). This is a distinctly different view of the world than the one articulated by Debord. For Debord, society is defined by the movements that colonize and capture it, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari society is defined by the lines of flight that run across and through it.

In order to support their rejection of a tradition that fought to map a false unity onto life and consciousness Deleuze and Guattari turn to Nietzsche’s understanding of difference.
According to Deleuze and Guattari, “for the speculative element of negation, opposition, or contradiction, Nietzsche substitutes the practical element of difference, the object of affirmation and enjoyment” (qtd. in Patton 30). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze reformulated Nietzsche’s concept of “will to power, . . . in terms of active and reactive force [and] affirmative and negative expressions of will to power” (Patton 4). Active force signifies the “affirmation of difference,” whereas reactive force signifies “denial of difference” (30). This reformulation, Patton argues, is an anti-Hegelian ontology that provides the foundation for the concepts later constructed in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Nietzsche’s concept of “eternal return,” which portrays the “world not as being or the permanence of the same but as becoming or the repetition of difference,” is also central to Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative understanding of difference (Nietzsche qtd. in Patton 31; Patton 31). This Nietzschean world leaves behind the Hegelian world that is “oriented towards the reunification of absolute spirit or species being which has become divided or alienated from itself” (31). Through the concept of eternal return Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize a world wherein “only the active, excessive and life-enhancing modes of being” return (31). The reactive forces of coding and unification are only secondary movements of territorialization.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s re-conceptualization of capital and society some of Marx and Engel’s ideas are carried forth while others are discarded. According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari retain Marx’s “analysis of capitalism as an immanent system that’s constantly overcoming its own limitations, and then coming up against them once more in broader form, because its fundamental limit is Capital itself” (7). Deleuze and Guattari carry this idea forward to argue that there is a “permanent possibility of piecemeal social change” (7). However,
Deleuze and Guattari also reject three main aspects of Marx’s thought: first, the belief in “contradiction” as the driving force of history; second, the construction of an “internal or evolutionist” understanding of ordered power; and third, the deterministic power accorded to economic ideologies and processes (6). Debord uses both Hegelian and Marxist concepts, including the reduction of multiplicity to an original unity, an evolutionary understanding of the development of power, and a belief in economic determinism. Against these ideas Deleuze and Guattari produce a “differential typology of the macro- and micro-assemblages which determine the character of social life” and conclude that “society is defined less by its contradictions than by its lines of flight or deterritorialization” (6,7). As such, the concepts produced by Deleuze and Guattari form a basis from which to construct an alternative understanding of spectacular forms of production that does not rely on notions of unity or determinism. In this alternative theory of spectacular forms difference precedes unity and lines of deterritorialization precede lines of capture.

Deleuze and Guattari display a firm rejection of capitalism in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. A flexible machinic assemblage of massive proportions, capitalism is defined as a “fantastic system” that produces not only “great wealth,” but also “great suffering” (6). In order to develop a theory that can account for both the devastating power of capitalism and the intensive power of resistance, Deleuze and Guattari develop an understanding of capitalism as an “axiomatic system which is indifferent to the content of the propositions it connects. It produces a surplus by means of the axiomatic conjunction of decoded flows of labor, money, commodities, and . . . information” (7). For Deleuze and Guattari, capitalism is a “unique mode of economic and political coordination and regulation which is immanent to the social
field” (7). This is understood as a later form of capitalism that is contrasted against “earlier forms of empire which operated by the transcendent ‘overcoding’ or capture of existing social and economic processes,” such as the process described in Debord’s theory wherein authentic society is captured and colonized by spectacular forms of false-consciousness (7). However, “while the capitalist economy may constitute an axiomatic system inseparable from the fabric of modern social life, this does not mean that particular axioms cannot be removed or replaced by others” (7). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari’s post-Marxist and post-Freudian psychoanalytical interpretation of capitalism as schizophrenic argues, contrary to totalizing conceptions of society, that culture is continually “collapsing” and “restructur[ing]” as the “productive desire” of the individual continually challenges existing structures (“Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction” 1).

In other words, although Deleuze and Guattari assert that capitalism “restores a system of machinic enslavement,” they do not reduce all difference and forms of organization to this form of enslavement. Unlike the steady progress of total capture outlined by Debord, Deleuze and Guattari also construct an “opposition between the axioms which constitute the ‘semiological form’ of the apparatus of capture and the ‘living flows’ which are conjugated and controlled by the axiomatic: ‘there is always a fundamental difference between living flows and the axioms that subordinate them to centers of control and decision making’” (Patton 105; Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 105). In other words, the dictates of the “capitalist social machine” do indeed “repress a natural state of free and undirected social existence;” however, they also construct “new social forces and forms of life” (Patton 105). Each time an assemblage moves to reterritorialize the free flows of energy that it holds within itself it also sets new movements of
deterritorialization into motion. For Deleuze and Guattari, the threat of fascism lies within the process of reterritorialization. According to Kornberger, Rhodes, and ten Bos’ use of Deleuze and Guattari, the only way to avoid fascist stagnation is to retain a nomadic style of thought. The nomadic is an unsettled line of flight that ruptures normative dimensions of discourse and hegemonic structures of control, hierarchy, and organization (Kornberger, et al 59).

An application of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory also collapses the binary subject framework established by Debord. Against the binary between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that “there is only one class” - the “bourgeoisie and proletariat alike are slaves of the social machine” (Patton 105). As opposed to the delineation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat that Debord outlines in *The Society of the Spectacle*, Deleuze and Guattari collapse the binary between the two and position them as equally captured by social codes. Instead of relying on a model that pits subject against subject, Deleuze and Guattari highlight the “revolutionary potential of decoded flows” and “suggest that the opposition to this machine . . . is not that between the capitalist and worker but that between the ‘decoded flows that enter into a class axiomatic on the full body of capital, and on the other hand, the decoded flows that free themselves from this axiomatic’” (105; Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 105). All subjects can become-revolutionary at any time because becoming-revolutionary is immanent to the social field. As such, becoming-eco-revolutionary is also always a possibility in each encounter and connection between universal environmental aspirations and local ecological and cultural situations. In relation to Live Earth, capital is already immanent in the event, in environmental groups, and in society at large. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of capital, it is not possible to construct a binary between
authentic and inauthentic modes of being that is based on a total refusal of the conditions of capitalism. It is possible, however, for events, groups, discourses, societies, and the environment to be transformed through the fricative alliances drawn between universal aspirations and local contexts. This transformation can be either positive or negative, or even both at the same time. In order to fully understand how this process operates it is necessary to investigate Deleuze and Guattari’s alternative understanding of difference. Since Deleuze and Guattari’s political ontology supports the politics of difference, as well as the possibility for individuals to become-ecological, it is necessary to examine the primary concepts that define this ontology.

Constructing A New Understanding of Difference

Deleuze initially attempts to subvert the Platonic system in *Difference and Repetition* by using the concept of simulacra to argue against philosophy’s elevation of the originary Form. By denying the “primacy of original over copy, of model over image,” and instead “glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections,” Deleuze and Guattari challenge the hegemonic lineage of the derivative theories of difference (qtd. in Patton 34). In the concept of simulacra Delueze constructs an understanding of society wherein the “play of difference, rather than the relations of identity and resemblance” determine the sociopolitical world, as well as the natural world (Patton 34). All relations are ultimately relations of difference. The concept of simulacra supports a definition of the world in which “difference rather than sameness is the primary relation” (34). In this understanding of society, the Real is no longer an originary site of authenticity. Instead, there is only simulation, understood not as an act of replication or as the reproduction of the replicated copy, but rather as an “act by which the very idea of a model or privileged position is
challenged and overturned” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 34). Eventually Deleuze moves beyond the concept of simulacra and Patton maintains that Deleuze’s use of this concept is “limited to [his] deconstruction of the world of representation” (Patton 35). In 1993, Deleuze indicated that the concept of simulacra had to be abandoned because it was, in the end, a poorly formed concept (35).

After rejecting Baudrillard’s concept of simulacra, Deleuze reconstructed the concept of difference as a positive concept. Founded on the concepts of multiplicity and virtuality, Deleuze and Guattari’s “concept of pure difference, or difference in itself,” is not subordinated to the Platonic world of representation (32). Deleuze and Guattari construct a new ontology to accompany this new understanding of difference. This is the political ontology that Deleuze and Guattari outline and explore in A Thousand Plateaus. In this ontology “disparity or difference is the fundamental principle and the identity of objects is understood as something produced from the difference of which they are composed” (32). Difference always precedes the construction of unified definitions of identity, and repetition does not entail the “return of the same but rather the production of sameness through the returning of that which differs” (34). As previously discussed, this understanding of repetition is rooted in Nietzsche’s concept of eternal return. In Debord’s understanding of spectacular society the only form of return that is accorded any value or presence is the reproductive return of highly organized hierarchical systems of political, economic, and social domination that progressively colonize the authentic experience of life. Green theories also see a process of social and ecological colonization and desire to return to a more authentic relationship between man and nature that has been lost in contemporary society. However, green critiques, such as Tsing’s, also identify the existence of a multiplicity of eco-
movements that offer different perspectives on the problem of climate change, as well as
different solutions to the problem. Furthermore, not all of the positions assumed in relation to
climate change seek to return a lost identity to society, nor do they seek to reproduce existing
systems of technological and economic innovation. Some positions reach beyond the two into the
in-between space of the material encounter between past, present, and future, as well as between
the universal and the local. Unlike Debord’s unified framework of spectacular society Deleuze
and Guattari affirm the eternal return of difference and possibility, rather than the reproductive
and progressive encroachment of unity. Following the trend set by Nietzsche, Deleuze and
Guattari thus support the politics of difference, not only in their “refusal to treat difference as
secondary, derivative, or deficient in relation to a presumed identity,” but also by constructing a
“conceptual framework for the autonomy of individual differences” and rejecting reductionist
forms of thought that “treat particular differences . . . as subordinate to one central difference or
social contradiction” (Patton 46). Difference is the primary condition that produces both the
natural and social worlds in which we live. The definitions of multiplicities constructed by
Deleuze and Guattari are fundamental to their non-derivative understanding of difference.

Virtual Rhizomatic Multiplicities and Numerical Arborescent Multiplicities

The conceptual framework for pure difference is based on concepts that explore the
presence of multiplicity and virtuality in the natural and social world. This theoretical framework
also outlines the kinds of difference that are relevant, in an “ontological, ethical or political
sense,” to their understanding of difference in-itself (46). According to Patton, Deleuze never
intended to “abandon or overthrow concepts of identity, sameness, [or] the One;” Deleuze was
nonetheless “concerned with the question of how identity is constituted, what . . . form of unification” identity takes, as well as with “how to conceive of a form of identity or unity which is not identical to itself” (29). Deleuze, and Guattari with him, sought to understand the natural and the social world through a lens that did not restrict these worlds to predetermined categories of identity or being. By looking beyond deterministic theories that map solidified and totalizing representational, economic, Oedipal, or hierarchical Master meta-narratives onto chaotic reams of social data, Deleuze and Guattari are able to conceptualize and find a world that is driven by the wild abandon of a libidinal energy that desires continual movement, random contact, and uncertain connection. In order to explain this world, Deleuze and Guattari construct a “non-contradictory, non-dialectal consideration of difference” that can account for the perpetual motion of the natural and the social world (Patton 29). The concept of multiplicity is defined according to conditions that are entirely separate from predetermined identity categories. As such, the concept of multiplicity is integral to Deleuze’s politics of difference.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari draw a distinction between “arborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities” (33). Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between arborescent or macro-multiplicities and rhizomatic or micro-multiplicities form the basis for their philosophy of difference. These two types of multiplicities correspond to the distinctions made by Riemann between “discreet multiplicities and continuous multiplicities,” by Meinong and Russell between “multiplicities of magnitude or divisibility and multiplicities of distance,” and by Bergson’s distinction between “numerical or extended multiplicities and qualitative or durational multiplicities” (33). In *Deleuze and the Political*, Patton explains Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of arborescent and rhizomatic multiplicities in relation to Bergson’s
understanding of numerical and qualitative multiplicities. The definition of numerical multiplicities corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of arborescent multiplicities, whereas the definition of qualitative multiplicities corresponds to their understanding of rhizomatic multiplicities. Numerical multiplicities define the “extensive or objective reality of things” (Patton 36). Measured according to differences in “degree,” rather than “changes in kind,” numerical multiplicities are coded categories that return multiplicity to derivative frameworks of difference (36). The other kind of Bergsonian multiplicity, defined as a qualitative multiplicity, “appears in pure duration” (36). Defined by “relations [of] distance,” Brownian movements, “quantities [of] intensities, differences in intensity,” and connections between particles, Bergson’s qualitative or durational multiplicities are autonomous, unpredictable, and unintentionally drawn to conditions that enable the qualitative increase and expansion of distances, intensities, connections, and particles (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 33). Qualitative or durational multiplicities are internal multiplicities of “succession, . . . fusion, . . . organization, . . . heterogeneity, [and] qualitative discrimination” (Patton 36). Unlike numerical multiplicities, these multiplicities are “virtual and continuous” multiplicities that always differ in kind when they divide (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 36). This entails that qualitative multiplicities cannot be numerically coded and categorized according to a derivative framework. Qualitative or virtual multiplicities are “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (36). For Deleuze and Guattari, arborescent or macromultiplicities, like Bergson’s numerical multiplicities, are “extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or preconscious” (Deleuze and Guattari, A
Thousand Plateaus 33). Rhizomatic or micromultiplicities, on the other hand, correspond to the Bergson’s qualitative multiplicities. This entails that rhizomatic multiplicities are libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing in nature, and distances that do not vary without entering another multiplicity and that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold. (33)

The understanding of virtual rhizomatic multiplicities provides the foundation for Tsing’s interpretation of the universal as an aspiration rather than a determining force of colonization. In the friction of encounter and connection between the universal and the particular there is an encounter and connection between qualitative and numerical multiplicities. These encounters and connections expand both numerical and virtual multiplicities in a qualitative sense. In the new conditions created by these encounters new forms of organization and new subjectivities can emerge.

Since Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic multiplicities correspond to Bergson’s qualitative multiplicities, Bergson’s notion of duration is central to their understanding of rhizomatic multiplicities. In Bergson’s account of the multiple, “duration, pure memory and life” are “virtual realities,” wherein the “virtual implies a process of actualization or differenciation” (Patton 36). Patton identifies two sides to the concept of difference, articulated in Difference and Repetition; first, the “determination of the virtual content of a multiplicity, which [Deleuze] calls differentiation,” and second, the “actualization of the multiplicity of
particular species and component parts, which he calls differenciation” (38). According to Patton’s explanation of virtual multiplicity,

the virtual is actualized by a process of différenciation in which difference is primary in two senses: there are differences between the virtual point of departure and the actual outcome, and there are differences between the various lines along which actualization can take place (life may be actualized as plant or animal, etc). (36, 37)

In the distinction between arborescent and rhizomatic multiplicities Patton suggests that Deleuze and Guattari do not juxtapose Kantian “possibility” against Bergsonian “reality,” but rather position “virtuality” against “actuality” (36). This is an important distinction because discussions over possibility and reality fall into a cyclical argument wherein “what is possible typically resembles or prefigures the real, while the real is typically considered a subset of that which is possible” (36). Debord falls into this cyclical discussion of the possible by relying on definitions of authenticity that are derived from the real. For Debord, revolution is a possibility which can only manifest in specific concrete conditions of reality that already prefigure revolutionary forms. Bergson’s virtual multiplicity, on the other hand, “does not have to resemble the actual” because the “rules of actualization are not those of resemblance and limitation” (36). In other words, the virtual initiates a process wherein the virtual realizes itself in action. It makes itself real through its very desire to become real. However, the concrete form that the virtual assumes is not identical to the aspirations of the virtual. In Deleuze’s words, “actualization breaks with resemblance as a process,” as well as with “identity as a principle” because actualization is “always a genuine creation” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 212). The virtual aspiration
realizes itself through multiple forms of action. These forms of action qualitatively diverge from each other, as well as from the virtual aspirations that inspire them. According to Deleuze, the actualization or différenciation of a potential or virtual object requires the creation of “divergent lines which correspond to - without resembling - a virtual multiplicity” (212). In Tsing’s argument the universal aspiration creates different lines of actualization, but these lines do not perfectly reproduce or resemble the universal aspiration. They correspond to the universal but they do not replicate it. In relation to Live Earth, this entails that the different lines of actualization that are inspired by the official discourse of the event will not result in the universal reproduction of homogenous systems and subjectivities, but rather in the global production of difference.

The concept of difference is understood as a process, not as a derivative category. Each process of difference differs from every other process; there is only “differing difference” (Delueze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 39). Rhizomatic micromultiplicities are impossible to eradicate because difference only generates more difference. This aligns with Deleuze and Guattari’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s concept of eternal return, which asserts that it is difference that is always returning autonomously, rather than unity. Bergson’s concept of virtual difference, as well as Nietzsche’s notion of eternal return thus provide the crucial foundation for Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of rhizomatic multiplicities. Derivative difference is thus cast aside and a pure and qualitative difference is instead conceptualized as the basis for all forms of identity. In this context, resemblance is secondary to difference. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “no art can be imitative or figurative” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 250, 304). Indeed, the act of imitation “self-destructs” in the process of actualization because the “imitator
[always] unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates” (355). In other words, the imitation of universal aspirations does not result in the exact replication of the universal in each particular instance of use. Instead, each particular act of imitation is an encounter and a connection between universal aspirations and local contexts or particular situations. Each of these encounters creates an in-between space of qualitative possibility, wherein the new forms of organization or identity that emerge differ in kind, rather than in number. In the act of imitation “one does not imitate; one constitutes a block of becoming” (305). In other words, the act of imitation does not perfectly replicate the universal aspirations of the spectacular Live Earth event. Instead, it produces and reproduces difference. Derivative difference is thus cast aside and difference in-itself is conceptualized as the fundamental basis for all forms of identity. On these terms, “difference never refers back to a primary identity but only to further differences” (Patton 39).

The virtual is thus a concept that allows for the universal to exist as an aspiration that engenders the conditions conducive to the creation of new possibilities without restricting these possibilities to predetermined categories of difference derived from an originary Form of the real. In relation to social, political, economic, or ecological problems, the “virtual possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved” (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition 212). Although the problem “originates, conditions, and engenders solutions,” these solutions do not “resemble the conditions of the problem” (212). In other words, the solutions proposed may be posed in a universal language but the forms that these solutions assume are qualitatively diverse and differ in kind rather than in degree. Patton contends that A Thousand Plateaus is an attempt to “elucidate a vision of a world in which all things are the expression of virtual
The conceptual use of Baudrillard’s simulacra, Nietzsche’s will to power, and Bergson’s virtual multiplicities all support the move toward a theoretical foundation for a philosophy of difference that refuses to simplify difference under the cloak of a fractured and diseased identity that only recognizes desire as lack. A specific analysis of a particular situation or assemblage, such as Live Earth, is thus undertaken through an examination of “the differential elements and relations, along with the singularities that correspond to them” (38). These elements and relations “form the real content of a given structure” (38). Moreover, these elements and relations assert the perpetual existence of a “completely positive multiplicity [that] cannot not be subsumed under the categories of opposition or negation since these play no part either in the constitution of structures or in their actualization” (38). Under this framework, the spectacular event cannot be subsumed to the dictates of the universal aspirations that are coded in its sign regimes and discursive formations. Instead, every spectacular event is fabricated out of a completely positive multiplicity. The progressive process of total capture and colonization that Debord subscribes to in *The Society of the Spectacle* is consequently impossible. Live Earth is not simply a spectacular force that colonizes and capitalizes environmental discourses and subjectivities. Rather, the Live Earth event is a multiplicity of differential elements and relations that cannot be subsumed to the territorial dictates of a globally hegemonic political economy.

