

THE POTENTIAL OF LEAKS:  
MEDIATION, MATERIALITY, AND INCONTINENT DOMAINS

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## ABSTRACT

Leaks appear within and in between disciplines. While the vernacular implications of leaking tend to connote either the release of texts or, in a more literal sense, the escape of a fluid, the leak also embodies more poetic tendencies: rupture, release, and disclosure. Through the contours of mediation, materiality, and politics this dissertation traces the notion of “the leak” as both material and figurative actor. The leak is a difficult subject to account for—it eludes a specific discipline, its meaning is fluid, and its significance, always circumstantial, ranges from the entirely banal to matters of life and death. Considering the prevalence of leakiness in late modernity, I assert that the leak is a dynamic agent that allows us to trace the ways that actors are entangled. To these ends, I explore several instantiations of “leaking” in the realms of media, ecology, and politics to draw connections between seemingly disparate subjects. Despite leaks’ threatening consequences, they always mark a change, a transformation, a revelation. The leak becomes a means through which we can challenge ourselves to reconsider the (non)functionality of boundaries—an opening through which new possibilities occur, and imposed divisions are contested. However, the leak operates simultaneously as opportunity and threat—it is always a virtual agent, at once stagnant and free flowing. Belying its figurative possibilities, the materiality of the leak is central to this project. Material in both philosophical and Marxist senses, leaking imbricates matter and actors in constellations of relations that bear potential in helping us comprehend a wide range of concerns. It is to these ends that I argue leaks provide both effective and affective means for performing interdisciplinarity. This project insists that whether they take form as data, images, crude oil, bodily fluids, or slips of the tongue, leaks share the same origin in logics of containment. In interrogating these logics of containment, I

assert the potential in *letting leak*, a mode through which difference is not collapsed, but rather no longer policed.

## DEDICATION

*For those who have suffered within boundary spaces, while contesting and crossing borders, and in their resistance of barriers.*



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CHAPTER 1/  
Introduction

... *everything* “leaks”

Susan Buck-Morss,  
“Aesthetics and Anaesthetics”

### Defining the Leak

Ask yourself; what leaks?

In her work on “Sick Building Syndrome” Michelle Murphy qualifies *the building*, not in terms of what it *is*—but rather as something “made possible of *ands*” (2016, 12). Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of multiplicity, Murphy asks of the building “what are its *ands*?” and “what did its historical relations make possible?” (12). It is with this sentiment that I wish to explore the leak. The leak is not an individual thing, it is sets of relations—it cannot be alluded to as either a liquid *or* a pipe, a drip *or* a hole — it is, at once, liquid *and* pipe *and* drip *and* hole, amongst many other qualities and properties that together make up the leak. It is this condition of *ands* that comes to define the leak as an assemblage of actors that constitute relations, and it is these fluid sets of relationships, and what they make possible, that make up the subject of this work.

In taking the leak as my subject, I am attempting to account for it in as many instantiations as I can. This project is a messy one, spread across disciplines and sites, through varying media and materialities. There is no way to account for the first instance of leaking. Down to the cellular level, leaks have biological functions in the channels of cell walls. The traversing of membranes that underlies a host of biological processes makes, at least in some

sense, the condition of leaking indistinguishable from the condition of life itself. The question of whether intentional, or designed leaking can be considered leaking at all will be explored throughout this project, but for now, I ask the reader to at least entertain this possibility.

Besides a material biological significance, it is also important to account for the social production of meaning that *leaking* carries with it, which is where this genealogy of leaks begins. This approach to leaks is not only designed as being methodologically in line in with Michel Foucault's notion of the "history of the present," (1980) but, more simply, was inspired by the contemporary moment in which leaking appears to be particularly pervasive and perverse. To this I ask, from where do our contemporary notions and assumptions of leaking descend from? This question encourages an etymological exploration. In this chapter, language will be the first medium through which the leak is explored, but the rhetorical significance of the topic will not end here. Not only will this chapter outlay the meanings that have come to define *the leak* as we know it, but here I will also set forth how leaking/leaks/leakiness may help us to make meaning of the contemporary moment.

As a noun, a leak is defined as a fracture through which something enters or escapes. However, *leak* may not only refer to the site through which something seeps, but to the very substance that passes through (though we also call this *leakage*). As an adjective, *leaky* modifies a noun into something without the ability to contain. To leak, as a verb, is to put the leak into action, to set it forth, to cause the leak to occur. This vague description of the leak is broad enough to account for the meaning of the word over time, but this is not to imply that its meaning has remained fixed. This chapter refers to the leak in two instances. On one hand, I am discussing the word, or the signifier, that has come to signify the leak in language and thus culture, and on the other, I am speaking of the thing itself—the leak as a material, immediate

occurrence. These two instances are not necessarily exclusive of each other—as Martin Heidegger (1982) argues “the word makes the thing into a thing—it “bethings” the thing” (151). And while this lexical investigation of *leak* is important considering the interconnectedness of language and culture, I argue that the dynamic nature of the material leak exceeds what is conveyed by naming it as such.

The English word *leak* does not have a clear proximate source. Its adjective form appeared as “hlecc” in Old English, but has no recorded morphology in Middle English. When *leak* appeared in the sixteenth century as leck, leake, lek, and leke, it is thought to be the proximation of the Low German or Dutch word lek, denoting *deficiency*.<sup>1</sup> What we make of this word’s etymology depends on what we make of etymology itself. Christy Wampole (2016), in her exploration of *rootedness*, describes the twentieth century as a time of “etymological obsession” for continental Europe (213). As a period occupied by questions of origin, the search for the original meanings of words took varying forms, as did the critiques leveraged against these etymological pursuits.<sup>2</sup> My intention in drawing on how the word *leak* made its way into language is not to make a claim of any absolute truth in the meaning of the word, but rather as a method for engaging with the genealogy of the concept in order to understand how we make meaning of it in the present.

Classically, the Germanic connotation of *leak* has been negative. To leak implies a breach, with the first noted English uses often relating to naval contexts.<sup>3</sup> Whether something

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1. See "leak, n." in OED Online

2. See Wampole (2016), chapter 6 “Etymology and Essence: The Primeval Power of Word Roots” for a detailed account of these arguments.

3. See, for example, *Naval Accounts & Inventories of King Henry VII* (Oppenheim 1896) a reprinting of the receipts and accounts in the institution and maintenance of the British Navy 1485–1488. The text notes services rendered in 1458 for “the stopping of sundrie lekes” (25).

leaks in, or leaks out, an object's leakiness implies a deficit in its utility. The same implication holds for the concept's meaning in Latin. The adjective *futilis* notes an object's brokenness. The association between *futilis* and *leaky* appears in Isidore de Seville's *Etymologiae* from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century:

Worthless (*futilis*; lit. "leaky"), "vain, useless, a chatterbox"; the term has a transferred sense from 'pottery (*fictilis*) vessels' that are empty and leaky and don't hold what you put into them.<sup>4</sup> (Isidore de Seville, 219)

*Futilis* is by no means the only way to refer to an object's leakiness in Latin,<sup>5</sup> but the term's material relation to the condition of leaking (*futilis* being from *fud-* or *fundere*—to pour out, not to mention Saint Isidore's use of the leaky vessel metaphor in explaining the term) and the figurative description of something with no value<sup>6</sup> (Barney's choice translation of *futilis* into *worthless*) further entrenches the negative connotations of words denoting *leak*. However, in noting the action of leaking (that is, *leak* in its verb form), the exclusively negative connotation is not necessarily apparent—rather, to flee, *fugĕre*, forms the basis of the verb meaning "to leak" in the Romance languages. In descending from *fugĕre*,<sup>7</sup> I argue that leaking takes on a certain semantic openness in these particular non-Germanic languages where the term can shift meaning between positive and negative connotations.