In the elaboration of arborescent and rhizomatic multiplicities Deleuze and Guattari also cite Elias Canetti’s distinction “between two types of multiplicities that are sometimes opposed but at other times interpenetrate:” mass multiplicities and pack multiplicities (33). The distinction between mass multiplicities and pack multiplicities complements the distinction that Bergson makes between virtual and numerical multiplicities. Furthermore, Canetti’s distinction supports a
critique of Debord’s totalizing conception of society. Mass multiplicities are defined by their “large quantity, divisibility, and equality of members, concentration, sociability of the aggregate as a whole, one-way hierarchy, organization of territoriality or territorialization, and emission of signs” (33). These multiplicities are the kind that are identified by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, although in Debord’s text these multiplicities are only recognized as derivative multiplicities that are ultimately reducible to an originary Form of the Real and which capture pre-existing and authentic forms of social, economic, and political organization. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in the mass, the subject assumes the “paranoid position of the mass subject, with all the identifications of the individual with the group, the group with the leader, and the leader with the group” (34). In addition, the leader of the mass multiplicity “consolidates or capitalizes on past gains” in order to preserve and reproduce both his position and the system of organization that swaddles him in the trappings of power (33). This entails that unifications do indeed occur and individuals can identify with a central leader; however, Deleuze and Guattari’s distinctions between mass and pack multiplicities assert that this unification is never total. Yet this unified mass is the only type of social organization that Debord emphasizes in *The Society of the Spectacle*. Mass multiplicities can be organized into easy categories of difference, including official political divisions, dominant categories of gender, racial distinctions, and divisions of class. This is the derivative type of identity difference that Debord identifies in spectacular society. Yet Debord cannot see that underneath, at the margins, and within mass multiplicities there are also pack multiplicities. Debord focuses solely on the mass through a lens of derivative difference in *The Society of the Spectacle*; as a result, Debord fails to adequately address the pack
within the mass through a lens that does not reduce all difference to a pre-existing unity or originary Form.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual framework moves beyond theories, such as Debord’s, that restrict analysis to identifications between the real and the copy, or the authentic and the inauthentic, within derivative mass categories. Unlike mass multiplicities, pack multiplicities are characterized by “small or restricted numbers, dispersion, non-decomposable variable distances, qualitative metamorphoses, inequalities as remainders or crossings, impossibility of a fixed totalization or hierarchization, a Brownian variability in all directions, lines of deterritorialization, and projection of particles” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 33). Pack multiplicities are virtual multiplicities that are always “constituted by a line of flight or of deterritorialization that is a component part of it, and to which it accredits a high positive value” (33). The link between pack multiplicities and virtual multiplicities entails that the pack also always changes in kind as it divides. Difference is not derivative. Instead, it is a process that is in constant motion. Although the pack is a multiplicity, “in a pack each member is alone even in the company of others” (33). Each individual in the pack occupies the “schizo position, [of] being on the periphery, [and merely] holding on by a hand or a foot” (34). Unlike the mass leader, the pack leader “plays move by move, [and] must wager everything every hand” (33). Both the leader of the pack and the members of the pack thus occupy an unstable and unpredictable position that is subject to change at any moment. Deleuze and Guattari also state that there is “no more equality or any less hierarchy in packs than in masses, but they are of a different kind” (33). Pack multiplicities are much more difficult to define. They are the kind of multiplicities that are resistant to definition and categorization. According to Patton, molecular
pack multiplicities encompasses “social affinities, sexual orientations, and varieties of communal belonging” (Patton 43). Pack multiplicities are carried forward by the kind of difference that emerges in the productive friction of alliances. In the in-between space wherein hybridities of multiplicity are formed becoming is enabled. Chaos and indetermination reign on this stage, not with the negative connotations historically attached to such terms, but rather with a positive and productive definition wherein chaos and indetermination enable the creation of new forms of being and organization. The mass multiplicity defines the arborescent multiplicity, whereas the pack defines the rhizomatic multiplicity.

Under Debord’s framework, but in relation to Deleuze and Guattari, Live Earth is identifiable as a mass multiplicity that is divisible, concentrated, large-scale, with one-way hierarchies, and the organization of territories of meaning and action. Live Earth also emits a multitude of officially coded signs. Yet Deleuze and Guattari assert the existence of pack multiplicities within all mass multiplicities. No multiplicity is ever reducible to the dictates of unity and homogeneity. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizomatic pack multiplicity is defined by the ultimate a priori of difference. It therefore necessarily entails that although Live Earth is primarily visible as an arborescent multiplicity it is defined by the rhizomatic lines of flight that run through it and fracture its unity. These rhizomatic lines of flight will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

The various Friends of Live Earth concerts that were organized by different groups in different localities also involved both macromultiplicities and micromultiplicities. Of the ten events listed in the official “Friends of Live Earth Fact Sheet” six were organized by professional event producers, two were organized by government bodies, one was organized by local
broadcasters, and one was organized by a community coalition. While it is clear that the majority of these ten events were organized by arborescent multiplicities, such as centric government forces and capitalized interests, a few were organized by coalitions of concerned community members. These community coalitions are formed out of rhizomatic multiplicities, rather than the arborescent multiplicities of molar assemblages. As Tsing suggests in her interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of multiplicities, the environmental universal aspirations emitted by arborescent forms travel across the globe and encounter rhizomatic multiplicities thereby inspiring local contexts. However, these aspirations are transformed in each locality as different people apply their eclectic perspectives to them. For example, community members in Clearwater, British Columbia, organized an organic garden party instead of a spectacular concert. In Quebec, residents not only got together to watch the broadcasted concerts together, but also planted trees together in their community. Various dinner parties, street festivals, and mini-concerts were also held across Canada (CTVNews). These events all possess one central quality that defines them against the isolated, non-communicative, passive spectator in Debord’s text. All these small-scale events involved the active participation and interaction of community members. These events were designed to bring people together and build community dialogues around the issue of climate change. These events indicate the existence of a rhizomatic multiplicity that engages with the arborescent dictates of the universal. As Tsing’s theoretical framework allows, these examples also demonstrate the transformability of the universal aspirations of Live Earth in the minds and hands of individuals and communities.
Assemblages and Abstract Machines

The concept of assemblage is pivotal to understanding how difference is continually assembling and disassembling forms of economic, political, and cultural organization. There are two kinds of assemblage which correspond to the previously defined distinction between arborescent mass multiplicities and rhizomatic pack multiplicities: arborescent, molar, or macropolitical assemblages and rhizomatic, molecular, or micropolitical assemblages. In accordance with the non-linear and transformable intent behind the concepts developed by Deleuze and Guattari these two kinds of assemblages, or multiplicities, are described in different ways in each chapter. Every chapter describes a particular assemblage in relation to “different fields of content, including machinic assemblages of desire, collective assemblages of enunciation, nomadic assemblages and apparatuses of capture, as well as ideational, pictorial and musical assemblages” (Patton 42). Each use of the concept of the assemblage requires a transformation and mutation of the concept; as such, the theoretical conceptualization of the assemblage is ultimately fluid and open to the a priori of difference. According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblages provides “formal continuity across the analyses of very different contents in each plateau. At the same time, those analyses transform and deform the concept of assemblage in such a manner that it exemplifies . . . continuous variations” (42). As such, the concept of assemblage is itself a multiplicity that is capable of transforming and “becoming-revolutionary” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 292). Becoming is a central concept in Deleuze and Guattari’s schizophrenic understanding of the social world. We will discuss the concept of becoming in more detail later, but for now it is important to understand that becoming is a process that is not only always already immanent to the social
field, but is also a process that anyone can access at any time. Moreover, “becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a post of the revolution; [indeed], it passes between the two” (292). The concept of becoming thus removes itself from revolutionary theories, such as Debord’s, that require revolution to meet the criteria set by the concepts of authenticity, totality, and stable permanency.

According to the two types of multiplicity identified earlier, arborescent multiplicities or assemblages are “hierarchical systems with centers of signification and subjectification,” whereas rhizomatic multiplicities or assemblages are “fuzzy or indeterminant objects” that are defined by “abstract line[s] of flight or deterritorialization” (Patton 43; Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 43). These rhizomatic assemblages exist outside centric hierarchical systems and are determined by lines of flight that transform them and bring them into contact with other multiplicities. Arborescent or molar assemblages, on the other hand, are “unifiable objects” with visible boundaries, hierarchical methods of organization, and derivative categories of difference (Patton 43). The arborescent or macropolitical assemblage is an organized form that exemplifies centralized hierarchies of power. The concept of the arborescent assemblage accounts for the movements that constitute the external colonization of man that is identified by Marx and Engels, the movements of psychological colonization that Debord identifies in *The Society of the Spectacle*, and the movements of ecological colonization that are identified by radical green critiques of society, without reducing all movement to a totalizing act of capture. The concept of rhizomatic or molecular assemblages explains a different type of movement and organization that “lack[s] central principles of unity or connection, such as central axes or invariant elements” (43). According to Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizomatic assemblage
connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-sign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple . . . It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and overspills.

(Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 21)

Rhizomatic or molecular assemblages always involve multiplicities of “magnitudes and dimensions” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 43). When multiplicities of magnitudes or dimensions encounter other multiplicities they always change in kind, rather than in number. There is always a qualitative increase of intensities, rather than a quantitative increase in derivative forms of organization. Furthermore, rhizomatic assemblages are present within arborescent assemblages and arborescent assemblages only exist within rhizomatic assemblages. The two are permanently linked and therefore ultimately inseparable.

Patton summarizes the conceptual form of an assemblage as a “quadripartite structure along two axes” (44). This structure is composed of four parts, each of which has two sides. One side faces the body without organs, whereas the other side faces the strata.47 In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, the assemblage exists “between two layers, between two strata; on one side it faces the strata . . . but on the other side faces something else, the body without organs or planes of consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 40). The side that faces the strata is the side which constitutes an “organism, a subject, or a complete entity” (Patton 77). The side that faces the body without organs is the side “on which the organism tends to break down and
transform” (77). Both sides are “equally states of desire;” however, one side is coded whereas the other consists of pure intensities (77).

An assemblage also has two axes running through it that divide it into four parts. The “first division of every assemblage” is a division between a “machinic assemblage [of content] and an assemblage of enunciation” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 504). On the first axis, assemblages are “composed of discursive and non-discursive components” (Patton 44). On this horizontal axis assemblages are “both assemblages of bodies and matter and assemblages of enunciation and utterance” (44). Machinic assemblages of bodies and matter are “forms of content” and define “bodies, their interactions, and passions” (44). In relation to Live Earth, there are assemblages of bodies that act according to different passions. These corporeal assemblages interact with other bodies, thereby transforming and expanding the passions of the event. Assemblages of enunciation and utterance are “forms of expression” that define “utterance, speech acts, or statements” (44). Live Earth also contains assemblages of enunciation and utterance that define the discursive components of the event.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, assemblages are not confined to the strata because “expression in it becomes a *semiotic system*, a regime of signs, and content becomes a *pragmatic system*, actions and passions” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 504). Patton suggests that the first axis of an assemblage corresponds to Foucault’s definition of apparatuses of knowledge and power, as well as to the intricate systems that constitute modern forms of sexuality (Patton 44). An assemblage, such as Live Earth, therefore codes expression into a semiotic system and content into a pragmatic system. This processes of coding is defined by Deleuze and Guattari as a “double articulation [of] face-hand, gesture-word,” (Deleuze and
Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 504). The double articulation establishes a “new relation between content and expression that was not yet present in the strata” (504). This new relation is established through statements or expressions that express the *incorporeal transformations* of bodies. The term incorporeal indicates an “extra-being that occurs between the sense of the statement and the plane occupied by real bodies” (Lambert, “Expression” 36). Incorporeal transformations are created through the assignation of “attributes or events” to bodies and matter (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 80; Stratford 108). An attribute does not define the “state of physical things” or the “quality or property of things;” instead, an attribute is defined as an “extra-being that is expressed by the proposition” - by the statement - that is spoken (Lambert, “Expression” 34). Bodies are organized forms, such as organs, corporeal bodies, judicial bodies, or political organizations. The incorporeal transformation occurs in the in-between space that exists between statements and bodies. It is the specific character of this state of extra-being that determines the kind of transformation that will occur on both the plane occupied by statements and the plane occupied by bodies (36). In other words, the “inscription [of race, gender, or green] . . . in a statement . . . introduces an incorporeal transformation that changes and determines” the particular social meaning of bodies (36). According to Lambert, particular dates or events, such as 9/11, “express incorporeal transformations” (39). The incorporeal transformation indicates the “transformation of a nominative reality and the arrival of a new social order and a new collective assemblage of enunciation” (39). In this transformation “meanings are not limited to the chain of events” (39). Instead, an incorporeal transformation continually informs the “interpenetration of new order-words and the intermingling of acts, bodies, and statements” (39). Previous meanings of signs are brought into the realm of variability
by the incorporeal transformation brought on by an event. Old meanings are destabilized and new meanings emerge.

In terms of language, the simple act of speaking can be the equivalent of action. The question as to what expressing an idea means is thus transformed into a question of pragmatics. In other words, language is not simply a medium of communication; rather, it is the vehicle through which social obligations are imposed on society. For Deleuze and Guattari, language is strictly social; indeed, “there is no individual enunciation” (qtd. in Lambert, *Who’s Afraid of Deleuze and Guattari?* 57). Individuals do not speak for themselves, instead they repeat social directives. This social language thus creates subjects through redundant statements and “order-words” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 81). In other words, stable identities are created through the repetition of redundant statements that attach bodies to subjectivities. The collective assemblage on the horizontal axis of assemblages of enunciation “refers to the redundant complex of acts and the statements that accomplish this redundancy” of language and subjectivity (Lambert, “Expression” 35). The collective assemblage thus determines the “assignations of individuality and their shifting distributions within discourse” (35). This means that individuated statements do not precede the collective assemblage. In terms of the discourse of Live Earth, Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of language is key to understanding the operation of universal aspirations.

Statements and utterances involve attributes that subject bodies to social orders (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 80). Incorporeal transformations directly transform bodies through the enunciation of attributes; at the same time, this transformation is still “incorporeal or internal to enunciation” (Lambert, “Expression” 37). For Deleuze and Guattari, society is
“defined by the order-words that define the intermingling of bodies, actions, and passions” (37). Order-words attach specific meanings to bodies thereby individuating bodies in relation to the social meanings of the order-words in use. The attributes attached to the statements of Live Earth individuate bodies according to the order-words that circulate within mainstream environmental discourses, as well as within radical green discourses. The order-word itself is produced by “an extra-something” that “remains outside the scope of linguistic categories and definitions” (36, 37). An order-word is not defined as “description, designation, [or] nomination;” instead, it functions to “effectuate the conditions of possibility” (37). In other words, the order-word allows language to express the sense perceived by the body.51 Without the order-word language would only be “virtual, lifeless,” and without “real transformations” that affect corporeal bodies and tangible matter (37). In terms of the process of deterritorialization and becoming, however, “only exceptional states of language cause language to enter into variation, or continuous variation, which is expressive of a state of the body as becoming” (38).

Language is a directive, yet this does not mean that language imposes a homogeneous social order onto society. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “language is a map, not a tracing” (A Thousand Plateaus 77). Language is not a code because it moves beyond the simple process of coding for the purpose of transmitting a message. In other words, language can communicate what has not been seen or perceived by the senses. This type of perception and language, which Deleuze and Guattari call “indirect discourse” is unique to humans (77). For Deleuze and Guattari, “all discourse is indirect” (77). This means that “every statement of a collective assemblage of enunciation belongs to indirect discourse” (84). Indirect discourse is defined as the “presence of a reported statement within the reporting statement, the presence of
an order-word within the word” (84). Free indirect discourse is the force that animates and
determines language. The concept of free indirect discourse also asserts that the subject does not
“master the word it chooses to express its beliefs or its desires” (Lambert, “Expression” 35).
Nevertheless, there is always the possibility for the redundant complex of statements to be
decoded and destabilized.

A spectacular assemblage, such as Live Earth, is intersected by forms of content and
expression that create both semiotic and pragmatic systems. These systems define the forms of
action advocated by both the official and the unofficial statements of the event. In this definition
forms of identity, interaction, and action can solidify and atrophy. However, forms of content and
expression only define one axis of an assemblage. The second axis defines the movements of
spectacular assemblages. On this axis there are movements of capture, as Debord suggests;
however, there are also movements that escape these attempts at capture.

The second axis, which runs vertically across an assemblage, is “defined by the nature of
the movements governing their operations” (Patton 44). There are two types of movements, both
of which are always in motion. There are the movements that constitute “territories and fields of
interiority,” but there are also movements of “determinisation [or] lines of flight along which
the assemblage breaks down or becomes transformed into something else” (44). The first
division of the second axis defines the territoriality of the assemblage. The second division of the
second axis is “constituted by lines of determination that cut across it and carry it
away” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 504, 505). These lines constitute
qualitatively different becomings that open unforeseen and unpredictable possibilities for other
movements of determinisation, as well as for movements of reterritorialization. Some of these
lines of flight “open the territorial assemblage onto other assemblages” allowing the creation of a “group refrain” (504). In the context of Live Earth and the environmental movement within it, some movements of deterritorialization within the assemblage open the territory of Live Earth to other assemblages of content and expression, thus enabling the constitution of a cohesive position that is numerically multiplied in order to create a group refrain. Other lines of flight “operate directly upon the territoriality of the assemblage, and open it onto a land that is eccentric, immemorial, or yet to come” (505). In relation to Live Earth, some lines of flight work to decode or deterritorialize the formally organized territory of the spectacular assemblage. These lines of flight break down hierarchical systems of organization and meaning and recode the forms of content and expression within the event. Debord focuses solely on the negative movements within a given form of organization. As a result, Debord failed to explore the positive and productive movements by which arborescent spectacular assemblages break down and reform. Other lines of flight or deterritorialization “open assemblages onto abstract and cosmic machines that they effectuate” (505). The intricacies behind Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of lines of flight will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. For now, it is important to note that movements of deterritorialization can not only destabilize dominant social codes, but also can distance bodies from these dominant codes. The lines of deterritorialization within a given assemblage are the primary forces that determine the kinds of becoming that can be constituted. The forms of content and expression in each assemblage are also constituted by the lines of flight within an assemblage. All assemblages contain “movements of reterritorialization,” that “fix and stabilize their elements” (Patton 44). At the same time, every assemblage also contains “cutting edges of deterritorialization which carry it away” (Deleuze and
Guattari qtd. in Patton 43). The movements of both constitute all assemblages. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the forms of content and expression within an assemblage are “effected by the movements of deterritorialization that quantify their forms. That is why a social field is defined less by its conflicts and contradictions than by the lines of flight running through it” (qtd. in Patton 45). To summarize, an assemblage has a “tetravalent” structure, rather than a centric structure (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 505). The first division constitutes the content and expression of an assemblage. The second division constitutes the forms of territoriality and deterritorialization of an assemblage. These divisions create four distinct components in every assemblage. Visually, an assemblage would resemble the following diagram.

![Diagram of an Assemblage](image)

**Figure 1: The Constitution of An Assemblage**
There are therefore two primary questions when analyzing a spectacular assemblage such as Live Earth. First, “what is the territoriality of the assemblage?” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 505). In other words, what are the semiotic systems and pragmatic systems of an assemblage? Second, “what are the cutting edges of deterritorialization, and what abstract machines do they effectuate?” (505). A Debordian analysis allows the identification and critique of the territories of Live Earth, but it does not account for the abstract machine of desire that directs the movements of an assemblage, nor does it account for the cutting edges of deterritorialization that define the revolutionary potential of a spectacular assemblage.

As previously explained, Bergson’s notion of virtuality is central to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of multiplicities and therefore also to the concept of assemblages. Although assemblages are essentially “concrete arrangements of things,” the movement of assemblages cannot be separated from the “virtual or abstract machine which they embody” (Patton 44). Abstract machines are virtual multiplicities that “inhabit the assemblage like its virtual double” (44). Defined as “ontologically prior to the distinction between content and expression within a given assemblage,” the abstract machine acts as a “diagram” that guides the movements of the assemblage (44, 45). The abstract machine is thus a requisite component of an assemblage. Although an assemblage cannot function without an abstract machine this machine does not function as a “determining infrastructure or transcendental Idea” that traps all meaning into imitation or representation (45). The abstract machine present in a given assemblage directs or guides “distinction[s] between forms of content and expression and distributes [these distinctions] across the various strata, domains and territories (45). The abstract
machine also connects the lines of flight that affect the forms of content and expression in an assemblage.