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4. This translation from Barney et al. is based on the 1911 Latin edition of the text, which reads: "Futilis, vanus, superfluus, loquax. Et est metaphora a vasis fictilibus, quae cassa et rimosa non tenent quae inieceris" (Isidore de Seville, trans. Wallace Martin Lindsay 1911).

5. In several translations of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the damaged vessel is described as "leaky" based on the phrase "gemuit sub pondere cumbasutilis et multam accepit rimosa paludem" (Virgil 1872, 475–476) — *rimosa*, "full of cracks and fissures" (Morwood 2005), being translated as leaky. Also, A.S. Napier's *Old English Glosses* notes *rimosa* as the Latin word for *hlecc*, which we know to be the Old English term for *leak* (1900, 148).

6. Robert Ainsworth's *English and Latin Dictionary* notes the connection between *futilis* and leaking with the adjective "blabbing" (1773, 254).

7. For example the nouns *fuite* (French), *fuga* (Italian, Spanish and Portuguese), and *fugida* (Catalan).



This shifting between positive and negative implications is not unlike how we understand the term *leaking* in the contemporary moment.<sup>8</sup> This flexibility, however, is often only afforded to metaphorical acts of leaking. In speaking of the material leak (for example, let us keep with the instance of leaky vessel), the connotation is almost always negative—it speaks of a deficiency, a brokenness, the condition of futility. It is at this point I want to consider the conditions of the figurative leak—how, and why, it seems to offer more connotative flexibility. In the simplest sense, a metaphor is the representation of a thing through a word or phrase that literally denotes something else. Earlier assertions about metaphor considered the figure of speech as being outside of conventional language and placed it in the realm of the poetic.<sup>9</sup> In spite of this previous trend, however, George Lackoff (1993) argues that contemporary linguistics insists metaphor should be understood as “a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world” (204). Lackoff’s rereading of Michael Reddy’s push for metaphor to be regarded as a mode of thought, and to not simply to be relegated to the realm of language, furthers the possibilities in the use of metaphor as a means of understanding culture. In describing Hans Blumenberg’s approach to metaphor, Wampole asserts “metaphors are not simply rhetorical flourishes, replicable by nonmetaphorical language” but also that metaphors “allow thoughts to be expressed that are impossible to express in nonfigurative terms” (2016, 16). Understanding metaphor as a process of thought, rather than an element of language allows for discursive possibilities—where Foucault (1982) argues “of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things” we must consider the way metaphor and discourse exist productively together

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8. Here, I am referring explicitly to the English term.

9. See Lackoff (1993); Reddy (1993); and Ortony (1993).

(49).<sup>10</sup> It is this quality of being “irreducible to the language and to speech” that requires us to consider the metaphor of leak as being more than a matter of similarity (49). Describing something as a leak connotes a set of relationships, interactions between actors and implies particular consequences.

As previously noted, we cannot know for sure what the very first instance of leaking was—we can, however, imagine that the earliest references were to water.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of the substance’s chemical makeup, primary definitions of *leak* tend to refer particularly to a liquid or a gas.<sup>12</sup> We can, from here, assume that first instances of leaks were material ones. In spite of this, figurative, or metaphorical, leaks, are much older than the English language can account for. The first transfigurative documentation of *leak* in English appears in the late sixteenth century (OED 2017), however it echoes much older figurative expressions from other languages.<sup>13</sup> The first instances of the leak metaphor in English described analogous dynamics, that is, situations where something was *leak-like*—here, something less tangible might be likened to the tendencies of the material leak, for example, the quality of being foolish,<sup>14</sup> or the impossibility to contain forces of evil.<sup>15</sup> The figurative sense of the verb, that is, to leak something that is not a liquid or gas, had not been clearly documented (thus demonstrating common use) until the term’s entry

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10. For a more detailed account of the interconnectedness of metaphor and discourse see, Paul Ricœur’s *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (1993).

11. This is speculative, but probable considering the etymology of the word, and first recorded instances.

12. See, for example: Fenning (1761) “To LEAK, V.N. to let water in or out...” (633); or The New Oxford American Dictionary, “Leak... accidentally lose or admit contents, especially liquid or gas...” (Stevenson and Lindberg 2011)

13. For example, the insult in John Marston’s 1602 play “Antonio’s Revenge”: “...and cling to routes of fooles, That can not search the leakes of his defectes” (120), follows closely to Socrates’ analogous reading of water carriers as defective fools in Plato’s *Gorgias* (2008).

14. For example: “It being the property of a foole to be full of leakes” (Hakewill vi. 229)

15. For example: “There will be alwaies euils which no arte of man can cure, breaches and leakes moe then mans wit hath hands to stop” (Hooker 1597, v. ix. 16).

into Webster's (1828) dictionary as "*To leak out*,... to escape privately from confinement or secrecy; as a fact or report".<sup>16</sup> It is in this metaphor of *leak* (in its verb form), where the action of leaking seems to regain some agency, where the negative connotation of *leaking* weakens, even if just a bit.<sup>17</sup> With the figurative sense of *leak* expanding beyond an occurrence that echoes the material condition of leaking, the content of the leak transforms into something else entirely. The noun *leak*, come the twentieth century, assumed a polysemic quality—no longer referring exclusively to a material substance, but also to something disclosed or revealed.<sup>18</sup> Here, we return to the notion of metaphor, particularly as asserted by Max Black—metaphors, he argues, make new meanings possible (1984), and this is certainly true of the metaphor of leaking. Throughout this project I will explore the leak metaphor in two senses; figuratively, as a means for thinking through the dynamic of particular relationships that may not typically be regarded as *leaky*, as well through addressing particular material leakages and how they can be traced as being part of these figuratively leaky flows. The use of metaphor, generally, in philosophy has been substantive, and later in the project I will return specifically to the way the leak metaphor performs in philosophical thought in order to further flesh out how figurative leaks can form the basis of material calls to action. But for now, I will return to the word.

Much like etymology, accounting for historic word use frequency is difficult and problematic<sup>19</sup>—but this is not to imply that it is not useful. The most bountiful data from which

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16. This edition does not have page numbers—the entry is listed alphabetically, noted under "*Leak v. i.*" under the heading "LEA".

17. This is not to suggest that *leaking* does not retain a primarily negative connotation, but rather that this is the point in time when the term becomes open to more nuanced uses.

18. There are instances of the term being used in this context prior to the twentieth century, however, it does not appear as having the polysemic meaning in the vernacular until later.