Although there are movements of capture that seek to reterritorialize errant lines of flight, Deleuze and Guattari assert the “ontological primacy of absolute deterritorialization and qualitative assemblages” (Patton 45). This corresponds to Deleuze’s initial elevation of difference to a position of primacy over the originary Form of Platonic thought. In every assemblage “mutation, metamorphosis and the creation of the new” always comes before acts of coding, stratification, and territorialization (45). The a priori definition applied to movements of deterritorialization and qualitative assemblages of multiplicities also means that “rhizomatic, molecular and macropolitical assemblages are prior to arborescent, molar and macropolitical assemblages, and the abstract machine of mutation is prior to the abstract machine of overcoding” (45). Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari deterritorialization is the “deeper movement [that is] identical to the earth itself” (46). In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari cite Arthur Conan Doyle for his conceptualization of the earth as deterritorialized. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s interpretation of Doyle, the Earth is defined as the “Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant Molecule” (A Thousand Plateaus 40). The earth is a “body without organs” that is “permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, [and] by mad or transitory particles” (40). The theoretical framework constructed by Deleuze and Guattari is perhaps even more compatible with a radical green perspective than reductive critiques of spectacular capital and globalization that are forwarded by writers such as Debord. Although Debord’s critique of spectacular power aligns with green critiques of capital and the political processes of globalization, Deleuze and Guattari’s
perspective not only offers a critique of capitalized processes of globalization, but also asserts the primacy of processes that continually break down or decode organized forms and reconstruct or recode new forms of organization. For example, Debord only considers the social world according to the terms set by the progressive evolution or colonization of society. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, consider both the social and the natural world and see the continual process of deterritorialization as the primary force that determines the social and natural world in which we live. As such, the earth and all forms of biotic and abiotic life are defined not by the processes that code them, but rather by the movements that decode them. After all, the decodings produced by lines of flight enable the reorganization of pre-existing forms into new forms.

Although the movement of deterritorialization is ontologically prior to movements of territorialization there are also always movements of stratification that are occurring at the same time. Strata give “form to matters,” capture intensities, and solidify singularities into “systems of resonance and redundancy” (40). Indeed, “strata are acts of capture” that not only create territories out of molecular intensities, unstable bodies, and nomadic movements, but also code these territories into semiotic and pragmatic systems of content and expression (40). These processes of capture stratify the body without organs into divisible forms and stable flows of sensation. Despite all attempts at total capture, however, “the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes . . . judgement, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” (40). The free flow of intensities always escapes movements of stratification or territorialization. In all forms of social organization the “diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary” (Patton 74). These lines of flight are not a “phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but [rather] cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization” (Deleuze and
Guattari qtd. in Patton 74). The earth itself, as well as all social events such as Live Earth, are defined by the movements of deterritorialization that run through them.

Finally, assemblages are not assemblages of power, but rather of desire. Indeed, “desire is always assembled” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 73). Power is only a “stratified dimension of the assemblage” of desire (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 73). According to Patton, this understanding of assemblage relates to Nietzsche conception of the will to power, which Deleuze and Guattari define in terms of the “capacity to affect and the capacity to be affected” (74). By conceptualizing power in terms of affects it is possible to construct an alternative analysis of the relationship between power and desire, wherein power and desire are understood as parallel elements rather than “complementary or convergent phenomena” (74). In this framework, power and desire both contain “an inner principle of increase,” which entails that the power of the organism and its “sensitivity to different kinds of intensive states” will be increased and expanded the more it is affected (74). This affectation should not be understood as quantitative, but rather as qualitative. In other words, “a body will increase in power to the extent that its capacities to affect and be affected become more developed and differentiated” (74).

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of intensity also relates to Nietzsche’s understanding of the feeling of power. The “principle of increase implies that desire will be enhanced the greater the range and degree of intensities available” for consumption (75). Under this rubric, the feeling of power is a “sign of our own power to act; however, it is not a reliable sign” (75). When these “actions are successful, the feeling of power will be enhanced . . . [when] they fail, the feeling of power will be depleted” (75). The feeling of power is important to Deleuze and Guattari’s
revolutionary theory because the “feeling of power is an affect which is associated with a process of becoming-other than what one was before” (75).52

In order to understand a spectacular assemblage such as Live Earth according to a framework that does not force a singular interpretation on the event it is “necessary to ascertain the content and the expression of each assemblage, to evaluate their real distinctions, their reciprocal presuppositions, [and] their piecemeal insertions” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 504). Live Earth is an assemblage of encounters and connections among different groups. Some of these alliances lead to movements of capture of stratification, as a Debordian analysis discovers, but others push forward movements of deterritorialization. Even in negative alliances there are movements of deterritorialization and within positive alliances there are movements of territorialization. The spectacular assemblage of Live Earth faces both the strata and the body without organs and contains both lines of territoriality and lines of flight. Live Earth has an abstract machine of desire that directs the free flow of intensities. Some of these intensities are coded and solidified while others retain their free flows and unstable molecules. The greater the range of connection across different localities, groups, and individuals the greater the range and degree of intensities available for the creation of new forms of eco-revolutionary action. Each connection increases and expands the possibility for new forms of organization to develop. These new forms will have both positive and negative impacts on ecological action. Some forms of action and organization will be beneficial, whereas others will be highly destructive. Nevertheless, the central movements of an assemblage will ensure that forms will always disassemble and reassemble; as such, there is always opportunity for piecemeal change.
In order to understand the systems and movements of assemblages it is necessary to also understand the concepts of desire, deterritorialization, and becoming.

*The Abstract Machine of Desire*

Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of desire is central to the concept of assemblages and their movements of territorialization and deterritorialization. Indeed, “desire is implicated in all social and political processes” (Patton 68). In Deleuze and Guattari’s words,

> We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of an mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. There is only desire and the social, and nothing else. (qtd. in Patton 68)

Since desire is positioned as the fundamental force that drives society all forms of organization must be analyzed according to the “abstract machines of desire” embedded within them (Patton 69). Against the model of analysis used by Debord, Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of desire entails that fascism cannot be understood as “duplicity or ideology” but rather “must be explained in terms of desire” (69). Moreover, revolution cannot be understood on ideological or authentic terms, but rather must be conceptualized according to the terms set by desire. The essential point in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of desire is that desire is a productive force that can inscribe not only capitalist or fascist forms of territory, but also rhizomatic forms of deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari’s interpretation of desire is distinct from dominant perceptions of desire which suggest that desire is negatively “constituted by the ever-renewed
and impossible attempt to regain a lost object of satisfaction” (70). Deleuze and Guattari criticize psychoanalytic theories of desire and formulate a schizoanalytical understanding of desire that recognizes and explains movements of territorialization, as well as movements of deterritorialization. Like Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between two different forms of multiplicities and assemblages and between movements of territorialization and deterritorialization, their reconstruction of desire distinguishes “two poles or states of social libidinal investment: ‘the paranoiac, reactionary, and fascizing pole, and the schizoid revolutionary pole’” (68, 70; Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 70). The paranoiac, reactionary pole of social desire defines the mass multiplicities of molar assemblages. The schizoid revolutionary pole of social desire defines the pack multiplicity of micropolitical assemblages. As Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of assemblages requires, neither of these poles can be understood as opposed or contradictory states, but rather as states that exist within and beside each other. In this reconstruction, desire is understood in the positive sense, as a “primary active force rather than as a reactive response to unfulfilled need” or lack (Patton 70). Desire is understood as an active and productive force because it “produces real connections, investments and intensive states within and between bodies” (70). Through these connections, investments, and intensive states “desire produces reality” itself (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 70). The primacy of desire as an active force rather than as a response to lack complements the ontological primacy of difference. Like the process of différenciation, desire is a productive process.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, desire is a process that produces machinic assemblages of desire. Since “desire always requires a machine or assemblage,” the first thing desire produces is a “machine
or circuit of libidinal energy” called a “desire-machine” (Patton 70, 71). According to Patton, the process of desire production has three stages, each with its own form of connection, that conform to the primary stages of the Marxist production process. This process of desire is positioned by Deleuze and Guattari as the force that animates the processes of “connection, encoding and consumption” (72). In the first stage, the elementary body is formed through “a connective synthesis [between] flows and part-objects” (71). In other words, flows of energy or matter and part-objects connect to each other to form an “elementary body or simple machine” (71). In the second stage, flows of energy and part-objects conjugate in order to form a complex “body-without-organs” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 150). This is achieved through a “disjunctive synthesis of [the] meanings [that are] attached to [simple] elementary machines” (Patton 72). In other words, the simple aggregations of elements from the first phase are combined with other elementary compounds in order to construct a more complex body. This body-without-organs is also called a “plane of consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 251). The body-without-organs or the plane of consistency “embodies the creative or ‘schizophrenic’ potential of desire” (Patton 71). This entails that revolution is immanent to the body-without-organs. The third stage is the stage of consumption. The stage of consumption involves the “experience of intensive states in the resultant psychic body” (72). This is achieved through a “conjunctive synthesis [between] resultant differences” (72). This synthesis produces different kinds of intensities. Intensities are the “products of a synthesis [between] differential forces, the effects of an encounter between different levels or kinds of energy, and the basis of all sensation (72). The different kinds of intensities are defined by Patton as sensations, such as “intensities of sound or temperature . . . [and] movement” or sites of pleasure that are derived
from “privation, suffering, [or] sensual pleasure” (36, 72). Intensity is also the site wherein feeling and emotion are formed into tangible sensations. The consumption of intensities is the ultimate goal of the process set in motion by desire. Indeed, desire “consumes itself” through intensities (72). Both revolution and the formal organization of elements are simple byproducts of a process that desires the qualitative multiplication of intensities for consumption. According to Patton, the concept of intensity is key to understanding the process of desire because the “experience of intensity is the real motor of the process of desire as production” (72). Intensities, definable as qualitative multiplicities, drive the process of desire and continually enable the conditions for fragmented, yet productive change. This change occurs because intensities of feeling “may contain a number of elements imperfectly perceived, but once these elements are distinctly perceived by consciousness, the feeling inevitably changes its nature as a result” (36).

Although Deleuze, Guattari, and Freud all use the concept of “libidinal energy” and suggest that the process of desire transforms this energy, Deleuze and Guattari do not define this energy as sexual or as externally oriented (72). In accordance with the ontological primacy of difference over centralized unity, Deleuze and Guattari also reject the conclusion that libidinal energy moves purposefully “toward the formation of a fixed or centered subjectivity” (71). The process of desire does not intend to produce fixed identities or subjectivities; instead, fixed identities or subjectivities are a “residual effect of [the] consumption of intensive states which accompanies the connections and recordings of desire” (72). Deleuze and Guattari envision a process of capture, wherein libidinal energy “becomes fixed under the influence of Oedipal social and familial structures which impose a particular usage of the primary synthesizes” (71). Under Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of desire the solidification of any identity, whether it be
considered environmentally destructive or ecologically beneficial, is a process of capture that is a byproduct of intensive processes of consumption. Sites of connection are identifiable as productive sites of friction wherein the connections between different pre-existing subjectivities introduce flows of desire to other flows of desire in new and revolutionary ways. New disjunctive and conjunctive syntheses consequently occur between previously disconnected forms of order. Pre-existing forms are destabilized and decoded and new forms are territorialized. For the green movement this entails that processes of social and ecological colonization are always incomplete and there is always a possibility for the transformation of existing social forms, as well as for the formation of new and ecologically conscious subject identities. However, the formation of new eco-identities cannot be predetermined or perfectly reproduced and imitated. Instead, what a given assemblage of desire will create is always unknown, unpredictable, and uncertain, but nevertheless possible.

Desire does not exist inside the subject; the subject exists inside desire. The subject is “inseparable from the constitution of a machinic assemblage of fluxes of intensity, particles of affect and a-signifying signs. Desire produces intensities and consumption of intensities . . . [s]ubjectivity is an effect of this process rather than its origin” (Patton 70). Because desire precedes the body-without-organs, desire is posited as a molecular, rhizomatic multiplicity that is inherently “a-social or revolutionary” (71). This does not entail that desire lusts after revolution, but instead that it is “involuntarily” revolutionary because it “want[s] what it wants” despite the acts of capture that attempt to fix it to a code or a Signifier (71). Indeed, “desire is revolutionary because it always wants more connections and assemblages” (Deleuze and Guattari in Patton 77). Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two forms of desire. On one hand, there are
“assemblages of desire that are fixed or delimited in particular ways, shut off from all but certain specified relations to the outside” (Patton 77). These are hierarchical arborescent molar assemblages of power and signification. The regime of signs and the pragmatic system of molar assemblages of desire are highly organized and fixed by a central code. On the other hand, and more importantly, there are “more fluid or open-ended assemblages in which new connections and new forms of relation to the outside are always possible, even at the risk of transforming the assemblage into some other kind of body” (77). These are decentralized rhizomatic micropolitical assemblages of desire that are dominated by lines of deterritorialization. These lines of flight or deterritorialization are open to encounters and connections with other multiplicities because desire always desires the expansion and growth of intensities.

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desire thus provides a permanent place in the understanding of society for the possibility of revolution. Understood as a “rupture with the causal determinations previously at work in a given social field” revolution is always immanent to the abstract machine that directs the formation of social assemblages (69). Desire is the force that empowers processes of “differential reproduction or becoming-other” (69). Desire thus constitutes the conditions that are essential to the production of “creativity in culture, as well as in nature” (70). However, “revolutions only occur when the configurations of desire shift in such a way that old allegiances no longer hold sway and authorities can no longer rely on their orders being carried out” (69). As such, “not all assemblages of desire will sustain revolutionary actions” (70). Indeed, some assemblages will form despotic or capitalized configurations that further perpetuate the conditions of oppression and colonization. Nonetheless, movements of deterritorialization always precede and outweigh movements of territorialization.
The Eternal Return of the Process of Deterritorialization

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of revolution disallows the kind of total revolution that Debord’s Hegelian-Marxist preoccupations demand. For Deleuze and Guattari change is always partial and fragmentary, but nonetheless revolutionary. According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari “do not envisage global revolutionary change but rather a process of ‘active experimentation’ which is played out in between economic and political institutions and the sub-institutional movements of desire and affect” (7). This active and productive process of experimentation is affected by the continuous movement of desire. As previously discussed, desire is always seeking out new connections in order to expand and increase the intensities available for consumption. Desire is always in motion constituting bodies-without-organs and consuming intensities. There is subsequently a continuous movement of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization in all social assemblages.

In Deleuze and the Political, Patton cites Eugene Holland for identifying movements of deterritorialization as the “motor of permanent revolution” (105). Defined as “the operation of a line of flight,” movements of deterritorialization are the “primary elements of a given assemblage” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 106; Patton 106). Indeed, “processes of deterritorialisation are the movements that define a given assemblage” (106). Processes of territorialization code and stabilize lines of flight into highly organized forms, yet territorialization itself produces movements of deterritorialization. Although deterritorialization produces movements of reterritorialization stable territories are always temporary, whereas deterritorialization is always a permanent force of change. Lines of flight or deterritorialization are only collected and assimilated into the mass “in order to [be] segment[ed], . . .
obstruct[ed], . . . [and] ascribe[ed] . . . a negative sign” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 33). Deterritorialization is therefore the greater force. Moreover, lines of flight or movements of deterritorialization are the forms that “define the form of creativity specific to [each] assemblage [and] the particular ways in which it can effect transformation in other assemblages or in itself” (Patton 106).

Patton suggests that Deleuze and Guattari “outline a normative typology of processes of deterritorialisation” that differentiates between four different kinds of deterritorialisation (106). In the first instance, processes of deterritorialisation are categorized as either “relative or absolute” (107). On the one hand, relative deterritorialisation defines movements that occur “within the actual - as opposed to the virtual - order of things” (107). In other words, relative deterritorialization occurs in the realm of what is made real. Absolute deterritorialization, on the other hand, defines movements that occur in the “virtual - as opposed to the actual - order of things” (107). Absolute deterritorialisation involves the qualitative movement of multiplicities and is composed of “unformed matter on the plane of consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 107). Relative deterritorialisation occurs on the “molar dimension of individual or collective life,” whereas absolute deterritorialisation occurs on the “molecular plane of social existence” (Patton 107). However, these processes of deterritorialization are not contradictory or opposed phenomena. Instead, processes of absolute deterritorialisation are found within processes of relative deterritorialization.

In the second instance, both relative and absolute forms of deterritorialization are further divided into positive and negative forms. Relative deterritorialisation assumes a negative form when the “deterritorialized element is immediately subjected to forms of reterritorialization
which enclose or obstruct its line of flight” (107). Relative deterritorialisation assumes a positive form “when the line of flight prevails over secondary reterritorializations, even though it may still fail to connect with other deterritorialized elements or enter into a new assemblage with new forces” (107). Absolute deterritorialization assumes a negative form when it follows the process of subjectification. Absolute deterritorialization assumes a positive form when a becoming enters a space of “extra-being” or “extra-territoriality” (Vojkovic 224).54 However, the “dangers of the line of flight . . . are also the danger of absolute deterritorialisation” (Patton 107). By this, Deleuze and Guattari mean to caution against the belief that positive absolute deterritorialization will guarantee a revolutionary moment or movement. A line of flight or the process of absolute deterritorialization is considered potentially dangerous because its momentum can carry it into absolute chaos or nothingness. A line of flight can destroy both itself and everything that it carries with it. Nonetheless, the positive line of absolute deterritorialization is the movement of desire, and therefore also of revolution.

Both absolute and relative deterritorialisation will assume positive forms when “revolutionary connections [form] in opposition to the conjugations of the axiomatic” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 107). For a truly revolutionary transformation to occur deterritorialized elements must be recombined in “mutually supportive and productive ways” (Patton 107). Social or political assemblages are “truly revolutionary only when they involve assemblages of connection rather than conjugation” (107). Connection is privileged over conjugation because simple conjugation effects a joining of two separate bodies in a way that preserves the separateness of each of the bodies involved, whereas connections engender a transformation in the each of the bodies or forms of matter involved. Every society always
“reproduc[es] itself on one level;” at the same time and on another level, society is constantly “being transformed into something else” (107). This transformation is called a becoming. The process of deterritorialization is thus the site of revolutionary potential.

In relation to the politics of difference, Deleuze and Guattari do not support the “incorporation of minority demands by adjust[ing] . . . the code” (7). Instead, Deleuze and Guattari invest in the “process of becoming-minor,” wherein subjects are called upon to expand the “gap between oneself and the norm” (7). The most important form of becoming is a “revolutionary-becoming” (7). Revolutionary-becoming or becoming minoritarian is not only a form of “resistance to the mechanisms of capture and reterritorialization;” it is also the process that creates “new forms of subjectivity and new forms of connection between deterritorialized elements of the social field” (7,8). The minority, in Deleuze and Guattari’s text, is central to their understanding of revolution not because it is a marginalized category against the majority, but because it always involves a divergence from the norm. In Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of minority politics, the minority is “understood in a qualitative rather than quantitative sense” (7). According to Patton’s explanation, the minority is “that which deviates [in kind] from the majority or standard which is the bearer of the dominant social code” (7). The minority is thus a force that is capable of “deterritorializing dominant social codes” (7). In relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of power, however, “what a given assemblage is capable of doing or becoming will be determined by the lines of flight or deterritorialisat...
to the block of becoming under consideration, and in relation to the mutations of an abstract
machine” of desire that directs the movements of an assemblage (Delueze and Guattari qtd. in
106). In relation to eco-revolutionary change, the forms of deterritorialization immanent to an
assemblage or a particular situation, such as Live Earth, determine the kinds of change that will
occur.

In relation to the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth, it is possible to discern the
existence of movements of positive relative deterritorialization within the spectacular materiality
of the event. On the virtual level, there are also lines of absolute deterritorialization that move
toward the irruption of new possibilities, new content, and new forms of action. Although the
event is an arborescent assemblage, complete with coded regimes of signs and pragmatic
systems, it is defined by movements of deterritorialization that decode the semiotic and
pragmatic systems of the event. The specific connections made between ecology and social
justice issues in the performance by Blue King Brown constitutes a line of flight that escapes the
dominant codings of the official body. The specific details of this line of flight will be explored
in greater detail in chapter six. There are negative movements of relative deterritorialization
within Live Earth, wherein the deterritorialized element is immediately reterritorialized, its line
of flight obstructed and captured. However, positive movements of relative deterritorialisation, in
which the line of flight followed prevails over secondary reterritorializations, are also present in
a spectacular assemblage such as Live Earth. Although this line of flight can fail to connect with
other deterritorialized elements or enter into a new assemblage with new forces they are still
central movements that help define the specific nature of the Live Earth spectacular assemblage.
As with any assemblage, there are also movements of negative absolute deterritorialization
wherein the process of subjectification turns subjects away from the territory of established by the master signifier of the event. Finally, there is also a movement of positive absolute deterritorialization that creates a process of becoming wherein the connected bodies enter a space of extra-being or extra-territoriality. The connections formed between a radical green philosophy that collapses the distinctions between nature and culture and a social justice movement that insists on the interconnections between the human, the cultural, and the ecological constitute a positive movement of absolute deterritorialization. By connecting both of these movements with and within their music and their performance Blue King Brown became the in-between site of extra-being and created a positive space and movement of absolute deterritorialization within the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth. As we will explore in more detail later, Blue King Brown’s performance raised issues and set standards that the official rhetoric of the event refused to address directly. By writing and performing songs that not only reject processes of indigenous colonization, but also assert the need to fight against the economic and political systems that dominate and exploit people and nature, Blue King Brown introduces a semiotic line of flight into the Live Earth assemblage that cuts across the universal territories of the event. As a result, all territorialized forms of matter and enunciation within the event are immediately destabilized and cast back into the chaos of meaning and form. This consequently suggests that Debord underestimated not only the role of the spectator, but also the political potential of spectacular forms. Contrary to Debord’s emphases on processes of total colonization Deleuze and Guattari elevate movements of decolonization or deterritorialization. These movements come before movements of territorialization and colonization. They also define the kinds of fragmented change that can occur within a given assemblage. According to this perspective, the specific
alliances built under the Live Earth framework create both lines of reterritorialization and lines of deterritorialization, rather than simply a progressive linear path of total colonization or transcendence.

**Becoming-revolutionary**

According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari are “not theorists of liberation, but [rather] theorists of becoming-revolutionary” (83). Through the concept of becoming Deleuze and Guattari assert the immanent and permanent “possibility of transformation in the forms of social organization of work and desire” (83). Although arborescent forms of organization cannot be abolished, the “molar assignment of differential power and affects to the sexes” can be redistributed (83). Furthermore, becoming-revolutionary is not judged by the “success or failure of the moral redistributions to which it gives rise” (83). Instead, the success of revolution is always “immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 83). Unlike Debord’s Hegelian-Marxist perception of revolution, which demands a kind of total change that institutes an entire new and permanent order onto the whole of society in a single moment, Deleuze and Guattari support a theoretical framework that identifies change as piecemeal or fragmented, always possible, always accessible to all, and always occurring. It is not necessary for revolution to construct and sustain new molar forms, it is only necessary for connections and alliances to occur between stable bodies because these connections cannot help but destabilize the sign and the body.
The becoming-other or becoming-revolutionary of philosophical conceptualization refers to a mutation or transformation of a concept into a new conjecture. Although there is a process of transformation the new concept still marginally resembles its previous form. This does not mean that new concepts are an imitation of existing concepts or that thought moves through a set of progressive moments that lead to an absolute state of self-consciousness. Instead, the process by which concepts are deterritorialized transforms them into new categories of understanding that link to old understandings without letting these understandings determine the new categories. The becoming-other or becoming-revolutionary of corporeal bodies are defined on slightly different terms. Although corporeal-becoming is different than a becoming that involves ideas or concepts, both are defined as a process or “action by which something or someone continues to become-other (while continuing to be what it is)” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 78). According to Patton, Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the becoming-other of the body is defined in terms of Spinozian affects. Through Spinoza’s framework of “affections” a body is “defined by the affects of which it is capable” (78). Affects are defined as “active (‘to incite, provoke or produce’) or reactive (‘to be incited, or provoked, to be induced to produce, to have a useful effect’)” (78). According to Deleuze and Guattari, when bodies come into contact with one another they act on one another. In other words, the encounters between bodies create productive connections which in turn transform all of the bodies involved. In every connection that creates, destroys, or transforms bodies there are corresponding “intensities that affect [them, thereby] augmenting or diminishing [bodies’] power to act’” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in 79). In terms of power, becomings can be understood as “processes of increase or enhancement in the powers of one body, carried out in relation to the powers of another, but without involving appropriation
of those powers” (Patton 79). In other words, the process of becoming involves the formation of “virtual alliance[s]” between a body and “other bodies or states of being” (80). This state of alliance either “reinforces or enhances” the power of the engaged body (79).

According to Patton, processes of becomings are “by definition perverse processes which involve a relation to the unnatural or the inhuman” (80). By this, Deleuze and Guattari mean to assert the primacy of movements that break down normalized definitions of subjectivity categories and dominant political, economic, and cultural organizations. In *A Thousand Plateaus* becoming-revolutionary is termed in different instances as becoming-animal, becoming-woman, or becoming-other. The greater the divergence from the code that defines humans as separate from and superior to the animal the greater the revolutionary potential of the becoming in question. Furthermore, becomings can be “realized in the social imaginary or in the unconscious desires of individuals, but they are always linked to a qualitative multiplicity of some kind” (80). Becomings always involve changes in kind as lines of flight distance bodies from dominant identity codes and centric assemblages of power and signification. In other words, all forms of becoming involve a qualitative expansion and increase of molecular intensities and therefore also involve an increase in the different kinds of libidinal energies available for the production of new modes of being. A line of flight is a line of becoming that “has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Patton 82). It is always in the middle, between what it once was and what it will be. There are no definitive identities, only processes of capture or territorialization that inadvertently create subjectivities, as well as processes of deterritorialization or escape that desire new connections and qualitative increases in states of intensity.
As previously discussed, a revolutionary-becoming is a “minoritarian becoming” because it implies a movement that moves away from the dominant code of the majority (Patton 80). Indeed, there is no such thing as a becoming that moves towards majoritarian forms of organization: “all becomings are molecular” (81). In Deleuze and Guattari’s expositions on the nature of becoming the greater the gap between the norm and the minority-becoming the better; after all, this gap signifies a qualitative increase in the kinds of differences that diverge from the majority. Minorities are not defined as a derivative of the majority; instead, Deleuze and Guattari define becoming-minoritarian as a process of deviation from the majority that is immanent in every molecular element of an assemblage. Indeed, to “become-minoritarian is to embark on a process of deterritorialization or divergence from the norm” (81). For Deleuze and Guattari, each and every becoming is a revolutionary or minoritarian-becoming. In relation to the construction of revolutionary identity Deleuze and Guattari assert that “only minorities can function as agents or media of becoming, but they can do so only on condition that they cease to be a ‘definable aggregate in relation to the majority’” (Patton 81; Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in 81). A becoming is minoritarian or revolutionary for two primary reasons. First, becomings occur on the molecular level, rather than on the stage of the molar. Second, becomings involve the consumption of intensities, rather than the consumption of material goods or semiotic signs. The hegemonic modern molar subject is a masculine subject. Against this model, women, children, and animals are all defined as molecular minorities. Any movement that involves becoming-animal, child, or woman is a revolutionary movement because these forms of becoming are considered to be “potential paths of deterritorialisation of the majority” (81).
Although territories can be reformed after a new becoming the movement of becoming is not reducible to this territory. The rhizome will assume lines of reterritorialization and set down roots in a tree-like structure of hierarchy, but the multiplicity always escapes because the a priori virtual multiplicity that directs the formation of the arborescent structure is ultimately formed through “alliance, uniquely alliance,” in which the conjunction “and . . . and . . . and . . .” overrides the verb “to be” that is “imposed” by the tree (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 25). The conjunction *and* acts as an “axiom” for Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of becomings, wherein “events or beings always emerge from [an] ‘in-between’” space (Patton 10). The word *and* stands “for that which is in-between any two things brought into relation with each other” (10). According to Patton, the word *and* is an “indeterminant conjunction” that “free[s] the connective power of relationality from its [required role of] subordination to attribution” (10). The function of connection that the seemingly innocuous term *and* supplies to the process of becoming lies in its role as a “border between two elements and, as such, a potential line of flight along which things happen and changes take place” (10). The fricative site of encounter and connection is thus the site of revolutionary potential. In the friction of the in-between space, which is created by the encounters and alliances made between different multiplicities during the construction of spectacular assemblages, the process of becoming deterritorializes the dominant codes of society.

*Regimes of Signs and Lines of Flight*

Since we are discussing Live Earth as a spectacular semiotic assemblage it is necessary to explore Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of semiotics. Deleuze and Guattari provide support
for a position that does not reduce Live Earth to a capitalized semiotic discursive formation. Four
different kinds of regimes of signs are identified and defined in *A Thousand Plateaus*: the
signifying regime of the sign; the presignifying semiotic; the countersignifying semiotic; and the
postsignifying regime of signs (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 113-120). At the
same time, Deleuze and Guattari also assert that there are other semiotic systems. In accordance
with the theory of repeating difference and the a priori of multiplicities Deleuze and Guattari
contend that there are multiplicities of regimes of signs. Furthermore, these regimes of signs are
in continual motion, always transforming in moments of encounter and processes of connection.
New encounters and connections between different universal regimes of signs, identified by
Deleuze and Guattari as signifying regimes, as well as between universal sign regimes and other,
local semiotic systems, including presignifying semiotic systems, countersignifying semiotic
systems, postsignifying regimes of signs, and other, unidentified regimes of signs, lead to the
creation of new systems of signification.

The semiotic system that is defined by Deleuze and Guattari as the *signifying regime of
the sign* describes a process of domination that allows for the type of world that Debord
describes in *The Society of the Spectacle*. It is the “imperial despotic regime,” as well as all other
“subjected, arborescent, hierarchical, or centered groups,” such as political parties, economic
systems, mainstream environmental movements, or families, that exercise a universal hegemony
over language, ideas, and actions (116). The signifying regime of the sign conforms to the
following eight principles that define its state of capture:

(1) the sign refers to another sign, ad infinitum (the limitless of
significance, which deterritorializes the sign); (2) the sign is brought back
by other signs and never ceases to return (the circularity of the
deterritorialized sign); (3) the sign jumps from circle to circle and
continuously displaces the center at the same time as it ties into it (the
metaphor or hysteria of signs); (4) the expansion of circles is assured by
the interpretations that impart signified and reimport signifier (the
interpretosis of the priest); (5) the infinite set of signs refers to a supreme
signifier presenting itself as both lack and excess (the despotic signifier,
the limit of the system’s deterritorialization); (6) the form of the signifier
has a substance, or the signifier has a body, namely, the Face (the
principle of faciality traits, which constitute a reterritorialization); (7) the
system’s line of flight is assigned a negative value, condemned as that
which exceeds the signifying regime’s power of deterritorialization (the
principle of the scapegoat); (8) the regime is one of universal deception,
in its jumps, in the regulated circles, in the seer’s regulation of
interpretations, in the publicness of the facialized center, and in the
treatment of the line of flight. (117)

This regime is a heavily regulated system of “universal deception” that controls the
interpretations of signs and fixes their meanings around a central signifier (117). In this system
there is a movement of deterritorialization, but this movement is swallowed up and abstracted by
the signifying regime. This is achieved through a process wherein that which is considered
dangerous to the stability of the regime is demarcated as that which must be expelled from the
regime of signs and its corresponding social body. The body that rides the line of flight and
therefore engages in the process of becoming-other is identified as the source of all the sins of society. The body of becoming thus becomes the scapegoat that must be excluded or expelled from society. The scapegoat is excluded because it represents “everything that resisted” the signifying regime of signs; indeed, the scapegoat is identified as the incarnation of a “line of flight . . . that the signifying regime cannot tolerate” (Pister and Lord 225). In the signifying regime of signs Deleuze and Guattari define assemblages of hegemonic arborescent signs according to orbital laws. The signifying regime contains signs that circle around a central signifier just as the planets orbit around the sun. However, there are also forms that defy the orbital path of signifying signs. Like a meteor, a line of flight breaks away from the orbital path and constitutes an intense line of flight away from the center. Different possibilities emerge in this line of flight, but not all these possibilities will constitute a new form of being. A line of flight may establish its own path that sustains a separate identity or it may burn up in the intensity of its own becoming. As when a meteor breaks through the earth’s atmosphere and becomes a shooting star, a line of becoming can occur so swiftly and with such intensity that the body can destroy itself in the very process of becoming. The sun, the central signifier in the orbital model, is itself subservient to laws of the galaxy and galaxies themselves are subservient to the laws of expansion that shape the universe. There are movements of attraction and repulsion between all forms of bodies and matter. In other words, all bodies are constantly interacting. If an entity is moving and has mass it is interacting with other elements. This entails that bodies cannot be completely isolated from one another. As such, the dominant force that determines the universe does not come from one body; instead, the dominant force is a distinctly collective force. The signifying regime of signs is thus not the only semiotic system that defines
the social mores of a people, nor is it the original semiotic system that determines all other systems. Deleuze and Guattari identify three other semiotic systems: the *presignifying semiotic*, the *countersignifying semiotic*, and the *postsignifying regime of signs*.

The presignifying semiotic involves simple codings, such as rhythm or gesture, that function without signs. The presignifying semiotic system is a “segmentary . . . plurilinear, [and] multidimensional” semiotic system that resists the kind of “signifying circularity” that exists in the signifying regime of signs (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 117). In this system, expression is not reduced to faciality and forms of content are not eliminated by the processes of abstraction as they are in the signifying regime of signs. However, there is “still abstraction of content from a strictly semiotic point of view” (117). In other words, bodies, passions, and actions are abstracted through a proliferation of signs and symbols that create signifiers of meaning. Rather than trapping meaning into a signifying regime, however, this type of abstraction produces a “pluralism or polyvocality of forms of expression that prevents any power takeover by the signifier and preserves expressive forms particular to content” (117). Consequently, the expressive “forms of corporeality, gesturality, rhythm, dance, and rite coexist heterogeneously with the vocal form” (117). The vocal form is a discursive force that operates on a territorial level. It reterritorializes the deterritorialized combination of sounds, but it can also become-other when it catches flight along a line of deterritorialization. As previously discussed, these lines can be either relative or absolute and negative or positive. By asserting the coexistence of vocal sign systems with expressive forms Deleuze and Guattari provide support for a process wherein a “variety of forms and substances of expression intersect and form relays” that not only interact with the codes of the master signifier, but also move meaning past the
despotic codings of the signifier (117). All social communication is thus not reducible to
derivative categories of the master signifier. Instead, non-sign forms of communication exist
beside signifying signs and even surpass them in meaning.

Deleuze and Guattari locate the segmentarity of the presignifying semiotic in the forms of
social organization assumed by nomadic hunters. The dominant system of social interaction used
by the hunter nomad is defined by the “law of the lineages” (117, 118). In this system, the “sign
owes its degree of relative deterritorialization not to a perpetual referral to other signs but rather
to a confrontation between the territorialities and compared segments from which each sign is
extracted” (117). This kind of semiotic system is integral to Deleuze and Guattari’s position on
difference because the presignifying form defines that existence of a plurality of forms of
expression outside the codings of derivative sign systems. The segmentarity and polyvocality of
the presignifying regime supports the rejection of the originary Form because it “avert[s] the
already-present threat” of “universalizing abstraction, erection of the signifier, circularity of
statements, and their correlates, the State apparatus, the instatement of the despot, the priestly
caste, the scapegoat” (118). Unlike Debord’s wholly negative perception of spectacular society,
which only sees the colonizing movement of despotic signs, Deleuze and Guattari’s
understanding of society includes the identification of multiple sign systems that interact with
each other and sometimes disrupt or move away from the dominant codings of signs. The
prespignifying regime of expression, which emphasizes non-verbal body language, constitutes one
such system, whereas the countersignifying semiotic constitutes another.

The *countersignifying semiotic* is located, according to Deleuze and Guattari, in the
social organization of language that “fearsome, warlike, and animal-raising nomads” subscribe to
This semiotic system is a sign regime that declares war against the signifying regime of signs. It is the “semiotic of a nomad war machine directed against the State apparatus” (118). Defined by a “line of abolition” that desires to overthrow the despotic regime of the Signifier, the countersignifying regime involves a system of signs that directly challenge the order of meaning that is coded by the master signifier (Vojkovic 225). In this system the “semiotic proceeds less by segmentarity than by arithmetic and numeration” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 118). In other words, the systems of organization set by the principle of lineage is replaced by numerical systems of organization in the countersignifying semiotic.

There is also a postsignifying regime of signs. This regime is defined according to a different set of principles that oppose it to the signifying regime of signs. The postsignifying regime is a “passional . . . subjective regime” that “operates by the linear and temporal succession of finite proceedings, rather than by the simultaneity of circles in unlimited expansion” (120). It is a regime that operates through a process of “subjectification,” rather than through a process of signification (119). The process of signification belongs to the regime of the signifier, whereas the process of subjectification belongs to the regime of the post-signified. Signification is the process through which meaning is created as an organized system that orbits around the “full frontal face of a despotic God” (O’Connell 1223). The signs emitted by the center move in expanding circles around the face of the master signifier. These signs are accessed through the process of interpretation, wherein experts, such as priests, doctors, or scientists, “interpret the signs in relation to the master signifier, [consequently] stemming the entropy inherent in the system” (1223). Unlike signification, however, subjectification is “composed of lines punctuated by finite points, rather than circles responding to a central
referent” (1223). The process of subjectification is initiated in the moment when a “group of signs is captured or detached at a [specific] ‘point of subjectification’ through a process of fixation on some external event or object which constitutes its ‘reason for being or destroying” (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Maclean). According to this understanding, subjectification is defined as “a flight, a turning away, a betrayal, [wherein] the ties which bind a group of signs in a relation of significance are severed” (Maclean).58 The postsignifying regime is composed by a “decisive external occurrence, by a relation with the outside that is expressed more as an emotion than an idea, and more as effort or action than imagination” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 120). In the postsignifying semiotic a block of meaning constitutes a “point of betrayal,” in which a movement away from the “despotic master signifier” is instituted in order to “inaugurate a passionate, autonomous relationship with signs” (O’Connell 1223). In the examples provided by Deleuze and Guattari the “transcendent center of power is forsaken in favor of a situation where the subject traces itself out along a line of deviant autonomy” (Pister and Lord 225). In relation to the faciality of regimes of signs, the postsignifying regime is thus defined by “two profiles turning away from each other,” rather than by a centric formation around the full face of the Signifier (O’Connell 1223). Despite the deviant line of tracing that constitutes the process of subjectification, the postsignifying regime is defined by a specific configuration of signs that are confined to a specific situation and a particular context. The postsignifying semiotic system operates through a “postulate or concise formula “ that functions as the “point of departure for a linear series or proceeding that runs its course, at which point a new proceeding begins” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 120). Although Deleuze and Guattari isolate each process in order to describe their differences, they
also assert that the processes of significance and subjectification are often mixed together or combined with other processes that define other, still unidentified regimes of signs.

Deleuze and Guattari assert the existence of a multiplicity of other sign regimes that are defined by different movements of territorialization and deterritorialization: “there are many regimes of signs” (119). According to Deleuze and Guattari, there is such mixture within the same period or the same people that we can say no more than that a given people, language, or period assures the relative dominance of a certain regime. Perhaps all semiotics are mixed and not only combine with various forms of content but also combine different regimes of signs. Presignifying elements are always active in the signifying regime; countersignifying elements are always present and at work within it; and postsignifying elements are already there. (119)

In addition to the encounters and interactions between the four semiotic systems defined in *A Thousand Plateaus*, other unidentified semiotic systems interact outside, with, and within these four regimes. Semiotic systems and all of their “mixtures may appear in a history of confrontation and intermingling of peoples,” as well as in “languages in which there are several competing functions,” or in “an ordinary conversation in which people are speaking the same tongue but different languages (all of the sudden a fragment of an unexpected semiotic surfaces)” (119). In every social act there is thus multiple sign systems that connect and compete with each other. Every new combination of elements in a new assemblage involves an encounter between movements of qualitatively different kinds of sign systems. Each encounter creates an in-between space that opens new possibilities for the development of new subjectivities. In the
context of Live Earth, it is therefore possible that new eco-subjectivities can be reterritorialized by the event, as well as a possibility for subjects to grab ahold of a line of absolute deterritorialization and thereby enter into the process of becoming-ecological. As with language, Deleuze and Guattari contend that it is possible to create “maps of regimes of signs,” as well as to “combine maps or separate them” (119). Thus, in order to construct a “distinction between two types of semiotics” it is therefore necessary to “consider very diverse domains simultaneously” (119). In reconstructing an understanding of spectacular society it is necessary to view different spectacular events as assemblages of competing and complimentary semiotic systems. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “semiotic systems depend on assemblages, and it is the assemblages that determine what a given people, period, or language, and even a given style, fashion, pathology, or miniscule event in a limited situation, can assure the predominance of one semiotic or another” (119). Deleuze and Guattari’s framework of sign systems not only accounts for the movements of colonization emphasized by Debord, but also allows for the existence of movements of deterritorialization that Debord failed to appreciate. These movements of deterritorialization destabilize and transform the dominant sign systems that preserve and reproduce hierarchical systems of signification.