19. See, for example, Pechenick et al. (2015).

researchers derive information on historic word frequency is the corpora put forth by Google Books for use with their Ngram Viewer. In running an analysis on inflections of *leak*, one particular generalization can be made—there has been increasing usage of the word since the end of the industrial revolution, peaking in the most current years for which data is available.<sup>20</sup> Any causality in this scenario is speculative at best—but there are two points I want to emphasize from this data. First, the broadening use of the term *leak* into more figurative language is likely a factor in the increased occurrences of the term’s use. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, one can imagine that increased references to leaks, implies an increased capacity for leakage.

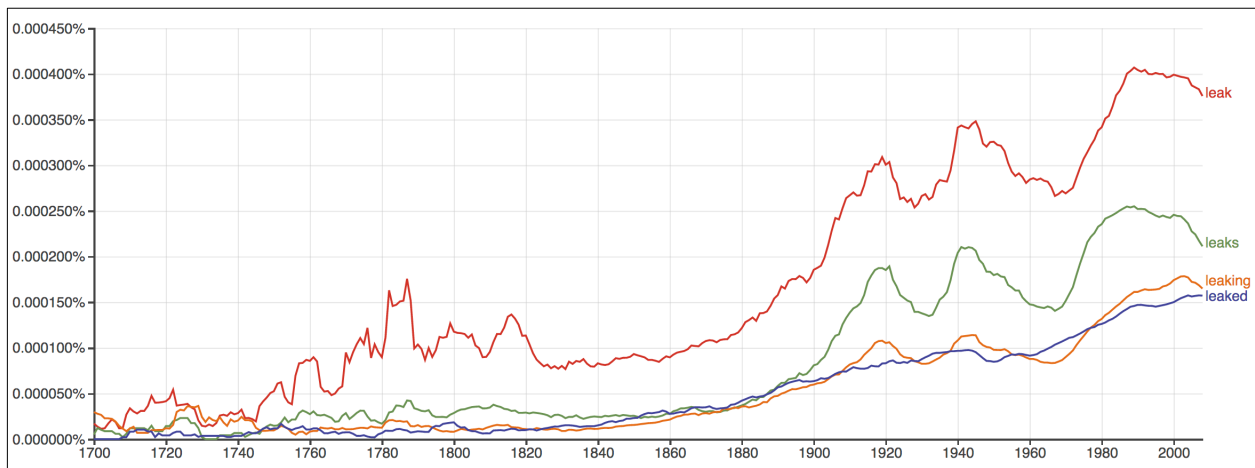


Figure 1: Google Ngram of “leak\_INF”. The graph displays the relative frequency of appearance of “leak”, “leaks”, “leaking” and “leaked” in predominantly English books (within the Google Books corpus) published “in any country” between 1700-2008.

Here, I argue that increased flows result in increased leaks following the logic of Paul Virilio’s *accidentology*—the insistence that the invention of a given thing is also the invention of its accident (2007).

From industrialization onwards, we have seen the invention of (or, at the very least, the increasing prevalence of) gas leaks, leaky faucets, hydraulic leaks, and leaking pipes. This

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20. See Figure 1: Google Ngram of “leak\_INF”.

pervasiveness of leaking into culture occurs in both a material sense and a lexical one. Colonial endeavors (material and epistemological), resource extraction, and infrastructure development were (and arguably continue to be) vital aspects of the industrial project. All of these, in some capacity are projects of containment—certainly not containment as an exclusively territorial act—but containment as a mode of operation for deterritorialized systems of control.<sup>21</sup> Anything in a state of containment, is in a position to leak, therefore to create new flows and to create new networks, is to create new leaks. The increased use of the word *leak* in the past century reflects, and exacerbates, our encounters with them, especially as leaks have expanded to more-than-material forms.

Beyond material leaks, we must also consider the way systems, networks, and discourses aim to organize phenomena, relationships, and knowledge into controllable forms—these too qualify as sites that may leak. In addition to the development and spread of increasingly complex infrastructures throughout the developing world, the early-to-mid twentieth century was the site for the crystallization of structuralist thought. In conceiving of the world as comprehensible through its underlying structures that constitute the relationships between differentiated elements, structuralism set itself up for inevitable leaks that became leverage points for post-structuralist thinkers. The leak stands as a threat to any boundary or formal delineation that operates through controlling paths and flows. In opening this chapter with the question of “what leaks?”, I am asking the reader to consider the ways in which anything can be thought of in terms of leaking—this includes biological processes, modes of thought, built environments, as well as

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21. This idea will be expanded on later in the project but follows arguments put forth by Hardt and Negri (2003) and Deleuze (1992).

structures that maintain the functioning of these systems. It is here, that leaking may arouse an opportunity.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the denotation of *leak* in Romance languages does not preclude the term from positive connotations the way the Germanic word had. The action of leaking as being an action of fleeing and escaping is part of the morphology of *leak* that descended from the Latin verb *fugere* in Romance languages. It is in its figurative sense that the word *leak*, in English, has regained possibility. The broadening of the term to refer to flows of data, information, and thought across boundaries allows for the opportunity to revisit the radical possibilities of *leaking*. This is not to say that there are not radical possibilities in more materially constituted leaks—a premise that will be explored when looking at feminist/new materialist thought later in this project—but rather, that grasping these potentialities are only possible if we contest the bounds typically put-upon *leaking* as a concept itself.

The context in which something is described as a leak, or to be leaking, is especially important in the contemporary moment. I argue that the use of the English word has only recently broken from its negative connotation. In the case of the revelation of information, *leak* is a dead metaphor—it no longer gives the impression of being similar to the material conditions of a fluid entering or escaping a container, but rather, appears to describe the character of information itself in a world where containment is futile. The dynamics and significance of media, information, and data leaks will assume a significant place in the project —particularly in chapter 2, “Leaky Mediation”—but for now, I want to emphasize the way *leak* in this context has affected the term’s signification. In the first instances where *leaking* figuratively indicated the divulging of information, the word maintained a negative connotation tinged with *leak*’s denotation of *deficiency*. This was especially the case in the political context where references to

leaks in government documents most often appeared as parts of inquiries, reports and hearings.<sup>22</sup> Our reaction to the leak is dependent on whether we feel contents are rightfully contained—this is where the signification of leak became increasingly variable. Both the material and ideological characteristics of the shifting media landscape have incited questions about the content and function of communications in the contemporary moment (Kittler 2010). Where the content and the function of a container were once a given, the defective nature of the leak was too—this relationship was regarded as predefined in the etymological origin of the *leak*. With the 2010 release of the United States diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks, journalist Heather Brooke declared “leaks are not the problem; they are the symptom” (2010). Brooke goes on to say that leaks reveal “a disconnect”—this project argues that this disconnect is not always a sign of deficiency, but rather a consequence of a system designed to contain. Here, leaks may not be intentional, but are absolutely inevitable. In the transfiguration of *leak* to include multitudes of containers and contents, the relationship between signifier and signified opens up—in the deconstruction of *leak* from its original meaning, the metaphorical act of *leaking* severs the word from its origin, making new meanings possible. It is not a coincidence that my attempt to genealogically account for the leak has left us on the shaky ground of deconstructivism. The following section will briefly discuss how the leak can function as a means for thinking about the poststructural turn and how we might find our footing in the new materialist moment.