In the spectacular Live Earth assemblage different regimes of signs interact, connect, and form alliances with other regimes of signs. Each of these regimes of signs exists in its own assemblage and contains both movements of territorialization and deterritorialization. In addition, each of these regimes of signs holds within itself the four different kinds of semiotic systems identified by Deleuze and Guattari, as well as unidentified semiotic systems. There is thus always a multiplicity of signs within a multiplicity of signs that interact and ensure the
eternal return of difference. An event such as Live Earth is thus ultimately an ambiguous event that can create, as well as delete, new possibilities. When regimes of signs connect and travel across the distances and dimensions of the social globe they become disconnected from the event around which they originally coalesced. This disconnection enables new connections to be formed between a multiplicity of local regimes of signs, specific linguistic systems, and particular cultural contexts, as well as between different geographical manifestations of ecological problems. A level of encounter and connection that reaches beyond the alliances built within the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth occurs between the aspirations and deceptions of the universal and specific local contexts and ecological situations. In this process both universal and local meanings are deterritorialized and new meanings are reterritorialized. The universal event travels across boundaries and in these travels both the universal and the local are transformed. Some of these transformations are positive, whereas others are negative. Through this analytical framework Live Earth is ultimately identifiable as an ambiguous event, not solely as a conquering spectacular force of psychological colonization. Since Live Earth is an assemblage of different regimes of signs, each regime also carries within it semiotic forces of deterritorialization that break down its dominant semiotic regime. A spectacular assemblage can not only colonize, it can also open undetermined and uncertain possibilities for the future. These possibilities may be reterritorialized into new subjectivities or they may continue moving through the process of becoming.

Although it is certain that revolution is immanent to all assemblages it is not certain that the new forms created by the interaction of different regimes will be eco-revolutionary. While it is possible to construct a signifying regime of signs that designates an ecological or
environmental subjectivity it is not possible to cement and solidify this subjectivity with an eternal permanency, nor is it possible to predetermine the terms of a new eco-subjectivity. Although this lack of permanency and totality may appear as a negative condition that indicates the failure of the eco-movement to sustain itself it is in fact a positive condition that prevents the permanent capture of eco-identities by any despotic force that desires to eradicate difference and replace it with an originary or authentic definition that circles around a master signifier. The process of becoming described by Deleuze and Guattari ensures the continual deterritorializations of normative mainstream environmental subjectivities. In every spectacular environmental assemblage there is always a piecemeal possibility for a line of deterritorialization to take flight along a line becoming-ecological.

We have already identified the signifying regime of signs associated with the official discourse of Live Earth in the Debordian inspired analysis of Live Earth. To summarize, the official semiotic regime of Live Earth involves discursive formations and signifying regimes that support capitalism and economic development, a political regime of signs and discourse that reproduces separated centric political systems, and a signifying regime of signs and discourse that delimitates the boundaries of mainstream environmentalism. These signs and discourses, as Debord rightly contends, seek to perpetuate dominant centric political systems and free-market economies by emphasizing the need for technological and market solutions to combat the climate crisis. But what Debord's framework will not allow is an identification and analysis of other regimes of signs or other semiotic systems that inevitably cut across or against dominant signifying systems. Every spectacular assemblage holds within it systematic movements that lock the meaning of signs and words into systems of signification, as well as movements that
directly challenge these systems of signification or that operate through the process of subjectification instead of through the process of signification. Other semiotic tracings destabilize central systems of signification through unique processes of deterritorialization. It is therefore necessary to explore Live Earth in relation to its musical assemblages, specifically the music of Blue King Brown with their radical green propositions and their collapse of the distinction between nature and culture, as well as in relation to its cinematic assemblages, in particular the short films that were aired in-between performances and presentations. In addition, Live Earth also connected with the internet through its affiliation with MSN, thereby not only expanding the reach of the event’s global discourse, but also qualitatively expanding the possibilities for deterritorializations of the dominant environmental code supported by the official discourse of Live Earth. Live Earth is a spectacle in which alliances are drawn between environmental organizations, musicians, and spectacular capital; as such, Live Earth is an “assemblage” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 80) of competing, contradictory, and complementary fields that intersect to create a much more complicated spectacle than Debord allows in *The Society of the Spectacle*. 
Chapter Six

Live Earth as a Spectacular Assemblage

In order to understand the moments of encounter that occur in and through a spectacular event, such as Live Earth, it is necessary to visualize both the processes of capture and the processes of deterritorialization that are present within this particular spectacular assemblage. This understanding must transpose an understanding of what becoming-revolutionary means in an ecological context. Each spectacular event holds within itself not only processes of territorialization or capture, as identified by Debord, but also process of deterritorialisation or becoming-revolutionary. Live Earth requires a form of unity within certain restrictions, this entails that certain threads of desire will be knit into a coherent form of organization; however, in the process, some threads of thought or investigation are left incomplete, disconnected from the corporeal and conceptual body of the event. It is at these sites that the event can unravel, and its meaning can be deterritorialized. These lines of flight escape capture precisely because they have not been firmly knit into the official unity of the event. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of difference, Live Earth can be understood as an assemblage of assemblages. In other words, each particular event is an assemblage that holds within itself a number of different and independent assemblages. Each of these individual assemblages is composed of multiplicities and consists of both macro-movements of territorialization and micro-movements of deterritorialization. There are formal arborescent forms of capital within the event. There are also free-flowing rhizomatic bodies-without-organs cutting through the event. In Live Earth’s discursive assemblage, the molar politics of an official environmental discourse inhabit the same
space as the micropolitics of an unofficial radical green discourse. Both of these discourses have corresponding semiotic systems that circulate different signs in order to expand the capacity for their discourses to affect people and therefore to change the social and ecological circumstances in which we live.

According to Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of capital and society the domain of spectacular capital is already immanent to the world in which we live. Unlike Debord’s perception of capital, which contends that forms of capital operate through a hegemonic and primary process of progressive, one-way capture that colonizes authentic forms of being and living, Deleuze and Guattari assert the primacy of undefined difference and movements of deterritorialization that decode and recapture social and natural processes. The question of the authentic is irrelevant in this conception of the social world. Indeed, there is no form of social organization that can lay claim to the Real or to any validation of authenticity. There is only constant experimentation, connections between fragments, and continuous movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The connections between different assemblages of discursive and semiotic enunciation create new contexts, new contents, new meanings, and new forms of expression. While it is possible to identify the negative implications of some of these new connections and reterritorializations, there are also positive movements of deterritorialization that come with positive implications. For example, in the green standards constructed for the live concerts (spectacular productions) of Live Earth, as well as in the green standards set for concession stands and products, capital is forced to change the process of production. Although capital attempts to fake its own greening, there are incremental shifts made to both production processes and consumption practices that result from the attribute of greening
that is taken on by capitalism. Furthermore, hegemonic traditional corporate forces are drawn not only into competition, but also into alliances with organic and fair trade movements of capital that are initiated from the ground up and ascribe to an entirely different set of production and consumption standards. The hegemony of spectacular capital is destabilized and deterritorialized in the connections made between traditional forms of capital and community-based systems that emphasize fair labor compensation, the expansion of ecologically integrated systems of agriculture, and the use of non-toxic or minimal impact manufacturing processes.

The politics of desire embedded within spectacular assemblages ensure the movement of deterritorialisation even within arborescent forms of capital and power. The abstract machines of desire in Live Earth inevitably create a qualitative expansion and increase in the kinds of eco-revolutionary forms of thought and action presented by the event. Live Earth, as a spectacular assemblage, is turned into a specific kind of semiotic machine by the abstract machine that is immanent within it. Yet at the same time Live Earth is a spectacular semiotic assemblage that cannot repress its own desire to multiply. Live Earth can thus be understood as a semiotic process that, in the first and last instance, desires a qualitative increase in modes of being that embody becoming-ecological. According to the philosophy of desire and deterritorialization, Live Earth’s official, yet ambiguous universal precepts for change are inherently open to connections between different assemblages of desire. As such, the fricative alliances between universal discourses and local contexts open potential lines of flight which could engender new eco-revolutionary subjectivities.

As a moment of alliance between individuals, scholars, activists, musicians, actors, politicians, and capitalist interests Live Earth involves a diversity of individuals situated in a
number of different geopolitical locations. In the opening of *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari state that, in writing, they “made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away,” and in doing so were “aided, inspired, multiplied” (3). Live Earth similarly involves a productive incorporation of everything within range; as such, Live Earth is identifiable as an arborescent multiplicity that holds within itself rhizomatic multiplicities which threaten to unravel the coded meanings of the event. Indeed, both the arborescent assemblage that constitutes the official regime of signs and pragmatic systems of Live Earth and the rhizomatic assemblages within it contain lines of territorialization, as well as lines of flight.

In relation to Tsing, it is imperative to understand Live Earth as a site of encounter, friction, and engagement between different understandings of the ecological and the social. In *Earth for Sale*, Tokar contends that there has been an “impressive flowering of philosophical and ethical approaches to ecological problems” in the last fifty years (Tokar 117). The emergence of “diverse ecological philosophies” has enabled the creation of “political and cultural alternatives to the life-denying practices of industrial capitalist society” (117). In this context, Live Earth cannot help but be an event forged through the friction of connection and negotiation between economic definitions of society and nature, political definitions of the social and the environment, and ecological definitions of culture and earth, as well as between universal aspirations and the local contexts of each of these understandings of the world. The space of encounter is momentarily completely open to new possibilities, not closed down by a totalizing unity of predetermined ideas as Debord’s theorization of society contends. Instead there is a total disconnection of both lines of capture and lines of flight which are slowly knit back into a
coherent unity. In this process of reterritorialization old lines of flight are momentarily lost or forgotten. However, this does not mean that they cease to exist. As Deleuze and Guattari’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s concept of eternal return asserts, there is only the repetition of difference through the constant movements of desire across distances and dimensions.

The green movement encased within the borders of the Live Earth spectacle cannot be confined to a theory of economic exchange; the green movement operates first and foremost on a level of exchange that is concerned not with monetary returns, but rather with ecological returns. Capital can co-opt these concerns and profit off CFL light-bulbs, carbon credit schemes, hybrid cars, bottled water factories, forest plantations, and mono-crop factory-farms, but capital cannot meet the green movements desire for a radically different set of relations between the social and the ecological that are capable of creating an ecologically stable and productive social environment. Although Live Earth links itself to preserving and sustaining capital rather than nature in its dependence on advertising affiliates and technological solutions, the event also connects with movements that advocate a radically different set of solutions that begin with a reevaluation of existing systems of social, political, and economic thought and practice. The ecological and social justice concerns articulated by environmentalists and individuals are not economic concerns; as such, Live Earth circulates semiotic meanings that are detached not only from context, but also from economic preoccupations. Consequently, Live Earth contains an element of production that is not reducible to economic terms as Debord insists when he conflates the entire circulation of the image with the circulation of economic ideology and separated power. Environmentalists, presenters, and musicians who promote a reevaluation of contemporary consumption patterns, as well as a reassessment of the cultural mores that
inform everyday life, also exist within the spectacular Live Earth assemblage. These elements destabilize the hegemony of capital and centric power configurations that are identified by Debord, thereby indicating that even the spectacle’s most stultifying form contains elements that perpetuate movements away from hegemonic codes of capitalized political action. Moreover, the capitalized discourse of the spectacle is intersected and fractured by the discourse of ecology, and the gaze of the spectacular spectator is intersected and fractured by a multiplicity of different ecological semiotic systems; as a result, the Live Earth spectator cannot be programed by Live Earth to reiterate and reinscribe only the official “integrated” (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 16) discourse of the event. Live Earth is thus an assemblage of multiplicities that struggles to maintain its modes of capture in the context of an a priori of difference. Each assembled multiplicity within the macropolitical assemblage of Live Earth has its own abstract machine that directs the flows of intensities and states of capture. Even as meaning is being coded it is breaking down and reassembling because the in-between space between different assemblages of content and expression, or of territorialization and deterritorialization, is a space of extra-being. This space of extra-being opens up new possibilities for the reterritorialization of signifying systems and subjectivities into a more eco-friendly form, as well as for the movement of becoming to carry subjects into a state of becoming-ecological. Language is a collective assemblage of enunciation that creates redundant categories of identity, yet at the same time language is continually transforming. As a result, the universal signifying semiotic and discursive formations within Live Earth cannot be defined simply as a force of negative colonization that traps bodies in false meanings. It necessarily begs the question as to what particular alliances are drawn that lead to revolutionary connections.
The Rhizome of Music and Blue King Brown

Through music and performance, Live Earth’s opening act - an eclectic Australian band called Blue King Brown - brings with them a different understanding of how to mitigate the climate change crisis. This understanding is rooted in an indigenous perspective that refuses the binary between nature and culture. Like radical green perspectives, the indigenous position offers a coherent rejection of capitalized social codes and practices, and a holistic alternative worldview that incorporates nature, culture, and spirit. As with a radical ecological perspective, nature is not identified as separate, but rather it is recognized that nature is a part of culture and culture is a part of nature. In other words, nature produces culture and culture produces nature. As Tsing contends, local cultures are not isolated forces that exist as pure contradictions to the universal. The desires and affiliations of Blue King Brown are forged through encounters between universal aspirations for indigenous rights and solidarity, as well as for environmental integrity, and local understandings of what these aspirations mean. Since Blue King Brown uses the medium of music to disseminate their critique of the dominant systems that govern the meaning of social life according to the racialized principles of the economy and centralized power it is necessary to analyze the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth not only as an assemblage of signs and discourses, but also as a musical assemblage.

Deleuze and Guattari imagine pop music as a rhizomatic assemblage that is continually deterritorializing and reterritorializing content and expression: “music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many ‘transformational multiplicities,’ even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome” (qtd. in Murphy and Smith 7). The musical rhizome has
infinitely proliferating points and continually transforming lines that cut through it and connect with other points of proliferation and lines of transformation. The proliferation of rhizomatic points and lines fills empty spaces with intensities of sound, expression, movement, and passion. The fragment of the past musical event is continually deterritorialized and reterritorialized; as a result, the dominant codings that inform the maps of signification which are traced onto society are subject themselves to a continual process of transformation. As the fundamental concepts outlined by Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, musical assemblages are defined by a diversity of unpredictable relations. The proliferation of rhizomatic assemblages and lines of flight within the spectacular musical assemblages of Live Earth ensures the continuous disruption of established musical, spectacular, and discursive territories (Breyley).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of assemblages music is constituted as a territorialized structural form, as well as a rhizomatic expressive form. Contemporary musical forms, like current spectacular forms, are assemblages that involve connections between a diversity of media forms and a multiplicity of expressions (Campbell). According to Murphy and Smith, “of the many forms of expression through which their thought moves, flowing and multiplying without privilege or hierarchy,” Deleuze and Guattari “number ‘pop’ among the most powerful (in the Spinozian sense, of that which affords the greatest potential for further connection and ramification)” (Murphy and Smith 1). In _Kafka_ Deleuze and Guattari define ‘pop’ as:

An escape for language, for music, for writing. What we call pop—pop music, pop philosophy, pop writing—Wörterflucht [word flight]. To make use of the polylingualism of one's own language, to make a minor or intensive use of it, to oppose the oppressed quality of this language to
its oppressive quality, to find points of nonculture or underdevelopment, linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape, an animal enters into things, an assemblage comes into play. (qtd. in Murphy and Smith 1)

Pop is thus defined as a rhizomatic assemblage composed of decentralized and non-hierarchical multiplicities. According to Murphy and Smith, “pop can be conceived as a rhizome because it develops by fits and starts, in a messy, practical, improvisational way rather than in a refined, programmatic, theoretical way” (1). According to this understanding of music, the messy encounters and practical connections between auditory media, semiotic regimes, and discursive refrains in the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth create new bodies of music and new systems of expression.

Murphy and Smith locate their discussion of popular music in the “regime of music production” that is defined by a “bricolage of modern recording technology . . . and its media of distribution” (2). The media analyzed in relation to Live Earth appertain to this modern bricolage of music production. Although this recording regime does indeed belong to a sector of production that is only available to the privileged classes of society, popular music cannot be reduced to a quantitative record of profit or a program of progressive colonization. Deleuze and Guattari define popular music according to qualitative and productive principles that reject generic and homogenizing definitions of music forwarded by theorists such as Theodor Adorno. According to this definition popular music is a permanent site of productive potential that can not only constitute movements that capture meaning, but that can also deterritorialize and reterritorialize meaning. The process of deterritorialization allows for the reterritorialization of primary elements into “assemblages of desire that act as ‘war machines’ against the
market” (Murphy and Smith 7). As such, when considering a spectacular musical assemblage like Live Earth, or any of the musical assemblages within Live Earth, it is necessary to consider its solidified territories, its lines of deterritorialization, and its movements of reterritorialization. While Debord’s understanding of spectacle accounts for the territories of an assemblage it cannot account for the movements that break down these territories and reconstitute new territories of meaning and expression.

The musical assemblages within the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth are important because “pop music is potentially an important element in the assemblages of expression” (10). Music, for Deleuze and Guattari, is an “intensifier of becoming,” in the same way that literature or painting are intensifiers of becoming (Murphy and Smith 10). Music is an intensifier of becoming because it is composed of “intensive sensory complexes” that move beyond the definition of perception to a space that is disconnected from the experience of subjects. In other words, “sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds anything lived” (Deleuze qtd. in Murphy and Smith 16). Music is always changing, transforming, and becoming-other than what it was before. Music is thus a form of enunciation that is particularly suited to movements which seek to overturn the hegemonic semiotic and pragmatic systems that attempt to impose a static state of total domination onto society.

According to Murphy and Smith, Deleuze and Guattari both participated in movements or situations that involved the creation or the use of musical assemblages. In 1972, Deleuze recited a passage from Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human* for a recording with the band Schizo (11). The music created by Schizo was not designed to compete according to the rules of the marketplace; instead, the musical assemblages created by Schizo were experimental assemblages composed of connections between different musical genres, as well as between traditional
musical instruments and technological music machines. Guattari encountered the musical assemblage through his involvements in different political movements. The French militant movements that Guattari associated with were composed, in part, by popular protest songs that united and incited protest movements. After the Movement of ’77, wherein the “Free Radio” movement used pop music as part of its assemblage of resistance, Guattari wrote a piece that featured the band “Alice” (Murphy and Smith 12). In this essay, Guattari defined the music of Alice as “a radio line of flight. [An] assemblage of theory - life - praxis - group - sex - solitude - machine - affection - caressing” (qtd. in Murphy and Smith 13). According to Murphy and Smith, although connections between political radicals and avant-garde artists form many of the primary links that constitute revolutionary movements, the “involvement of pop musicians substantially broadened the reach of the [French, American, and Italian] social movements [of the 70s] . . . through the proliferation, hybridization, and feedback of mass expression” (13). These movements were marked not only by instances of solidarity, but also by moments of contention; as such, movements exist “in the middle, like refrains,” of processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Murphy and Smith assert that the musical assemblages of these movements “acted as refrains that [not only] deterritorialized the enforced social relations of capital, [but also] provided hooks for the reterritorialization of alternative futures” (14). The musical assemblages in the Live Earth assemblage also contain refrains that decode the axioms of capital. In the process of deterritorialization that these refrains initiate new maps, which recode alternative territories, are traced out according to new lines of territorialization. This entails that it is indeed possible for new, eco-revolutionary bodies to constitute themselves through the encounters and connections forged between the various assemblages brought together in the Live Earth spectacular event.
According to Deleuze and Guattari, music is the “adventure of the refrain” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 302, 303). The experimental and adventurous movement of the refrain in musical assemblages is identified in the “way music lapses back into a refrain (in our head, in the pseudo probe-heads of TV and radio . . . ); the way it lays hold of the refrain, makes it more and more sober, reduced to a few notes, then takes it down to a creative line [of flight] that is so much richer, no origin or end of which is in sight” (302, 303). The refrain is defined as a territory and as territorializing. At the same time however, the refrain can be “carried away in a moving block that draws a transversal across all coordinates” (302). The refrain in music is thus an integral component in a spectacular musical assemblage. The refrain is a “rhythmic pattern that serves to mark a point of stability in a field of chaos” (Murphy and Smith 3). There are many different kinds of refrains that serve very diverse purposes. Pop music is only one form of refrain but it shares one key axiom with all other refrains. All refrains involve the “spatiotemporal delineation and organization of territor[ies]” (3). This territory is not identified as the source of the refrain in popular music; instead, the territory of the refrain is constituted in the middle of the song. As such, the “reterritorializing and deterritorializing potential of music” is also found in the middle of a musical assemblage (3). According to Deleuze and Guattari’s framework this also means that the “innovative expression precedes and constitutes the subject rather than issuing from that subject as an after-effect” (Murphy and Smith 7). The subject thus only exists within and beside its expressive self: “it is in the middle of everything and open to discontinuous variation, like a refrain” (7,8).

The voice in music is conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari according to terms entirely different than those set by the tradition of psychoanalysis. For psychoanalysis the voice “functions like the gaze to address and thus subjectify individuals, to interpellate them as the
[imperfect] subjects of a symbolic order” (Murphy and Smith 20). The recorded voice constitutes a Lacanian “acoustic mirror” in which the “subject (mis)recognizes him/herself” and becomes lost in a maze of narcissism (20). For Deleuze and Guattari, however, music is a creative, innovative, and productive force rather than a representational model of a homogenous society. In place of the psychoanalytical “model of dialectical negativity that is incapable of escaping its own constitutive impasses” Deleuze and Guattari construct a “productivist [understanding of] unconsciousness that exceeds the representational model on all sides” (Murphy and Smith 20). Although the voice can delineate a territory it can also be caught by a line of flight that deterritorializes the existing territories. According to Murphy and Smith, the voice in popular music is often the “fixed point of thematic reterritorialization around which the sounds temporarily deterritorialize (through distortion, feedback, overdubbing)” (20, 21). In Deleuze and Guattari’s words, “as long as the voice is song, its main role is to ‘hold’ sound, it functions as a constant circumscribed on a note and accompanied by the instrument” (qtd. in Murphy and Smith 21). In other words, as the attention of the audience is captured by the voice “as a carrier of discursive content or meaning” the “impact of sound as sound or intensity” is “effac[ed]” by the reterritorialization of voice (Murphy and Smith 21). The voice, in this context “delimit[s] and preserve[s] the pre-established territories of the piece, both harmonically and conceptually” (21). The voice “addresses the listener, demands (mis)recognition and interpellates her/him as a docile subject precisely because of the power it gains by this process of harmonic/thematic reduplication or reterritorialization” (21). Murphy and Smith assert that this is particularly “true . . . when the voice sings or speaks of escape, of lines of flight out of its territorial constraints” (21). In other words, when the refrain of a song articulates a movement of flight it immediately betrays itself as a new line of territorialization that recodes a new territory.
In this territorial understanding of the voice Deleuze and Guattari align with not only the psychoanalytical model, but also with the theory of popular culture articulated by Adorno and the theory of interpellation constructed by Althusser.

Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of music as an assemblage, however, moves beyond the perspective of pop culture that is championed by Adorno. In Adorno’s understanding of pop culture, “mass culture in general, and popular music in particular, represent not merely the commodification of art, but, more insidiously, the systematic enforcement of the false universality of commodity relations and profit that rationalizes all difference . . . out of social life” (Murphy and Smith 6). Both art and music are part of a larger “culture industry” that is designed not only to manufacture obedient subjects, but also to control them by manipulating their desires (Adorno qtd. in Murphy and Smith 6). Adorno’s superficial view of popular music diverges considerably from Deleuze and Guattari’s perception of music in that Adorno’s perspective sees the refrain as a “repetitive verse” that debases subjects and imposes the order of the commodity onto society, whereas Deleuze and Guattari define the refrain according to the eternal return of difference (Murphy and Smith 6). Adorno claims that “what parades as progress in the culture industry, as the incessantly new which it offers up, remains the disguise for an eternal sameness” (Adorno 87). Deleuze and Guattari, however, contend that the eternal return of difference comes before and exists long after the codings that attempt to map homogeneity onto society. The lines of deterritorialization that cut across and through temporarily territorialized codes that inform the structures and organizations of society are the lines that continually constitute new forms of being, meaning, and identity. Even the voice is governed by lines of flight that can carry it away into the intensities of sound and timbre that escape the “privilege
(and limitation) of discursive meaning[s]” (Murphy and Smith 22). The deterritorialization of sound involves the escape of voice and instrument from the territories of a “stable harmonic structure,” a discursive formation, or a semiotic system (23). The reterritorialization of the voice and of music thus involves the reconstitution of new melodies and refrains that carry new codings of sound and meaning. Musical assemblages are always changing and transforming. They are always in motion, continually encountering and connecting with different bodies and systems of expression, and therefore always creating new blocks of becoming

There is a large body of literature that positions music as a “potent political tool” capable of “open[ing] up spaces of resistance and renewal;” (Fischlin 31,12) the suggestion that “music is powerful” is reinforced by centuries of censorship and the brutal repression of music and musicians by powerful state forces (Blecha 4-9). Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of pop music is thus supported by other writers that assert the inherent ability for musical assemblages to not only deterritorialize social mores, but also to constitute new lines of becoming. Music can be used to create communities and sustain them, as well as to deterritorialize existing social forms and modes of expression. Music can therefore reinscribe and aid in the constitution of an official unified identity; nevertheless, within certain contexts, music, as an entropic medium, can fracture the homogeneity of unified identities. In terms of political action, music can be positioned as a form of “political behavior” that has instrumental, expressive, “purposive, and effective dimensions,” (Pratt 4) as well as “symbolic power” that “resists any and all forms of reductive thinking” (Fischlin 37) and opens space for multiple lines of performance and discourse, as well as for multiple lines of interpretation and response. While “cultural domination
exists and has real effects,” music can nevertheless create “important points and moments of resistance and even supercession of dominant intentions” (Pratt 5).

Heble’s perception of music contends that music is “about the power to dream, about creating new structures of hope and momentum, new opportunities for developing a community of concern, as well as for radicalizing the commitment to preserving a record -- a kind of collective memory . . . of human suffering and survival” (238). Used as a medium of communication and a tool for community building, music can be “consciousness-raising” (Fischlin 29) and subsequently can be a powerful component of political protest processes. In the context of Live Earth, music can occasionally forward an alternative space of thought that escapes the official space dominated by an environmental assemblage that is disfigured by its attachment to technology. The gaze demanded of the spectator by the spectacular form is deterritorialized by this alternative space because a different kind of community - an eco-community - is brought into play as a universal aspiration. The emotive and symbolic power of music can break down normative assumptions, open space for the creation of an alternate community, and assist in the maintenance of that community. Music can also complicate dominant narratives and create spaces of “resistance and renewal;” (Pratt 8) consequently, music can be understood as containing multiple movements of thought that destabilize and deterritorialize hegemonic discursive and semiotic environmental regimes. That is not to say that music cannot also reinscribe the dominant discourse, or even work against the desired outcome of the program. As Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of assemblages suggests, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of a structure or an idea is not always a positive movement. In order to define the territorial boundaries and the lines of deterritorialization in
spectacular musical assemblages it is necessary to situate the discussion of music in the “broader social and institutional contexts (of production, distribution, and reception)” in which it is formed (Heble 236). In the context of Live Earth, music and spectacle cannot be understood solely as commodified forces of physical and psychological colonization; instead, they must be conceptualized as complicated and messy assemblages of territories, lines of flight, and movements of reterritorialization that interconnect with each other. The spectacular and musical commodities are used in unexpected ways and applied to novel, and sometimes revolutionary, situations. In Live Earth, the particular ecological situation, the singular spectacular event, or the specific local context is thus not ever wholly reducible to the dictates of capital or the dogma of power. The music of Blue King Brown is identifiable as a musical assemblage that has formed an alliance with spectacular assemblages and green assemblages. As such, the performance by Blue King Brown at Live Earth is a unique assemblage of territories that cuts across the official codings of the event to constitute a line of flight that escapes the official territory of Live Earth.

In Blue King Brown’s political agenda, music plays an “important role in cultivating resources of hope” (Heble 233). Believing in the power of music to “enable a recognition that social change is possible, to sound the possibility of different, and more hopeful, ways of doing things,” (235) Blue King Brown infuse their music not only with politically inflammatory verses that attack the bastions of the global empire, but also with battle charged refrains that declare war against oppression, poverty, and ecological degradation. In addition to this critique and this open confrontation Blue King Brown also articulate a firm belief in the ability for the world to change — politically, economically, and socially.
Opening the first of nine globally televised live concerts, in Sydney, Australia, Blue King Brown not only publicly identified a personal alliance with the struggle for indigenous land and water rights, but also performed songs that articulated these struggles and celebrated indigenous knowledge. The BBC reports: “Live Earth was ushered in with the jolting sound of Australia's scorched red centre - the howl of a didgeridoo in a traditional Aboriginal welcome. Then, in front of a sparse and still-gathering crowd, the band Blue King Brown took the stage, with black T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan ‘Say No to Nuclear Energy’. . . a contentious issue here, where the Howard government is looking into building nuclear power stations to meet the country's demand for energy” (Bryant). This symbolic act rejects dominant political programs that position nuclear energy as a safe and legitimate alternative to fossil fuel use and replaces the dominant meaning (that nuclear energy is good) with a minoritarian meaning that positions nuclear energy as toxic to all life forms and therefore an undesirable alternative. In the context of Live Earth, Blue King Brown forwarded an anti-nuclear position that demonstrates the “utopian potential of ecological politics” (Tokar 121). In this movement, there is a focus on developing a “cooperative, decentralized society powered by community-controlled alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind power” (121). Moreover, the anti-nuclear movement in the United States is “committed not only to the abolition of nuclear power, but [also] to non-violent direct action, a principle of “life before property,” and an internal form of organization that further embodies “ecological and decentralist ideals” (120). These ideals include an “activist style [of action], [an] attention to group process and interpersonal relationships, and [a] creative utopian orientation” (122). These principles form the abstracted universal aspirations of a movement that is directly opposed to the solidification of centralized power and economic
progress. Through messy and uncertain links with other resistance movements the universal aspirations of the anti-nuclear movement thus disperse a set of universal ideals that directly oppose the signifying regimes that code nuclear technology as a viable alternative to fossil fuels.

In Blue King Brown’s performance of “Water,” a critique of Western civilization cuts across the official representation of the climate crisis as a technological problem. Beginning with the phrase, “this is the story of the human race’s diminishing glory,” the song “Water” circulates a history of oppression and theft of not only land, but also of Aboriginal culture (“Water”). This alternative history is paired with a call to fight against these forms of oppression and to rebuild Indigenous cultural and ecological values. In the song, “Come and Check Your Head” Blue King Brown admonishes Live Earth spectators to reevaluate their beliefs about dominant political programs. The band’s “mission” is to communicate the historical and current struggles of all indigenous peoples, illustrate that cultural and spiritual connections to the land continue to persist despite two hundred years of colonization and assimilation strategies, and to gather active support for the fight against oppressive power, Western political mores, and corporate capitalism (Blue King Brown, “Activizm”). In the performance of “Water” Blue King Brown consequently sent out message of indigenous struggle and survival, as well as a call for respect, reconciliation, and action, to a global Live Earth audience.

In addition to the MSN Live Earth footage of Blue King Brown’s performance of “Water,” a music video of “Water,” “shot in just one day with . . . [for] $200,” is also available on Blue King Browns website and on YouTube (YouTube, “Water”). In this simple yet powerful video, the political lyrical content of the song is accompanied by visual images that draw attention to the stark poverty of Aboriginal peoples, as well as to the Aboriginal rights protest at North 199.
the 1982 Commonwealth Games. Addressing both the colonized and the colonizer from the confines of a barren room with peeling walls, the band exposes the impoverished living conditions of Aboriginal families. The video footage also contains scenes in which the band plays beside images projected against the peeling wall of a community center; these images illuminate powerful verses and show recordings of the 1982 protests (Blue King Brown, “Water”). Comments logged under the video indicate that Live Earth increased the visibility of Blue King Brown and their debut video “Water;” Blue King Brown can subsequently be viewed in this instance as co-opting the corporatized platform of Live Earth in order to circulate the universal aspirations of an internationally linked Indigenous cultural and land rights movements in an ecological context.

Blue King Brown’s identity is deeply defined by their social message which is firmly rooted in the political climate of the Aboriginal Rights Movement in Australia. There is a proud cultural identity within the band, an acknowledgement and respect for their own cultural roots, as well as those of others, and strong ties with their cultural community. However, the band is also influenced by a number of different styles of global music. Music, contrary to Adorno’s critique, is still a vibrant art form that thrives outside of the thin sounds of manufactured artists on pop-rock radio. The increased cultural traffic between different music forms ensures the constant motion of encounter and engagement. The way of life embraced by touring musicians inevitably creates a unique situation in which music is continuously transforming through its contact with other musical styles. An urban roots reggae band, Blue King Brown’s own sound and live energy has already deepened and matured since their Live Earth performance in 2007. Their recent tours have given their original sound a new edge. This new edge infuses both their music and message
with innovative intensities, which in turn enhance the affective power of both by qualitatively expanding the range of intensities available for consumption. Music, which is ultimately an authentic community creation, is inevitably imbued with particular cultural characteristics, as well as with universal aspirations that circulate inside hegemonic models of popular culture. As music is shared between artists new sounds and ideas are incorporated into existing musical forms and semiotic systems. Music is thus always reassembling new complexes of meaning and becoming new assemblages of intensities.

The differences between the official discourse of Live Earth and the unofficial discourses of the event are exemplified by the disjuncture between the figurehead of the Live Earth movement and the opening indie band. While there are similarities and crossovers between some of their aspirations and enunciations there are also significant differences between each of their discursive and semiotic territories in the Live Earth spectacular assemblage, as well as in their respective performances after Live Earth. Gore and Blue King Brown both travel on a global circuit outside of their appearances on the Live Earth stage. During these travels, both Gore and Blue King Brown performed in Victoria, British Columbia. Their appearances in Victoria continued the separate and interconnected discursive paths and semiotic systems initially opened in Live Earth. In Live Earth, as well as at the Victoria Conference Center, Gore speaks of technological innovation, sustainable development, and management of ecosystems and people. Gore speaks to existing systems, whereas Blue King Brown speak out against these systems. Blue King Brown speak of indigenous land and water rights, as well as of the right for self-determination. They question the domination of not only indigenous people, but of all people across the globe and refuse to ignore the conditions that oppress both people and the Earth.
Indeed, both of these issues are perceived as fundamentally intertwined. The separation between nature and culture is collapsed, implicitly casting culture as a force that can either produce cultural and ecological destruction or cultural and ecological regeneration.

Although there are technological similarities between the two shows, including the sound equipment used to amplify the message and the types of transportation used to physically reach a global audience, the performances delivered diverge on several different levels. Blue King Brown clearly lack the star power of Al Gore, whose political career and media platform drag behind him wherever he travels; nevertheless, the power of Blue King Brown’s performance and message far exceeded Gore’s. Whereas Gore trotted out a well-oiled pitch to British Columbia’s governing class, with a cursory nod to the students in the media-feed room one floor below the main conference room, Blue King Brown delivered a raw, face-to-face performance at a downtown night-club for Victoria Jazzfest audiences. Gore’s presentation was ultimately a staid plea for irrelevant changes to existing patterns of behavior; Blue King Brown’s performance, on the other hand, was a full-volume, direct challenge to existing systems of domination and colonization.

Gore’s visit was arranged by the University of Victoria’s School of Public Administration and held at The Fairmont Empress. Six hundred tickets for the live presentation and high tea with Al Gore were priced for the wealthier citizens of the city at two hundred dollars a piece. Despite the fact that the event was organized and sponsored by the University of Victoria the cost of admission separated university students from the live event by seating them in a different lecture hall with a close-circuit feed of Gore’s live presentation. These seats were available for a lesser cost. Blue King Brown, on the other hand, performed in a small club at a local music festival for
twenty-two dollars a head. There was no separation between the elite and the rest of society. Anyone could stroll off the street and hear Blue King Brown’s message, whereas access to Gore’s presentation was barred by elitist politics and pre-sold tickets.

More important, however, the performances by Blue King Brown and Gore constitute very different spectacular assemblages. While Blue King Brown clearly rehearse songs and perform the same songs at multiple venues, much like the rehearsed script of Gore’s presentation, there is an element of improvisation throughout Blue King Brown’s live show. Gore’s speech was flawlessly rehearsed, whereas Blue King Brown was loud and gritty in some instances and powerfully poetic in others. It is not just a performance, but a jam session; not just a concert, but a point of communication. It is a moment of encounter and connection that reaches forth and pulls the future into focus according to a new and different complex of understanding. For example, the manipulation of Natalie Pa’apa’a’s voice through the use of effects at key moments amplified the emotional impact of the already powerful political lyrics. This technological amplification of Blue King Brown’s lyrics expanded and increased the intensities of sensation in their music and therefore also the intensities that are available for the audience to consume. Unlike Gore’s presentation, which utilized a few staged attempts at humor and the representation of accessibility, Blue King Brown’s performance excited the senses and connected to the audience by inciting and expanding their desires for socioeco-revolutionary change. It was also clear that a large portion of the audience had pre-existing knowledge of the group and of their political message. The audience knew the lyrics to the songs that were already on the indie market and responded to Pa’apa’a’s attempts to engage them. There was a spontaneity and an energy that circulated between the band and the audience that cannot be fully captured on
television and which rarely exists in the recording studio. The raw energy, informal setting, and blatant political message of Blue King Brown’s performance engendered a visceral and emotional connection with the audience that expanded the potential for the creation of new eco-subjectivities. The constitution of a line of becoming-ecological through the intensities of sound, performance, and revolutionary discourse is also possible in this instance.

Blue King Brown’s performance attained levels of intensity that Gore just could not reach through his conservative environmental approach that is watered down by the use of dominant political and corporate channels and presentation strategies. Gore choose a lecture setting that elevated his status to a iconic position of responsible government leadership. Unfortunately, this type of presentation minimizes the levels of intensities available for consumption by restricting the presentation to controlled, factual, and legitimate systems of signification, thought, and action. Nonetheless, the alliance drawn between Gore and Blue King Brown in the context of Live Earth creates a site of productive friction that deterritorializes and reterritorializes mainstream discourses of techno-environmental action. The signifying regime of Gore’s official rhetoric is disrupted and transformed by its encounter with Blue King Brown’s unofficial semiotic system and musical discursive strategy. The Blue King Brown assemblage is also disrupted and transformed by its encounter with the universal aspirations and deceptions of Live Earth. Some of these transformations occur through processes of reterritorialization, while others operate according to a line of flight. What is most important here is that the multiple encounters between different assemblages of music and spectacle create new possibilities for green movements.
Multiplicities of Musical and Spectacular Rhizomes

Blue King Brown is not the only group at Live Earth that disseminates a critique of Western capitalist society through music, as well as in direct statements addressed to spectators. The band AFI stated before their performance at the Giants Stadium that “we as a civilization are actually destroying ourselves” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). In the lyrics of the Smashing Pumpkins hit song, “Bullet With Butterfly Wings,” the band pronounces that the “world is a vampire, sent to drain” (“Bullet With Butterfly Wings”). The dominant systems in which we live are thus exposed and critiqued by a multiplicity of musical and vocal territories that articulate a different perspective. The song “Driven to Tears,” performed by Sting and the Police, reiterates AFI’s critique on technological lines in the lyric “too many cameras, not enough food” (“Driven to Tears”). The diversion of resources for the development and production of image technology is directly juxtaposed against the poverty it perpetuates and ignores; as such, the impoverished material truth masked by the technocratic illusion of technological salvation forwarded by Live Earth is unmasked for all to hear. The song “Where is the Love,” which was performed by the Black Eyed Peas, fractures the illusory unity of Gore’s unlimited technotopia even further by reminding the audience that existing systems of hierarchical power and corporate trade result in violence, exploitation, and inequality. Australian artist Jack Johnson also performs a series of topical songs that extend a critique of capitalized society. In “Horizon Has Been Defeated,” Johnson proclaims that the “horizon has been defeated by the pirates of the new age” and “only animals with too many tools . . . can build all the junk that we sell” (“The Horizon Has Been Defeated”). The lyrics of “Inaudible Melodies” posit a future in which “solar power plastic plants” and “pretty pictures of things we ate” replace living plants (“Inaudible Melodies”). The
song “Gone” highlights the follies of over-consumption and “Inaudible Melodies” admonishes Live Earth spectators to “slow down” because they are “moving too fast” (“Inaudible Melodies”). These vocal refrains expose the negative social and ecological consequences of the economic, political, and cultural systems that dominant the global stage. AFI’s song, “The Missing Frame,” speaks about the connection between the absence of information and the principles of conspiracy; in the context of Live Earth, the meaning of the lyrics is imported into the context of the climate change debate. As Jack Johnson’s song “Staple It Together” suggests, corporate news “staple[s] it together and call[s] it bad weather” (“Staple It Together). AFI and Johnson both supply a critique of the political and corporate neglect and cover-up of the true extent of the impact of current economic and political policies on the earth, as well as of modern wo/man’s impact on ecological systems. Through these different performances and presentations, the cause of global warming is exposed within the spectacle of Live Earth as a consequence of Western production and consumption patterns. Capitalism cannot hide its material contradictions in this particular spectacle because the participants themselves continue to draw attention to the rejection of life that capital holds within itself. Furthermore, this critique is circulated across the globe and therefore encounters a wide variety of particular local situations. Each of these contexts introduces new shades of meaning to the critiques circulated by the unofficial discursive and semiotic assemblages of Live Earth. In this process it becomes evident that neither the performers nor the spectators are ignorant of the destructive effect that the dominant social, economic, and political systems of the last century have had on the earth and culture. The past is not erased by the present and the present cannot hide from itself. The world’s population has been born into and has lived through both wars and revolutions. As Toni
Collette contends in the “Children of the Revolution,” “you won’t fool the children of the revolution” (“Children of the Revolution”).