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22. See for example the March 16th, 1933 House of Commons debate where a proposed resolution to the Solider Settlement Act was being discussed. Here, MP Alan Webster Neill complains about reading information about legislation in the newspapers before hearing about it from the Minister of Immigration and Colonization, Wesley Ashton Gordon: “Mr. GORDON: ...There is one thing, they never got their information from me”, “Mr. NEILL: ...It does not seem to be a desirable thing to have information leak out through the press before it is given to the House of Commons” (1939, 741).

Perhaps it seems counterproductive to dwell on the etymology of a word, trace its meanings through to deconstructivism, and then continue to assert that *leaking* signifies something fruitful enough to warrant investigation over several more chapters. However, it is here that I want to clarify what I am speaking of when I say that this project is one of leaks. The concept of *leaking* that I am referring to is certainly a phenomenon that has descended from the term's original referent, its use over time, and the cultural context leading up to the present day—however, this genealogy is not meant to fix an explicit definition or inherent meaning to the concept. Here, I am not contending that *the leak* symbolizes anything particular (a shift, a moment, nor a mode of thought). Rather, I use the concept of leak/leaking/leakage as a means of speaking to, and thinking through, dynamics that certain theorists seem determined to nail down. Whether we think of contemporary moment as postmodernity (Baudrillard 1994; Jameson 1991; Lash 1990), late modernity (Giddens 1997), reflexive modernity (Beck et al. 1994), hypermodernity, liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), second modernity (Beck 2006), network society (Castells 2006), Empire (Hardt and Negri 2003), postnationalism (Breen and O'Neil 2011; Frost 2010), super modernity (Augé 2008), late capitalism (Jameson 1991; Mandel 1999), zombie capitalism (Harman 2010), posthumanity (Braidotti 2013), or the anthropocene (Morton 2013)—leaking matters. Though leaking is by no means exclusive of this particular moment in time, I assert that certain characteristics that have been argued to define this epoch (for example, globalization, ecological decline, and the collapsing of grand narratives, amongst others) necessitate leaking.

This project does not assert *the leak* as a particular thing, but rather argues that leaks can be utilized as means for understanding the world as entangled networks of material and immaterial, mediate and immediate, human and non-human actors. In this genealogy of the leak I



argue that the figurative broadening of the term has allowed for, and continues to allow for, new possibilities in thinking through certain phenomena, as does understanding how the metaphor of the leak operates. Hans Blumenberg (2010) argues metaphorology “seeks to burrow down to the substructure of thought, the underground, the nutrient solution of systemic crystallizations” (144), but he also sees this practice as “auxiliary” (77). For Blumenberg, metaphorology is to be aligned with philosophic thought in order “to understand itself from its history and to bring that history to the present” (77). I argue that the opening up of *leaking* to metaphoric use has allowed for better expressions of, and understanding of certain relationships. However, it is important to note that this possibility is not triggered solely in understanding the leak as metaphor. In exploring Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the rhizome, Wampole reminds us of Stephen C. Pepper’s charge “every philosophical theory is a far-flung metaphor” (1928, 130). While the metaphor of the leak has substantive philosophical implications, we cannot forget that the leak, in particular instances, is still an incredibly material phenomenon with overtly material consequences. To this end I want to make clear that my understanding of the leak is at once literal *and* metaphorical, material and theoretical.

Leaks are always sites of multiple actors (human, non-human, more-than-human) and always have material *and* ideological implications. In this sense, my conception of the leak follows closely to feminist new materialist discourses that consider relationality to be the core question in interrogating our conception of materiality. Leaks are always relational: out of something, somewhere, someone and into something, somewhere, someone else. But, of course, the leak is not the only means through which we can explore relationality. Projects that purport the reframing (or de-framing) of phenomena outside of the confines of specific disciplines, unnecessary binaries, or tired discourses are plentiful; from Donna Haraway’s *cyborg* of “leaky”

distinctions (1991, 154) to Sarah Ahmed's work on *orientation* and *difference* (1998, 2008); from Timothy Morton's oozing *hyperobjects* (2013) to the revitalization of affect theory (Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Massumi 1995, 2002; Tomkins 2008), there are many theorists pushing towards the relational. While these concepts demonstrate interactions that go beyond leakages, I want to encourage the ways that *leaking* is, in some sense at play in all of these—questions formulated around flows, hybridity, and the softening of boundaries always concern *leaking*. This project takes *leaks* in the broadest sense as the movements that take place amongst actors. Rather than speaking of interaction, Karan Barad (2003) approaches relationality as a matter of *intra-action* as a means of collapsing the space between actors, and it is through this concept that I mobilize my conception of leaking (2015). Returning to Brooke's assertion that leaks are symptomatic of disconnect, the chapters that follow aim to show how leaks can also demand connection (the filling of spaces within, and between, actors).

The purpose of this chapter has been to prepare the reader for the many ways that I will think through *leaking* in coming chapters. In spite of its title, "Defining the Leak", this chapter does not make an attempt to contain the concept within a particular definition that carries cleanly through this work. Rather, I have sought to open the concept up—to let the leak free. But in contending that the leak is more than what vulgar definitions allow for, we must still account for the ways that our semantic conceptions of *leaking* have informed the concept. To these ends, I am asserting that the subject of this work is *the leak* as an assemblage. This includes *the leak* in all of its forms—sign, signifier, signified, as well as all the blurry spaces between (where meaning leaks). Thinking about *the leak* as an assemblage allows for the interrogation of the subject across time and materialities. In using the assemblage as part of her own methodology Michelle Murphy (2006), describes it as such: "An assemblage materializes an object by placing

it in a specific social and technical constellation, making it perceptible, outlining form, drawing out possibility and investing meanings by virtue of its linkages, effects and relationships” (13). But she also warns “by ordering an object in an assemblage, that object could be disinvested of qualities, capacities, and possibilities thereby becoming dematerialized, even deemed non-existent” (13). This tension in the leak assemblage is paramount—while the next chapter will focus on the abstractions of leaks into the realm of communications theory, it will conclude by reasserting the leak as a material phenomenon. This chapter has set out to show how the leak has evolved to be, at once, theoretical and material.

So please, ask yourself again; what leaks?

### **Tracing the Leak**

This project begins with the contemporary moment and asserts it as a particularly leaky constellation. Considering the significant amount of works, theories and concepts relying on liquid metaphors (fluidity, liquidity, flows, waves, etc.), I pose the question of how leaking underlies the dynamics of the present. However, following Foucault’s notion of the history of the present (1980), I assert the contemporary condition of leaking cannot be considered without accounting for the structures that have made this dynamic inevitable. Further, as introduced above, Paul Virilio’s *accidentology* appears continuously throughout the following chapters. In asserting that the accident is always, in some sense, inevitable in the materiality of technology (Virilio 2007), I believe this project can only be undertaken in allegiance with Marxist historical materialism. At times, this Marxist position is merely implicit, but this materialism underlies the entire work if the reader wishes to look for it.