A number of other disconnected and unofficial responses to climate change emerge in the jumble of entropic messages disseminated by various musicians and presenters during the live broadcast of Live Earth. These responses clarify that the spectacular medium of live television cannot predict or prevent a guest from saying or doing something that has been excluded from the official position. For example, between set changes at the London concert, comedian Adam Spencer discussed the politics of climate change by advising the audience to “tell” the “next” person who “whines” about the price of gas or a traffic-jam to “fuck off” because “oil is obscenely cheap” in relation to its social and ecological costs (Live Earth, “Concerts”). Spencer also joked about rampaging through the streets of London and smashing the windows of corporate shops. Live Earth’s official pledges clearly advocate non-violent, legitimate methods of enacting social change; as such, the destructive vandalism directed at capital that is advocated by the comedian exists as an illegitimate, but nonetheless separate, mode of action. Despite the fact that the performers and presenters are interlocked within the arborescent structure of the integrated spectacle, they also implode the structure and the regulation of television does not succeed. This implosion occurs on many levels and fractures the unified official technocratic discourse of Live Earth. As Madonna contends, Live Earth is “not just about entertainment,” its about “starting a revolution” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). What form this revolution takes is ambiguous and therefore opens new possibilities for piecemeal social and ecological change.

Many presentations and performances circulate a discourse that celebrates the immanent possibility of change without restricting the definition of what forms this change might create.
One presenter quotes Margaret Mead and tells the global audience to “never doubt change” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). For Toni Collette, “this moment is golden, time frozen” and “anything is possible, everything is probable;” for the Smashing Pumpkins “today is the greatest day I have ever known” because it is a day that heralds change (“This Moment is Golden;” “Today”). The John Butler Trio tells spectators to “be the world you wanna see” (Live Earth, “Concerts”). These statements are not tied to specific definitions of what form this change must take. The ambiguity of these statements allows them to become disconnected from the official set of solutions proposed by the event; as a result, the possibility for other sets of solutions to be imagined and forwarded in different localities by a multiplicity of peoples is increased.

Other presenters and performers support already clearly defined forms of eco-action that are not included in the official discourse of Live Earth. It therefore necessarily entails that not all of the media stars that presented or performed for Live Earth were simply acting in order to fulfill some scripted order. Some performers, such as activist Jane Goodall and band AFI ascribed to eco-values prior to their involvement in Live Earth. These eco-values enter the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth and consequently break down the signified systems of meaning that trap the event into oppressive codes that ensure the perpetuation of existing systems. Although these values connect with the official set of Live Earth solutions they also represent a different system of action and thought in relation to the issue of climate change. For example, the band AFI does not abandon the issue of climate change to a mere critique; in their own words, “we know, we represent, we want to be a part of” the change in the world (Live Earth, “Concerts”). For AFI, the way to a less-destructive life includes eating vegan and vegetarian foods, recycling, and minimizing the use of cars. Jane Goodall, who has followed a
radical ecological trajectory over the course of her life, also presented at the Live Earth concert in New York. Goodall’s forty-seven year career in biology, primatology, and conservation is itself an assemblage of sensations, experiences, beliefs, and actions. In her encounter with Live Earth the spectacular assemblage is connected to her ecological philosophy and her way of life. Goodall’s previous connections, such as the foundational connections between Louis Leakey, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas, are also carried forward as lines of deterritorialization that fracture the technological focus of Live Earth. Rather than pointing to technology as the sole saviour of Live Earth, Goodall’s eclectic perceptions located the survival of life in the unpredictable and persistent mutations of natural evolution. These examples suggest, unlike the form of spectacle identified by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, that Live Earth contains lines of flight which pull away from structures that define the solutions to climate crisis in terms of consumer choices or technological innovations.

*Live Earth as an Internet Rhizome*

The connections made between the spectacular environmental assemblage and the rhizomatic multiplicities of the internet further fracture the power of the central signifiers that delineate the official signifying regime of Live Earth. Contrary to Debord’s definition of the spectacle, wherein the spectators are considered passive recipients of a code that is emitted by the center of power, the Live Earth spectacle not only encourages an active response from its viewers, it also provides a medium for these responses to be heard. A reaction is expected and invited by this particular spectacle; consequently, the spectacle of Live Earth proceeds with “interruptions,” “détours” itself, and is “infuse[d]” with the “disruptive and critical energy” of
Situationism (Puchner 9). Comments logged in zones specifically constructed to receive input from spectators critique, appropriate, modify, and add to the official tips and solutions offered by Live Earth. While it is evident that the terms of existing economic and political systems are preserved by some of the comments, it is also possible to identify movements that deterritorialize the ideas and actions of normative mainstream environmentalism.

For example, one blog posting by a spectator named Meghan outlines the forms of environmental action she ascribed to before Live Earth. These actions included using energy efficient appliances, growing an organic vegetable garden, consuming organic products, and supporting the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, and the Organic Consumers Organization. Meghan then lists a number of other actions that Live Earth inspired her to add to her daily repertoire. These actions include purchasing local food from farmer’s markets, using cloth diapers, reducing overall consumption, unplugging electronics, and turning off lights (Live Earth, “Blog”). Not all of the actions listed by Meghan escape the signifying signs of capital and power, but some do indeed constitute lines of flight that deterritorialize the demands of capital. For example, the use of cloth diapers cannot be returned to the dominant directives of consumption. Instead, the use of cloth diapers must be understood as an action that operates according to a very different set of principles than the commodity dictates of disposable diapers. Since diapers are arguably a necessary product the solution is not to stop using diapers, but rather to use a product that can be re-used over and over again. This simple, and very small, shift eliminates the massive waste generated by the disposable diaper industry without without forcing parents to go without a means of containing the waste their baby produces. The Live Earth website also provided a series of links to articles that question and explore the solutions proposed by the official
discourse of Live Earth. Some articles reject political desires to move toward the use of nuclear energy and support less toxic energy sources, such as wind or solar. Other articles expose the cons of alternative technologies, including solar panels, wind farms, bio-diesel fuels, and hybrid cars, while others discuss the differences between local organic foods and non-organic foods produced by corporations (Live Earth, “Green articles and photos”). These articles expand the meanings of Live Earth’s ‘green’ semiotic systems and discursive regimes. In this expansion both universal aspirations and local discourses are transformed. Furthermore, in these instances the Live Earth spectacle’s ties to capital are partially severed by its encounters and connections with the internet.

The centric domination of meaning in the event was fractured by the musical and spectacular assemblages within the spectacular event. In addition, these assemblages, and the Live Earth event itself, were detached from corporate control by the internet. Not only were a significant number of concert clips available free of charge on the MSN official Live Earth site, but the DVD that was later produced can also be downloaded for free at the Mininova bit-torrent site. If diligently searched for, many songs that were performed at Live Earth can also be found on various download sites. Links to the Live Earth short films were provided on the official Live Earth website for months after the 2007 concerts. A selection of performances are still available to watch on the Live Earth website. Some short films featured at Live Earth can also be found on YouTube. Free open access software programs, such as Unplug, can be downloaded for free and then used to disengage videos from their webpages. It is then possible to save these videos directly on the computer’s hard drive. The internet not only allows the circulation of material goods, including diverse products such as movies, television shows, documentaries, music,
software programs, and operating systems, free of charge, but it also enables the circulation and transformation of information and knowledge. A variety of semiotic, musical, and textual products can be downloaded, streamed, or used online. Masses of information can be accessed online in an instant. This means that there is a measure of free and open access to events, information, and programs through the internet. Some of this information or these products are of poor quality, insipid, and uninspired. However, some of the information and the products are intelligently designed, easily accessible, creative, and critically bent. The internet is crossed with both lines of territorialization and lines of flight. Furthermore, users or audiences browse the internet as though it is a limitless text that allows them to choose their own adventure. This suggests that a total colonization of society is not just unlikely, but impossible. There is only partial domination and fragmented change because the so-called masses are not an undifferentiated, uneducated, and unconscious group of easily manipulated isolated subjects. The multitude are, and always have been, a fragmented, messy, and critically productive multiplicity that can navigate the many semiotic and discursive signs circulating throughout the globe.

*Disrupting Semiotic Regimes: The Live Earth Short Films*

In between official presentations and musical sets Live Earth incorporated the screening of a number of short films that both reinforced and deterritorialized the territory of the environmental spectacle. The fragmentation of the official rhetoric of Live Earth is particularly evident in the multiplicity of short films that were featured throughout the spectacular Live Earth assemblage. Since we are discussing the lines of flight that run through the Live Earth spectacle and deterritorialize its official regime of signifying signs and discourses, we will only discuss
two short films that constitute movements, however brief, of escape from the official territory of the event. The short film “Sunny Day,” directed by Sophie Muller, deterritorializes the move to reproduce capitalism through the production of energy efficient appliances by redirecting the gaze of the spectator to a different kind of solution. Instead of advocating the application of so-called green technologies onto artificial machinic methods of drying clothes the video asks viewers to unplug their dryers and hang their clothes outside. The constant and persistent noise of thousands of dryers is replaced with the fresh movement of the wind and the silence of the light (Live Earth, “Green Videos”). The purely natural drying action that is effected by the sun and the wind is situated as superior to technological drying methods precisely because it is not reliant on industrialized manufacturing processes or the precepts of the consumption industry. Appliance manufacturers, sale outlets, and energy companies all stand to lose profits if consumers chose to hang their clothes in the sun instead of using a dryer. Although it could be argued that the string and clothes-peg companies benefit from this emphasis, it is hardly likely that this is the underlying intention of the video, or even that this is an unintentional reinscription of economic modes of interaction or political programs of power. Instead, the dominant social mores that govern the social practice of drying clothes in affluent countries are directly contested and a new (old) code of conduct is thrown into the cultural mix. A small, yet deterritorializing movement away from dominant consumption codes is consequently initiated. The distance this line of deterritorialization can travel depends on the specific interpretations of and responses to the video. Some spectators may ignore the call and continue to use their dryer in the middle of summer. Others may only use their dryers when the weather will not permit outdoor drying. A few may hang their clothes on a drying rack in their home instead of using a dryer. Still others
may dry their clothes outside all year, including in the middle of winter. The point is, this short film constitutes a line of flight that deterritorializes the official Live Earth admonishment to purchase energy efficient appliances. The universal aspiration to combat climate change through technological innovation is deterritorialized and brought down to a specific, localized, and non-technologically dependent mode of action.

Chel White’s short film, “Wind” connects an assemblage of image with a musical assemblage and a poetic assemblage. In doing so, White constructs a semiotic system that deterritorializes the official signifying regime of Live Earth. The different assemblages brought together in “Wind” are infused with White’s green perspective. This perspective is influenced by the universal environmental aspirations of Live Earth, yet at the same time the universal aspirations of Live Earth are transformed by White. White’s short film is named after the poem, “The Wind, One Brilliant Day,” written by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado. This poem forms the allegorical center of the film; however, the images and the music that are connected to the poem carry the meaning of the poem into an entirely different context that is still reminiscent of its original meaning. In the film’s imagery the wind is featured as the main character as it moves over the various landscapes that cover the earth. Using time-lapse sequences White constructs a fragmented story-line that follows the wind as it moves not only across mountains and plains, brushing across the living forms that grow out of the earth, but also across the cities and factories occupying the land, catching the smoke pouring out of smokestacks and carrying it across the sky. The classical musical assemblage that accompanies White’s short film sets the expressive tone of the film to a cascading rhythm that appears to draw the wind across the earth. The semiotic system that holds the poem together pulls the imagery and the music into a memory
of a vibrant, living, and life giving garden that is destroyed by the greed of progress. At the same time, the poem is pulled into the present in order to signify an entirely different meaning in an entirely different context. Literally, it is a poem that expresses sadness and a guilt for garden that has died from lack of care. The wind, which comes bearing the scent, and therefore the life, of another garden is met with a dead garden that has no scent to give. As a result, the wind takes with it the last vestiges of color and life leaving the garden barren and dormant (Live Earth, “Green Videos”). In the context of Live Earth it is not just a garden that has died, but rather entire tracts of land that sustain crucial ecosystems and essential plant and animal species. The science of ecology has, despite Debord’s rejection of scientific principles, at least revealed to humanity its own dependance and vulnerability. Unfettered industrial and technological progress comes with an unforgivable price that robs the rhythmic pattern of the wind of its purpose. In this short film the anthropomorphic center of the event is shifted to include a qualitatively different kind of agent. The wind is shown as a force that is capable of transforming landscapes, influencing the flow of water, and carrying either life or poison across the globe. Directly linked to the issue of climate change in Live Earth the film illuminates the importance of not only the wind, but also the air, and draws attention to the abuse of this powerful force. By displaying images of wind turbines the film also returns the spectator to the official framework of solutions manufactured by Live Earth; nonetheless, the film destabilizes the anthropocentric focus of the event by featuring the wind as a central force and affected party. Both “Wind” and “Sunny Day” feature a perception of alternative energy sources that does not rely on a technological means of harnessing these energy sources. The sun is used without the intervention of technologically engineered solar panels. The wind also functions as an unharmed force that can regenerate the
earth by dispersing life-giving elements across the globe. The signifying codes of the dominant aspirations of Live Earth are forced to contend with these lines of flight. In doing so, they are transformed. Furthermore, the signifying codes of Live Earth’s dominant aspirations are subject to additional transformations at the local level of receivership and interpretation.

The Fragmented Transformations of Live Earth

The transformation of Live Earth in the time since the 2007 concerts attests to the eternal return of difference rather than to the permanence of sameness. The spectacular Live Earth event identified its own mistakes and attempted to address its shortcomings in the concert planned for 2008. Only one concert in India was scheduled for the second event, instead of nine official concerts on seven different continents and hundreds of unofficial concerts across the globe. Live Earth organizers thus attempted to reduce the primary sites of waste that undermined the first event by reducing the amount of live spectators, performers, and venues. This concert was cancelled by organizers when the political instability of the region reached a critical point. This political event also impacted the future decisions of Live Earth. Currently, Live Earth is promoting a “Dow Live Earth Run For Water” on April 18, 2010 on their website. This run will “consist of a series of 6 km run/walks” that will occur over a twenty-four hour period in “countries around the world” (Live Earth, “Run for Water”). This run/walk is intended to simulate the distance that “many women and children walk every day to secure water” (Live Earth, “Run for Water”). In this simulation, of course, the exact conditions that women and children face in the challenge to acquire water are not replicated; indeed, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s framework, these conditions could never be identically replicated. This
spectacular run/walk also intends to feature concerts and water education activities designed to “help solve the water crisis” (Live Earth, “Run for Water”). The 2010 Live Earth spectacle is defined by a very different set of universal aspirations and therefore also by a different set of strategies. It is consequently evident that in the years since the first event Live Earth has transformed. Furthermore, new cities and new groups are connecting with the original Live Earth movement for the 2010 Live Earth spectacle, thereby expanding the potential possibilities of this very different spectacular Live Earth event. In other words, there is a proliferation of connections and encounters in the spectacular Live Earth events. These encounters and connections in turn engender a proliferation of both macromultiplicities and micromultiplicities that transform the meanings of what it means to be a cultural subject in an ecological world.
Conclusions

The Live Earth Spectacle as Assemblages of Territories and Lines of Flight

The conclusions of this analysis subsequently suggest that the spectacle operates in a much less determinate manner than Debord ultimately claims. Gore uses the spectacle to unify an environmental movement. As such, a critique of Live Earth through a Debordian lens, wherein the movement is captured by an official rhetorical gesture that unifies the Live Earth environmental movement under clear divisible boundaries, is possible. Yet a critique of Debord is also possible: the language of “generalized separation” constructed by Debord (Society of the Spectacle 12) cannot fully define the differences in the lived realities of the participants, which includes presenters, musicians, vendors, production staff, and spectators, nor can it identify the differences in the actions Live Earth inspired people to pursue. Although Debord’s theory contains many useful insights into the forms of territorialization or capture embedded within spectacular assemblages, I believe a recoverable political potential exists within a slightly more indeterminate set of intentions and effects. The claim set forth is, as Debord recognized but failed to privilege, that the contemporary spectacle contains more than just one line of discourse, one idea, or one economically infused representation; the spectacle can be understood more accurately as being structured out of alliances between creative artists, as well as out of multiple images, ideas, and lines of discourse, and as such, as continually decoding and recoding both meanings and bodies. The mainstream environmentalism of the event constitutes a spectacle. It is universalizing, hegemonic, and reductive. However, within the environmental spectacle there exist a multiplicity of radical green perspectives that constitute lines of flight. These lines cut
across the official unity of the event. Live Earth is a cultural text in which we can see not only the absorption and disarmament of green countercultures by mainstream culture, but also the transformation of mainstream values by green countercultures. Fragmented, yet fundamental changes to mainstream ideas and practices, are an inevitable consequence of encounters and connections between mainstream cultures and green countercultures. Furthermore, the masses are themselves continually in contestation and contesting meaning.

The spectacle is most significantly ruptured at the location wherein connections are forged between social justice movements and radical green movements. The connections made between these two discourses and sign systems indicate a possible line of flight that escapes the dominant discourse of environmental imperialism that visibly marks Live Earth. In terms of the distinctly material consequences of a spectacular event such as Live Earth, it is clear that the material necessities of the event most certainly reinscribe the exploitations of technology, science, and capital. Yet the event does not only reproduce these arborescent forms, it also produces new forms, both rhizomatic and arborescent, which move away from dominant systems of signification that determine current social patterns of interaction, identities, and forms of power. For Deleuze and Guattari resistance is rhizomatic. This entails that green resistance returns at different times in different localities. This also means that there is a proliferation of ecological rhizomes even within the spectacular assemblage. These rhizomes cannot be silenced. Instead, they always return. They reject the channels created by arborescent political forms and instead operate underground in grassroots organizations and community coalitions. The spectacular Live Earth event is thus ambiguous in its success. In many instances, a reductive form of environmentalism that protects dominant capitalist, technological, scientific, and
development interests is emitted and circulated by the event. However, the alliances made between social justice movements and radical green perspectives represent a becoming-ecological that is far more productive than the diluted theories of conservation, management, stewardship, and green consumerism that pervade mainstream environmental discourses. Alliances made between different environmental organizations for an event such as Live Earth forward a space of encounter and connection that escapes the domination of one particular environmental program, as well as the domination of economic politics. Debord’s theory is found lacking in that it reduces the potential of the spectacle to introduce and establish more open and flexible ways of understanding; the analysis of Live Earth suggests that the spectacle can forward a space of fricative encounter and alliance that opens potential for “piecemeal social change” (Patton 7).