The methods I use to trace the leak are mixed and particularly indebted to Maggie MacLure’s (2011) framing of postfoundational approaches and Patricia Lather’s (1998) notion of “a praxis of stuck places”. As implied in introducing *the leak* in the previous section, deconstruction ensured the conceptual opening-up of *leaking*—because of this, I in some sense feel beholden to a poststructuralist framework. However, in asserting the leak as a material agent, I resist the temptation of dissolving it into language games. Ultimately, this work attempts to bridge the figurative and material in terms of leakiness. Each of the following chapters have two contours: existing discourses and leak assemblages. The initial undertaking of each chapter will be to demonstrate the established discourses that implicate the leak within a given frame. In some fields the leak is particularly explicit (e.g., data leaks within information studies discourses) and in other areas, leaks are implicit actors that can read into certain works (e.g., breached borders in discourses on sovereignty). The second contours seek to demonstrate how leaks mobilize actors into, topically relevant, but indistinct assemblages (i.e. media assemblages of Xerox shops and Lady Gaga CD’s; political assemblages of “Pee Tapes” and shipping containers; material assemblages of period panties and crude oil pipelines). While I refer, throughout this work, to the troubling of traditional structures of modernity, at no point will I claim that they have disappeared. From this perspective, I situate this project as one *within the ruins* (Lather 1998; St. Pierre and Pillow 2000; MacLure 2011). MacLure notes that “*the ruins* are a kind of shorthand for the crumbling edifice of Enlightenment values that have regulated theory and research for two centuries” (1998)—rather than attesting to the absolute dissolution of any and all foundation, *the ruins* implies a site in which one can get dirty amongst the vestiges of past thought. The illusion of a clean break with structure is restrictive. MacLure argues that “often, writing on theory and methodology hangs in a discursive space that is fairly empty of

examples”—thus, she continues, “theory has not had enough of a chance, then, to proliferate through sustained entanglement and interference with its objects” (998). This condition of theory hanging in empty space, is what this project attempts to strike down—in this sense, the goal of this project is to entangle theory back up with its material objects through their leakages.

Following Lather’s reading of Jacques Derrida—whereby the duty of philosophical praxis is “to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about)” (122)—this project takes the leak’s lead. Lather’s praxis is thus the rejection of “the privileging of containment over excess, thought over affect, structure over speed, linear causality over complexity, and intention over aggregative capacities”; she continues:

Ontological changes and category slippages mark the exhaustion of received categories of mind/body, nature/culture, base/superstructure, and spiritual/secular. The goal is to shape our practice to a future that must remain to come, in excess of our codes but, still, always already: forces already active in the present. (497)

Following the leak’s lead, is not to suggest that the shape of this project is not my own. In planning this work, I had a variety of destinations in mind, however the leak did not lead me to all of them. My design thus required a leaving “open” for certain paths along which *leaking* would take me—in fact the slippages that result from the exhaustion of the above categories noted by Lather are precisely the site from which some of the leaks I explore begin. As I will argue in chapter 4 “Material Realities of Leaks”, leaks are deeply entangled with a certain futurity, thus requiring (at times) some speculation. This however does not undo my methodological approach, for, as Marjorie Levinson (1995) contends, not unlike Lather does, “the critic must shape her practice not to that present but to a future that is somehow (in some coded, partial, obscure, an un-self-conscious way) sealed up in contemporary material conditions” (113). This project then, was one shaped to be leaky—this did not require a particularly strategic project design, but rather an attentiveness to the ways methodological

containment is always already leaky anyways. As John Law (2004) contends, method must learn to cope with messiness. And while I follow Levinson's conceit that the future is, in some sense bound, within present material conditions, certain possibilities open up in the recognition that materiality itself is not entirely contained. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 5, "Conclusion", the leak, as threat, is entangled with futurity (Massumi 2010), and therefore cannot simply be considered solely in its situatedness in the present.

This work is also greatly informed by feminist new materialisms. As noted in "Defining the Leak", the turn towards matter, not as distinct units, but rather as actors entangled in assemblages of relations, allows for the tracing of phenomena beyond the bounds enforced through traditionally modernist thought. And while I speak specifically of new materialist discourses in chapter 4, it is here I want to assert that assemblage-thinking also grounds this work through its methodology. Mieke Bal (2002), in speaking of cultural studies, asserts that "you don't apply one method; you conduct a meeting between several, a meeting in which the object participates, so that, together, object and methods can become a new, not firmly delineated, field" (4). It is in this sense, that method itself constitutes an assemblage (Law 2004).

Considering that assemblages inform both my method and subject, I want to discuss the influence of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's thought in how I go about thinking with *leaking*. This project attends to the leak as it exists as a messy *rhizomatic* constellation. Here, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatics play a significant role. Felicity J. Coleman describes the rhizome as "any network of things brought into contact with one another, functioning as an assemblage machine for new affects, new concepts, new bodies, new thoughts; the rhizomatic network is a mapping of the forces that move and/or immobilise bodies" (233). What simultaneously undercuts and enlivens this tracing of assemblages (through subject, methodology, and

argument) is a refusal to assert any structure, entity, or principle as absolutely continent. Here, I argue that my project is open—the possibility exists that I could have undertaken this exploration through different methods, with different cases, with different theories. I welcome this critique and also encourage future works to trace *leaking* differently. But I do not believe this possibility for difference challenges the rigor behind my account. My ultimate assertion is that the frameworks through which I trace the leak—media studies, social and political thought, and materiality (feminism and ecology as a mode for thinking “bodies and worlds”)—have, thus far, foreclosed upon particular possibilities in their failure to shed certain containment logics. As I will assert throughout this work, my call to turn towards leakiness is not a call for the absolution of boundaries—that would be a utopian project, literally so, in that without boundary spaces we could not conceive of place as such. My call here, is not for the end of difference, embankment or delineation, but rather, a call to end the policing of these spaces by way of turning to leaks. If we can reorient ourselves to attending to leaky spaces—what constitutes leaks, when do leaks mark the unfolding of possibilities, how might leaks enforce particular enclosures—I argue that new realms for ethics open up. It is at this point that I must address some of the terminology that underlies this project before proceeding.

In asserting that leaks are simultaneously threats and opportunities, I am relying heavily on Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation of *de-* and *re- territorialization*. While the concluding chapter of this work will deal with the specificities of these terms’ operation in relation to leaking, I want to briefly elucidate them here since they will appear many times throughout this project. Deleuze and Guattari assert that the spatial dynamic of assemblages are made through particular enactments of territory. Territory, in this sense, is not a fixed and unchanging relation to space (as will be explored in chapter 2), but rather a continual process of *de-* and *re-*

*territorialization*. In this sense, these processes are movements through which entanglements arise and form. In the case of deterritorialization, previous relations are undone and possibilities surface. Reterritorialization, rather, refers to the fixing of this movement into territory—a static constellation. Here, I assert that leaks involve both *de-* and *re-* *territorialization*, they can at once signify an opportunity—a line of flight (or line of leak, as noted in the conclusion)—but can just as easily be reterritorialized, rendered impotent. I must also note the reoccurrence of the phrase “making sense” throughout my work. As I argue against the rigid confines of modernity’s infatuation with reason, my call to “make sense” is never to imply a process of making something fully knowable. Rather, when I speak of “making sense”, I am posing the necessity of allowing for things to become sensible, a call for the seeking of sensation. My plea to *make sense* of the leak, is an appeal to the aesthetic possibilities of leaking, which will be implied throughout, but explored substantively in the concluding chapter of this work. Similarly, it is worth noting now, these aesthetic possibilities to which I speak, are indebted to the reassertion of affect into critical theory (Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Massumi 1995, 2005). While I work to untangle these concepts in greater detail throughout the constituent chapters of this work, I ask the reader to bear in mind that I consider the leak as always being a material, political, aesthetic and affective actor that entangles human and non-human others into complex assemblages of relations.

Chapter 2, “Leaky Mediation”, interrogates how leaks become implicated in the act of mediation. As with each of the body chapters of this work, I open with a section accounting for the literature through which I will later make my argument in consideration of particular cases. The review section of chapter 2 reframes media against their popular connotation as particular forms of representation, and asserts them simply as actants of the *in-between*. In this sense



chapter 2 contends that leaks do not simply happen *to* media, but rather that leaks *are*, *themselves*, media. Here, I note the media and communications scholarship that attend to media as complex representations that work through abstracting interfaces (Chun 2011; Galloway 2012; Splosky 2002), and as interlopers of perception (Virilio 1989, 1994, 2005; Vogl 2007). I address how media and technology become networked, and how “connection” distorts the mediated and the immediate (Blackman 2012; Peters 1999; Munster 2013). I also question how the form of media (their medium) become influential in the way they move. In addressing the question of analogue versus digital media, I question the material differences of media leaks as a means of attending to the question of how leaks’ form affect their function. In addressing at the 1971 leaking of the “Pentagon Papers”, I pose the question of how the medium of the leak affected its reception. I further consider this case in its relation to 2010’s “Cablegate” leaks to interrogate how mediation affects the function of the leak. Following this, I consider how images are affected by leakiness, ultimately asserting that representation demands movement. In spite of the political potency of the leaks discussed in chapter 2, I save explicit consideration and analysis of the political implications of leaks for chapter 3.

In the third chapter, “Political Realities of Leaks”, I frame the political nature of leaks in terms of Chantal Mouffe’s (1993, 2005) conception of *the political*. Here, I assert that political space is constructed through the delineation of inside and outsides. In this sense I frame the leak as a threat to sovereignty and subjecthood. Leaks are always already political, but always be further politicized. To these ends, I consider the complex constellation of leakiness around the Trump Administration. Noting the U.S. President’s shifting feelings towards leaks, I reassert the leak as relational—its particular circumstance always affects how it is perceived. I explore here how leaks are legislated against when deemed threatening, but also how they are operationalized

in the maintenance of power, or for the benefit of capital. Here, I consider the ways that the leak gets functions in the case of port cities—I argue that the material condition of leakiness is implicated in imaginaries about liquid capital and show how the port city is utilized to these ends.

Chapter 4, “Materializing Leaks”, reasserts the leak as a material actor and how feminist theories of embodiment have contested and reified certain dualities imposed by modern logics of containment. I argue for an emancipatory restructuring of embodiment whereby *the body* is regarded as another flexible assemblage constituted by leaky relations. However, I assert that this possibility only exists if we shed certain residual containment logics. Reasserting the potentials made available through feminist new materialisms, I trace our historical relationships to materiality. This chapter, however, also accounts for critiques that contest the *newness* of this turn towards recognizing the agency and the vitality of matter (Tallbear 2017; Todd 2015; Watts 2013). I address how ecological thought opened up materiality to interdisciplinarity, but assert that our relationship to materiality is still rather rigid. In accounting for the ways that bodies become imbricated within material, social, and ideological assemblages, I explore how the phenomenon of revenge porn reasserts modern relations back into the body. Further, I consider how Fourth-Wave menstrual activism utilizes material and mediated leaking, only for it to be captured back by capital. Here, I tend to ways that leaking can represent resistance, but also account for how these possibilities can be rapidly foreclosed upon. In my last case, I demonstrate how infrastructure and capital become imbricated in broader ecological concerns and contend that the opposing of nature and culture in modernity continues to complicate our ability to comprehend the interconnectedness of actors entangled in power assemblages. In reproducing the text of the Standing Rock Sioux’s address to Dakota Access Pipeline and Energy Transfer

Partners, delivered prior to the widely publicized protest at the Standing Rock camps, I demonstrate that certain stakes can only be accounted for with the recognition of complex assemblages. The concluding chapter of this dissertation, chapter 5, “Conclusion”, addresses how we can leverage leakiness to ethical ends. In arguing that leaks become material agents of connection, I assert that learning to live with leakiness opens up possibilities for redress. Here, I reassert the leak as *line of flight* (Deleuze and Guattari 2008). While the possibilities for leaking can, just as easily become imbricated in new constellations of containment, I contend that *making sense* of the leak can be a productive framework for being in the (leaky) world with others.

CHAPTER 2/  
Leaky Mediation

*“Well, see, I was thinking, let’s say you throw a rock at something. At a tree. You throw it, and it goes through the air and hits the tree. Right? But it can’t. Because—can I have the slate? Look, here’s you throwing the rock, and here’s the tree,” he scribbled on the slate, “that’s supposed to be a tree, and here’s the rock. see, halfway in between.” The children giggled at his portrayal of a holum tree, and he smiled. “To get from you to the tree, the rock has to be halfway in between you and the tree, doesn’t it. And then it has to be halfway between halfway and the tree. And then it has to be halfway between that and the tree. It doesn’t matter how far it’s gone, there’s always a place, only it’s a time really, that’s halfway between the last place it was and the tree—”*

*“Do you think this is interesting?” the director interrupted, speaking to the other children.*

*“Why can’t it reach the tree?” said a girl of ten.*

*“Because it always has to go half of the way that’s left to go,” said Shevek, “and there’s always half of the way left to go—seer’.*

*“Shall we just say you aimed the rock badly?” the director said with a tight smile.*

*“It doesn’t matter how you aim it. It can’t reach the tree.”*

Ursula K. LeGuin,  
*The Dispossessed*

While the idea that *leaking* transcends discipline is central to my argument, we must also acknowledge the ways in which it is particularly *at home* in media and communication studies. In this chapter I focus explicitly on the relationship between the leak and media. This relationship is defined in many ways—for example, the leak is both a possible *means for* mediation as well as a *subject of* mediation. Leaks are themselves intermediaries, vestiges of something from one side becoming apparent to another. And thus, leaks are media themselves. They are modes of communication, they can provide information, supply dissent, and they can confirm. Leaks are also incredibly present in literary cultures as metaphors and anecdotes—they embody and communicate a particular dynamic and can provide an avenue for better

understanding of other phenomena—an aspect that will be focused on in chapter 5. Leaks are also affected by mediation and communication. They can be spun, reported on, re-represented, and are, like most things in culture, defined by the narratives around them. Simply, leaks are both media and modes of communication as well as being actors/subjects affected by media and communication.