Change does not happen on a total basis, but rather on an fragmented terms. Through collaborations and alliances between the universal and the particular the spectacular assemblage of Live Earth fosters the conditions of productive connection. Indeed, the site of engagement between the universal rhetoric and the particular situation is fraught with a productive friction that incites change. Each moment in which the universal and the particular engage with each other new assemblages of possibilities, both creative and destructive, are produced. With these changes and new possibilities identities shift and more new conditions of possibility emerge. As an assemblage of coalitions between different groups and individuals Live Earth is a site of friction, wherein official semiotic discursive formations - universalisms - rub up against unofficial discourses - localized contexts and voices - to create new meanings and new possibilities. Although it is searingly evident that capitalism has mastered the technique of co-
opting and subsuming that which seeks to resist it, in this process capital itself is forced to make concessions and bend to the will of resistance. Capital cannot subsume the Other without also changing. The greening of government and corporate forces does indeed indicate a co-optation of green values by centric forces of signification, yet as Tsing’s argument allows, at the same time it also indicates a movement away from the purely exploitative and colonizing processes of contemporary forms of traditional capitalism. Capitalism is forced to minimize waste and remove chemicals or other polluting products from the market. The market monopoly of fossil fuel is disrupted by the public desire for alternative forms of fuel or transportation. The forms of agriculture solidified after the Green Revolution are critiqued and forced to change, even if only incrementally, by the principles of the continually expanding green movement. The molar cannot be abolished, but it can mutate and transform until what was is no longer recognizable and the past becomes a shadow that only haunts the future instead of controlling it. New lines of flight overcome the hegemonic hold of forgotten planes of consistency. New life, new hope, and new conceptualizations of freedom emerge in the ashes of friction. With these also emerge new forms of domination and oppression; nevertheless, the universal claims of the economy and the political world do not control the minds of subjects. Instead, subjects engage with the universal and force it to bend as it forces them to bend. Indeed, that which cannot stay in motion cannot sustain itself. To claim, as Debord does, that this motion is both an autonomous and determinate force of colonization is to reduce all life and all movement to a subsidiary and derivative category of an originary Form of the real that does not exist. The analysis of Live Earth forwarded in this thesis moves beyond Debord’s theory of spectacular society in order to
reconceptualize the Live Earth spectacle as a spectacular assemblage that involves both
determinant and indeterminant factors.73

Change is not certain, but neither is it fully uncertain. For every new coding there are
corresponding possibilities for new movements of deterritorialization. Each new arborescent
form of spectacular production thus asserts itself as a new site of revolution. For Deleuze and
Guattari, revolution is driven by an abstract machine of desire that seeks to qualitatively expand
and increase the intensities available for consumption. Any movement that moves away from
dominant codes of discourse, subjectivity, or organization is a revolutionary movement because
they are movements that qualitatively increase the kinds of being or knowing that are available
for all of society to consume. Revolutionary desire is present in all situations and encounters and
therefore accessible by anyone at anytime. As such, in every moment in time and in every
particular situation there is always a possibility for fragmented change. The spectacular
assemblage of Live Earth is therefore both a force of territorialization and a force of
deterritorialization. Furthermore, each additional encounter that occurs between the assembled
event and particular local situations qualitatively expands the forces of territorialization and
deterritorialization initiated by the specific spectacular event. Ecological revolution is therefore
always both present and possible, even within the signifying regime of a spectacular
environmental assemblage such as Live Earth. Contrary to Debord’s theoretical position, a site of
capture is simultaneously a site of revolution.
Modeled after the Live Aid concerts and reaching for the spirit of Woodstock, the spectacle of Live Earth was crafted to initiate “a mass movement to respond to the climate crisis” (United Nations) by operating as a “communication platform” for the official mission of S.O.S.: “to empower individuals to change their consumer behaviors and [to] motivate corporations and political leaders to enact decisive measures to combat climate change” (Live Earth, “S.O.S.”).

Premier Gordon Campbell and Mayor Alan Lowe.

Live Earth is only one particular sector of action that Gore is currently engaged in: Live Earth was preceded by the video, book, and presentation entitled *An Inconvenient Truth*. It was also shadowed by Gore’s ongoing lectures, as well as by a number of other coordinated offensives into popular culture, such as music videos by Madonna, Angelines Kidjo and Joss Stone, short films airing at independent film festivals, S.O.S. television advertisements, and the American “We” campaign.

Official Live Earth concerts were held in Australia, Brazil, the United States, England, China, South Africa, and Germany. Special events in Japan, Antarctica, the United States, and Rome were also aired as part of the event. Friends of Live Earth concerts were held in a diversity of locations, including Canada, India, Netherlands, Portugal, Indonesia, Switzerland, Maldives, Singapore, and the United States.

1). “Demand that my country join an international treaty within the next two years that cuts global warming pollution by 90 percent in developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth. 2). Take personal action to help solve the climate crises by reducing my own C02 pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become “carbon neutral”. 3). Fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store the C02. 4). Work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship, and means of transportation. 5). Fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal. 6). Plant new trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests. 7). Buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crises and building a sustainable, just and prosperous world for the 21st century” (Live Earth, “Pledges”).

Geldoff is one of the primary forces behind the Live Aid concerts. According to thestar.com., Geldoff “called the concerts a ‘waste of time’ because they had no specific goals for politicians or corporations” (thestar.com).

Debord relies heavily on the minority strain of Marxism developed by George Lukacs; other important thinkers that influenced Debord’s writings include Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Benjamin.

Romanticism

In Debord’s framework, symbolic exchange is strictly a form of economic exchange.

Germany began issuing “regular broadcasts [by] 1935,” four years before the United States began to air their own broadcasts. Central to the development the concentrated spectacle was Goebbels’ “innovative and synergetic use of every available medium, especially sound/image propaganda” (Crary 105).

These halls were designed to hold between 40 and 400 spectators (Crary 104).

Revolutionary slogans disseminated by Situationists included the following phrases: “Revolution is not showing life to people, but making them live;” “Never Work Again;” “Live Without Dead Time;” and “Take your Dreams for Reality” (angelfire.com 3). The familiar environmental catch-phrase “Think Globally, Act Locally” is also an original Situationist slogan (angelfire.com 3).

According to Barthes’ development of Saussure’s theory of semiotics, discursive formations also contain semiotic regimes that exercise a hegemony over the production and circulation of images and signs.


The primary materials used in this analysis are the Live Earth website and the Live Earth DVD.
The amygdala controls memory processes and the hippocampus controls the brain’s “contextualization system” (Gore, *Assault on Reason* 25).

The binary between the authentic and the false is distinctly inspired by a Debordian lens. The term "authentic," in this instance, utilizes the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity that governs Debord's understanding of both spectacle and society. The use of the “authentic” is an intentional binary set up in this chapter to underscore what Debord's argument means in relation to the environmental movement. At the same time, this language of authenticity exposes the problematic relationship between Debord’s understanding of spectacular society and contemporary interpretations of ecological movements. The language of authenticity that infuses Chapter Two is bound to a Debordian logic of authenticity that will be challenged in the second half of this thesis. In Chapter 3, I construct a brief critique of Debord precisely because he privileges this binary between the authentic and the inauthentic. Deleuze and Guattari offer a framework through which to understand not only the environmental spectacle, but also ecological revolution in a manner that is not bound to a problematic understanding of authenticity.

Nonetheless, Gore also contends that these same communication networks are capable of inciting the public into acting in a revolutionary manner.

These organizations are listed as official “International NGO Partners” of Live Earth (Live Earth, “Partners”).

Gore’s 1992 Global Marshall Plan highlights five main courses of (non)action that should be implemented on an international scale: the “stabilization of world populations;” the “rapid creation and development of environmentally appropriate technologies;” a complementary reworking of “economic ‘rules’ . . . by which we measure the impact of our decisions on the environment;” the “negotiation and approval of a new generation of international agreements;” and the “establishment of a cooperative plan for educating the world’s citizens about our global environment” (305, 306).

I personally agree with a critique that position Western economic and political development as a negative force of capture, colonization, and exploitation.

1). Demand that my country join an international treaty within the next two years that cuts global warming pollution by 90 percent in developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth. 2). Take personal action to help solve the climate crises by reducing my own C02 pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become “carbon neutral”. 3). Fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store the C02. 4). Work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship, and means of transportation. 5). Fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal. 6). Plant new trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests. 7). Buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crises and building a sustainable, just and prosperous world for the 21st century. (Live Earth, “Pledges”).

An undeniably ironic moment.

Many of whom came to the Live Earth concerts specifically to see Bon Jovi perform.

1) The product must be a “quality” product. 2) The material sources for the product must meet “environmental sustainability” standards. 3) The products must be “ethically manufactured.” 4). The product must contain “post-consumer recycled materials.” 5) The manufacturing and distribution of the product must minimize waste (Live Earth, “Merchandise”).

According to Shellie and Michael Lackman, “chemically manufactured bamboo fiber[s]” dominate the marketplace. The more eco-friendly mechanically manufactured bamboo linen is much less prevalent.
In this strategy “greenhouse gas emissions are capped and then markets are used to allocate the emissions among the group of regulated sources. The idea is to allow market mechanisms to drive industrial and commercial processes in the direction of low emissions or less “carbon intensive” approaches than are used when there is no cost to emitting carbon dioxide and other GHGs into the atmosphere. Since GHG mitigation projects generate credits, this approach can be used to finance carbon reduction schemes between trading partners and around the world. One Carbon Credit is equal to one ton of Carbon” (wikipedia).

Carbon offsets pertain to the purchasing of carbon credits. A “carbon offset is a financial instrument aimed at a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon offsets are measured in metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO2e) and may represent six primary categories of greenhouse gases. One carbon offset represents the reduction of one metric ton of carbon dioxide or its equivalent in other greenhouse gases. There are two markets for carbon offsets. In the larger, compliance market, companies, governments, or other entities buy carbon offsets in order to comply with caps on the total amount of carbon dioxide they are allowed to emit. In 2006, about $5.5 billion of carbon offsets were purchased in the compliance market, representing about 1.6 billion metric tons of CO2e reductions. In the much smaller, voluntary market, individuals, companies, or governments purchase carbon offsets to mitigate their own greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, electricity use, and other sources. For example, an individual might purchase carbon offsets to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions caused by personal air travel” (wikipedia).

In Australia, Angela Bishop advocated “100% carbon neutral” schemes; Chris Butler and other presenters reinforce and repeat the catch phrase: “reduce carbon dioxide emissions; offset the rest” (Live Earth, “Concerts”).

This dialectical quality in Debord’s text is later subsumed by his theory of the integrated spectacle.

Production, shed of its mindless repetition and homogeneity, could also be defined as an act of creativity. Consumption is arguably necessary for the continuation of an existence. Production and consumption have both a positive and a negative side. Or more accurately, production and consumption are assembled into ultimately ambiguous forms of signification.

This failure of totality is evident in all the different critical positions taken by scholars and activists. The mere existence of disagreement and contention over meaning signifies a multiplicity of voices in spite of linguistic or social mores that inform dominant political and public thought. Whether this multiplicity can be original or authentic is another question. Perhaps original can only be the mutated and transformed reproduction of a confusion of what preceded the present.

By these points I mean to include each subject’s familial structure and ideological orientation, cultural heritage, geographical setting, class distinctions, sexual orientation, past histories, future aspirations, and group affiliations.

Live Earth also participated in this discourse of civic duty by officially advocating the self-governance of consumption practices and carbon output. The ecological disaster is thus rendered an individual responsibility instead of a cultural, political, or economic responsibility. However, some of the musical assemblages within the event circulated a critique of hegemonic cultural, political, and economic systems, thereby returning responsibility to these systems.

Italics removed from the word ‘universal’ and added to the word ‘aspiration.’

Tsing is not directly challenging Debord herself. Tsing is specifically refuting the idea that the universal is a homogenizing force that cannot be disputed or disrupted.

With both positive and negative connotations.

Italics added.
It is important to note that in this instance ecological costs outweigh fiscal costs to the extent that the ecological costs of the event require expenditures beyond that of typical concert budgets. In other words, in this case the monetary costs of implementing certain environmental standards increases. As such, the event can no longer be classified as simply reproducing itself in order to produce a surplus of wealth for a select few. Instead, the health of the earth, not just of the people, and especially not the health of the economy, is established as the measuring stick against which to apply action.

These media affiliates embedded correspondents in different Live Earth locations and provided running commentaries on the event. These affiliates temporarily latched onto the event and exploited it for a story and ratings.

Including Jane Goodall.

Along with Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard.

Defined as “expansive” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 33).

Defined as “closer to the intensive” (33).

These are coded and therefore divisible multiplicities, such as numbers or space.

1) There are assemblages defined as “extensive, molar multiplicities that are divisible, unifiable, totalizable and organizable; conscious or preconscious” (Patton 42). 2) The other kind of assemblage is defined as “molecular, intensive multiplicities that are not unifiable or totalizable and that do not divide without changing in nature” (42). These are “libidinal [and] unconscious” rhizomatic assemblages (42).

Assemblages are “produced in the strata,” yet they are fundamentally different from the strata because they “operate in zones where milieus become decoded: they begin by extracting a territory from the milieus” (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 503). Indeed, “every assemblage is basically territorial,” yet at the same time territories also belong to the strata (503).

In “The Confessions of the Flesh” Foucault defines the apparatus as a “thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault). Foucault is interested in the “nature of the connections that can exist between these heterogenous elements” (Foucault). This entails that a “particular discourse can figure at one time as the program of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely” (Foucault).

Lambert discusses Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the attribute in relation to the sentence “the tree greens” (“Expression”34). In this context the sense of color is involved as a “pure event” of natural growth (34). The attribute is the verb (to green) of the thing (the tree) or the “event that is expressed by this verb” (34). In this example, “greening does not exist outside the proposition that expresses it” (34). The statement and the body are brought together through expression, yet at the same time they “continue to remain distinct from each other” (34). This process does not produce a “circular” logic to explain the social, but rather supports an understanding of difference that “subsists … in the proposition and on the surface of things” (34). In relation to the green movement and the Live Earth event, it is possible to stretch this example into a different context. Let us take the greening of capitalism as a point of departure. Although there is no pure event of natural growth, the attribute of the thing (capitalism) is the verb (to green) or the event that is expressed by this verb. The greening of capitalism does not exist outside of the statement that expresses it. Although the proposition and the body are connected through expression they remain distinct from one another. There is thus always a difference between the statement and the body; furthermore, the in-between space created between the two is a space of extra-being that introduces a new state of being.

Language itself is determined by the abstract machine of desire that exists within it and directs it (Lambert, “Expression” 38).
Sense is the extra-being that expresses the relation between propositions and things. This relation “does not exist outside the genesis of expression” (Lambert, “Expression” 34). Sense is defined as the “expressible” or the “expressed in a proposition” (34). It is also the “attribute of the state of affairs” (34). The sense expresses the “event of sense itself as a frontier that runs between propositions and things, statements and bodies” (34). This “frontier of sense does not pass between event and language or the world and the state of things” (34). Instead, it “occurs on both sides at one and at the same time, distinguished itself from the sense that occurs or manifests itself within each order” (34). Every time sense “distinguishes itself from the sense of proposition and the sense that belongs to the world of objects . . . [a] paradoxical difference appear[s]” (34). This difference is defined as the “sense of sense itself” (34).

Patton uses the example of the conjugation of teacher and student. The alliance between the two leaves both empowered; “power to enhance the power of the other” (69).

According to Patton’s explanation, “ego formation and the constitution of subjects involve a historically specific fixation of desire, brought about by the action of social codes, family structures and behavior towards the child” (71).

The processes of subjectification and becoming will be covered in more detail in the section that explores Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the regime of signs.

For example, a social contract involves the “mutual reinforcement of powers” that allows the “formation of a new and more complex body” (80). A symbiotic relationship is a becoming; or rather, it is a “double-becoming which involves real interaction between the two parties” (79).

Becoming-woman is a particularly important form of becoming because all other becomings “begin with and pass through becoming-woman” (Patton 81). Becoming-woman is prioritized on account of the “fundamental role of the domination of women by men in relation to the differential assignment of power and affect to the sexes” (81). This site of domination and differential power is a primary site of interaction between molar codes and molecular becomings that must be further deterritorialized in order to enable other kinds of becoming. This is not a temporal primacy that requires women to pass through becoming-other before anyone else can, for women themselves must become woman. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari assert that this is a “condition of the becoming-women of all” (81). This entails that the category of woman is in itself not a revolutionary category, but rather a site of divergence from the dominant code that can be further deterritorialized.

From this process the “speaking subject,” or the “subject of enunciation” emerges from the processes of “individuation,” wherein the “point of subjectification” serves as the point of departure for the formation of identity (Maclean). The speaking subject then “reconstitutes itself through a process of doubling as the ‘subject of the statement’” (Maclean). The subject of the statement is the “self that is talked about rather than talking” (Maclean). Doubling back is defined by Maclean as the process by while the “forces of the environment are reinstalled as forces of the interior, thereby creating an interior/exterior duality” (Maclean).

The abstract machine acts like a software program which turns the hardware assemblage into a “kind of technical machine” (Patton 45).

Tokar identifies social ecology, ecofeminism, bioregionalism, and deep ecology as sites of ecological radicalism.

These ecological returns include wetland restoration, forest replantation, and biodiversity maintenance; clean water, pure air, healthy forests, and thriving populations are the dominant concerns of the green movement.

Murphy and Smith discuss the processes of becoming-perceptible and becoming-imperceptible in music, as well as what it means to constitute territories and lines of flight instrumentally. As this kind of deterritorialization and reterritorialization is at the edges of the primary focus of this paper it is necessary to skip over the particular details that define the ways that music is always disassembling and reassembling sound.

Entropic message: A difficult to decode, unconventional message that requires a more active receiver. Redundant message: an easily decoded, conventional message that can be understood by a passive listener (Vivian and Maurin).
I don't know where to stand, up on the mountain or down in the sand,  
Cause I like being way up high, said I like being up but I don't know why,  
But up here I can see the walls built by man to divide us all,  
They've been making war and deny us peace,  
They took away the land and then they brought disease

(Chorus)  
Those white men who've got the key to black man's identity  
And those lands they were s'possed to be forever.  
They got no heart, they got no right  
And if you decide to fight, please know that we can fight together!  
We'll be the water, water, water  
We'll be the water for their fire (water for their fire) (repeat couplet)

They have the tendency to put in their pockets everything they see,  
They've been taking lands all across the globe  
And writing down their name on every rock and stone.  
But it aint no mystery, they're keeping the children from their ancestry  
They lock them out of their sacred ground  
Well, one day I'm gonna see them pull those fences down

(Chorus)

Now, our history is a shame to me but I still got faith in humanity,  
Can we swap back all the wrongs for rights  
And let the people walk free every day and night, cause  
Each nation has their own piece of earth that they call their home,  
It's a point of reference to identify  
So if you don't know where you come from, you know why. (It's those)

(Chorus). (Blue King Brown “Water”)

As part of my research I attended both Al Gore’s presentation and Blue King Brown’s concert.

These infrastructure needs are still environmentally damaging and perpetuate the music industry and the economy in general through the sale of records or dvds, the production of shows, and the use of international transportation methods. Nonetheless, it is not possible to reduce performance and music to purely economic ideals.

In “Where Is the Love” the Black Eye Peas ask “what’s wrong with the world . . . people killin’, people dyin’/children hurt and you hear them cryin’” (“Where is the Love”).

Natural evolution would occur according to a Deleuzian/ Guattarian understanding of transformation and mutation. Unlike theories of progressive evolution, such as Debord’s, Deleuze and Guattari’s framework allows for productive chaos, fricative relations, and indeterminant conditions.

Since we did not own a dryer and did not have electricity in the house where I grew up this was the way my family dried clothes until 1996. I was in charge of the laundry and I can clearly remember pulling stiffly frozen pants and shirts off the laundry line and bringing them into the house to dry next to the fire.
The wind, one brilliant day, called to my soul with an odor of jasmine.

"In return for the odor of my jasmine, I'd like all the odor of your roses."

"I have no roses; all the flowers in my garden are dead."

"Well then, I'll take the withered petals and the yellow leaves and the waters of the fountain."

the wind left. And I wept. And I said to myself:
"What have you done with the garden that was entrusted to you?"
(Machado)

If you will recall, audience and performer transportation incurred the highest levels of waste for the event. The number of venues was a significant factor that influenced the number of people that drove or flew to the concerts.

The money raised by the Dow Live Earth Run for Water is earmarked for expenditures on sustainable water programs.

There are some limitations to using Deleuze and Guattari. Whereas Debord wrongly invested too much power in the factor of determinancy, Deleuze and Guattari overly invest in the idea of indeterminancy. Both positions leave no room for agency and no space for subjects to actively think against the social mores they are born into and educated in. Nonetheless, I am clearly out of space to include this particular arena of debate.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


<http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Obituary/debord.html>.