While this chapter examines explicitly the leak's relationship to media, it does not conform to a perfectly linear structure. Rather, this chapter contains several subsections all of which bleed into each other. The first part of the chapter provides a broad overview of media and communications theory and the ways they intersect with the notion of leakiness. This section is organized into the following sections and themes: "Media as 'In-between'"; "Communication as Failure"; and "Technology, Networks". The second part of the chapter concerns the materiality of media and introduces the two cases that I use to illustrate how mediation and leakiness inform one another—these sections are as follows: "Analogue and Digital Leaks"; "The Pentagon Papers"; and "Cablegate". The third, and final, part of this chapter builds on the first two sections by interrogating how the material differences in mediating leakiness affect how we conceive of leaks in the contemporary moment—this is explored through the following sections: "Material Differences"; "The Newspaper", "The Data Dump"; and "The Leak-Image/The Leaked Image". The first section, "Media as an 'In-between'", accounts for existing theories in media and communications studies that focus on the nature of media (etymologically speaking) as existing in the middle. Through discourse analysis, I will explore how these theories are particularly helpful in integrating leaks into communication theory, as leaky mediums (Hartley 1999) and leaky interfaces (Splosky 2002), amongst other leaky formations. "Communication as Failure" will explicate the established works that frame "communication" as a futile ideal and situates

leaks as threats to the circulation of information amongst and between actors. However, this section also contends that leaks just as often promote communication. Following this, the “Technology, Networks” section will note how the leak becomes implicated in the question of technology and how the expanding discourses around networks and network-formations further situate the leak within media and communications studies. Here, I will further establish how networks exacerbate leakiness. This idea grounds the section that follows, “Analogue and Digital Leaks”, which compares the material differences of information leaks over time—these changes will be scrutinized through a cross-case analysis between Daniel Ellsberg’s leaking of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and the cache of information leaked by Chelsea Manning to WikiLeaks in 2010. In the final subsection of this chapter, I will also utilize a cross-case analysis concerning the image of the leak—how “leaking” is represented in certain images, as well as how “leaking” affects signification. Ultimately, the analyses that I undertake in this chapter will demonstrate the real, and conceptual value, of leaking in relation to mediation.

### **Media as “In-between”**

In chapter 1, I introduced the idea of Paul Virilio’s *accidentology*, which asserts that new inventions and applications of technologies introduce the opportunity for accidents by those very means (2007). This idea continues to undercut the premises of the following chapters. The subject of communications studies was born in the very moment that we recognized an outside of ourselves. Here too marked the beginning of medium, the space between two actors that constitutes the outside that we work to bridge. The media through which we conquer this divisive space becomes the means through which we communicate, and from this very instance we face the possibility (if not guarantee) of communication failure. What sits at the centre of media and

communications studies, is the desire for, and impossibility of the immediate—the connection that exists in spite of, or outside of, time and space. The development of communication technologies seeks to address this problem: how can the message be more immediate? How can it get there clearer, faster? The immediate thus becomes a question of speed, a particularly threatening force underlining Virilio's *accidentology*. It is from here that I want to begin this chapter on the leak from the perspective of media and communications.

While I do not dismiss our contemporary understanding of “the media” as “human communication systems” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler 2012, 3), it is certainly not the point from which this chapter begins. Rather, reasserting media as “in-between” undoes our assumptions of media and communication studies and brings us back to the middle that the term denotes. It is from here that I make the assertion that leakiness and mediation become entangled. This dissertation focuses media back around the problem from which it was born. I opened this chapter with an excerpt from Ursula K. LeGuin’s *The Dispossessed*, because it illustrates, so simply, the problem of media: that “it doesn’t matter how you aim it...” “there’s always half of the way left to go”. This chapter illustrates how media *fails* to connect us—this is not meant as a nihilistic argument about the communication systems that we have developed, but rather asserts that their possibilities are limited if we disregard the broader affective assemblages of which they are just one part. Here, I echo similar sentiments from within media and communications studies that I will build on later in this chapter.

It is from an acknowledgment of only existing in-between that Andrew Goffey and Matthew Fuller (2012) assert an evilness at the core of media. Goffey and Fuller argue that media creates a “troubling opacity and thickness in the relations of which they are a part” (5), an opacity that continually exists, but only tends to be recognized in the case of something going

awry. This idea that media is at once what constitutes the in-between, as well as our only hope to transverse it, makes it a particularly messy subject matter. Joseph Vogl (2007) echoes Goffey and Fuller's concerns in arguing that while "media make things readable, audible, visible, perceptible... they also have a tendency to erase themselves and their constitutive sensory function, making themselves imperceptible and 'anesthetic'" (16). In this view we can begin to imagine the opportunity that arises from certain accidents, the opening of possibility to recognize the space in-between. Like media, the leak is also constituted by an outside, it cannot exist in boundless space—but unlike media, the leak inherently rejects the delineation of insides and outsides, it breaches them, thus contesting the demarcating boundaries that define this middle space. Moreover, the leak differs from the qualities of media themselves, in that it tends to signify a particular aesthetic (rather than anaesthetic) quality.<sup>23</sup> While Vogl, Fuller and Goffey resent media's tendency towards imperceptibility, the leak signals a rupture—a cut into the real<sup>24</sup> of sorts. Similar to Vogl's account of how the telescope not only marked a new regime of visibility but also signalled what had previously been "invisible"—the leak, in becoming perceptible, becomes indicative of previous nondisclosures. That is, it makes known the condition of containment, suppression, and withholding that we may have otherwise missed.

This space in-between is not always (and rather, quite rarely) marked by absence. Not only are media themselves intermediaries, but we often traverse this *space between* through

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23. What constitutes the leak as an aesthetic actor will be explored in the concluding chapter.

24. Here I am thinking of concepts like Alain Badiou's (2007, 2013) concept of the *event*. For Badiou, "an event is something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable. An event is not by itself the creation of a reality; it is the creation of a possibility, it opens up a possibility" (2013, 9)—moreover, he contends "with a political event, a possibility emerges that escapes the prevailing power's control over possible" (2013, 11). Further, we can think of the real leaking out in Lacanian and Freudian terms, say through slips of the tongue, which will be briefly addressed in chapter 3.



interfaces which mask the complex operations of these intercessors. Similar to the arguments noted above, McKenzie Wark (2015) argues that medium often erases itself when operating painlessly, and that “when [the interface] is working smoothly you hardly notice it is there at all. Rather like ideology, really”. The interface stands in as smooth interloper, a simple surface that conceals. Rather than explicitly defining the interface, Alexander Galloway (2012) asserts it as a set of effects. More simply, he argues “that to mediate is really to interface” (10). To this end, to encounter the space in between (that is, to encounter media), is to encounter an interface. Whether the interface sits *as*, or *within*, the in-between is beyond what I wish to discuss here—in either case, interfaces are present, and they simultaneously obscure and make navigable the space between communicating actors. But Galloway, in citing Michael Serres, reminds us that the perfect functioning of the interface undoes itself:

Systems work because they don't work. Non-functionality remains essential for functionality. This can be formalized: pretend there are two stations exchanging messages through a channel. If the exchange succeeds—if it is perfect, optimal, immediate—then the relation erases itself. But if the relation remains there, if it exists, it's because the exchange has failed. It is nothing but mediation. The relation is a non-relation. (10)

To think of media as the in-between is, in some sense, an acceptance that communication inevitably fails. Alexander Galloway contends that “the familiar Socratic conceit, from the Phaedrus, of communication as the process of writing directly on the soul of the other has, since the 1980s and 1990s, returned to center stage in the discourse around culture and media” (25). But this is not always the case. In the case of software, Joel Splosky identifies what he terms “the law of leaky abstractions”, asserting that “all non-trivial abstractions, to some degree, are leaky” (2002). Though Splosky’s assertion refers explicitly to the way software complexities are hidden via abstraction in the coding process, the notion of “leaky abstractions” is too poetic to leave within the realm of computer science. “The law of leaky abstractions” guarantees that abstractions, at some point, fail. This follows Brian Massumi’s (1997) observation that networks

have a *topographical surface*, that in some sense disguise their complexity, and thus pushes Splosky's pragmatic law into contemporary theories of network aesthesia. Moreover, abstraction can function to assert and confound certain political realities. McKenzie Wark (2017), contemplating the work of Wendy Chun, asserts that "software is a crucial component in producing the appearance of transparency", signalling how we cannot neglect the way networks influence rational and affective flows (235). Anna Munster's (2013) claim that network experience is often anaesthetized, parallels the "abstraction" to which Splosky refers, as well as the erasing of relation described by Galloway's reading of Serres. Munster's remorse over how imposed simplicity "deadens the sense of complexity" (5) leads me to believe that she would be comforted by the seeming inevitability of "leaky abstraction" as a consequence of software design. This leakiness allows for complexities to be made perceptible, and through these leaks, we can glimpse intricacies, which allow for the possibility of new networked connections. It is the desiring of the immediate that has made affect theory such an appealing lens for scholars in media and communications (something that will be explored more thoroughly later in this chapter)—but to "write on one's soul" is merely another layer of mediation. The intersection of media theory and affect theory must turn towards aesthetic experience of communication failure rather than seeking perfect fidelity.

The "affective turn" (Clough and Halley 2007; Gregg and Seigworth 2010) reprioritizes sensation over logic and rationality—it contests the prioritization of knowledge as the content of the mind, and emphasizes the experience of affection as it moves into, and throughout the body. Here, communication takes place on a continuous plane, whereby chains of actors can exist without intermediaries, enmeshed within networks. These networks, not entirely unlike the ones that occupy the focus of media and communication scholars, operate beyond the realm of

information and communication technologies (ICTs). They assume a forward position in approaches such as actor network theory (ANT) (Latour 2007; Law 1986; Callon 1986), new materialisms (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010, Braidotti 2000, 2002; Coole and Frost 2010), and other discourses that assert the entanglement of human and non-human actors not just through language, vision, and signification, but through feeling, affect, and ethics. But if affect is defined as a relation, and if we accept Serres's argument in the quotation above, that perfect communication sees to "relation erasing itself", what becomes apparent is that mediation presupposes the impossibility of immediacy. All-in-all, this chapter aims to explore the leak as it sits within conventional media and communication studies, in addition to using the leak as a means to break open both "media" and "communication" as concepts often too narrowly conceived within their own disciplines. Here, I ask: how does the leak figure into classical depictions of the structure of ICTs, how does the leak contest the limits of theories of ICTs, and how can leaks help us to reconstitute our thinking and ideas around the notion of "networks"? To assert that we are living in times of increased mediation somewhat neglects the fact that while our relationships might have been, in some sense, simpler in previous societal configurations, they have never been immediate. Though mediation and communication have certainly been affected by technological development, the common assumption that the past, being free from hypermediation (as some may argue), offered people greater opportunity for substantive connection: this certain olden-days nostalgia however, is a point of criticism.<sup>25</sup> While the changing nature of media has confounding effects on our relationships as we move later into

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25. A meme deriding this sentiment began to circulate across social media at the time I was composing this chapter. Referred to as "not a cell phone in sight" by knowyourmeme.com, an image of historical significance or fiction depicting bleak times before tech saturation is captioned ironically with something such as "Not a cell phone in sight. Just people living in the moment" (see fig. 2). <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/not-a-cell-phone-in-sight>.

modernity, communication has never been free from complications. Media has always sat in the in-between spaces of actors, variations of media including new mediums and morphing formats continue to shift, grow, and arise between entities seeking connection.



Figure 2: An example of the “not a cell phone in sight” meme (original source unknown, image from Meme)

Changes in media ultimately change the dynamics of connection. John Fiske (2005) notes that the television experience, from the perspective of British cultural studies, “is a constant dynamic of movement between similarity and difference” (227). Here, he asserts that the relations between media and their audiences are not fixed, but rather exist as a discursive negotiation whereby “the boundaries of the text are fluid and unstable” (228). Fiske calls on Raymond Williams’s description of the cultural experience of television as one of “flows”

(2004). The argument here is that television cannot be thought of as a set of discrete programs but rather, as an always accessible media stream (Fiske, 95). Though Fiske and Williams are referring to television specifically, we can extend their thinking into a broader media theory whereby the in-between space of mediation does not simply contain discrete sets of media forms but rather exists as a space of media flows. While media forms shift, pick up speed, and indeed, in some cases, swell and flood, there has always been a watery chasm between actors.

Media studies always commences in the middle. This short section of this chapter intends to make clear my conception of media and communication scholarship as that which concerns the in-between space separating actors. This does not contradict the work of existing media theorists who see technology as a means for overcoming the communication problem, nor does it accept the confines that the discipline tends to work within. Ultimately, such a broad conception of media is necessary in order to make the assertion that the leak, even in its most material forms (e.g., dripping pipes, compromised hardwiring of private networks, missing papers from a file), is a subject of media studies in that media, by definition, is also an intermediary and therefore a leakage of sorts. However, even in the most simplistic framing of media studies, whereby “media” rigidly refers to “technologically developed communication industries... which can transmit information and entertainment across time and space...” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler 2012, 3) leaking stands to be a worthwhile exploration. While the following section will continue to address media and communications studies in breadth, part two of this chapter considers leaked media (documents, data, images, etc.) specifically, not only as media objects but as the subjects of mediation through news outlets, public circulation, web hosting, and archiving.

## Communication as Failure

One way of understanding the shifts throughout communication theory is to consider what our expectations of communications have looked like throughout time. In exploring theoretical interactions with the ideals of communication, John Durham Peters (2000) demonstrates that our expectations and hopes of perfect communication have almost never been static or lasting. His analysis of communication discourses points to the hermeneutical resurfacing of certain approaches throughout history, for instance: “dialogue” performing as the central element of perfect communication for both Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (2005) as well as for Marx’s “normatively dialogic vision of communication” (127); or communication as the construction of interiority from Augustine to Locke.<sup>26</sup> Here, Peters demonstrates how almost every concept, theorist, and cultural shift in communications represents a series of reoccurring dualities; impossible dialogue versus authentic encounters; discourse versus dissemination; interiority versus exteriority. These polemical configurations around “ideal” communication tend to be marked by a dynamic whereby “one position has too much gravity, while the other floats in a zero-gravity chamber” (21). Peters’s historical examples of communication failures, idealisms, and antagonisms—reasserts the flaws in our continual attempts for perfect communication and reminds us that “communication is a trouble we are stuck in” (263). The hope for perfect communication is perhaps more distant now than it has ever been previously. Mass

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26. Here, Peters is speaking of Augustine’s assertion of the inward self and the establishment of Lockean empiricism. Both philosophies of self contend that “our interiors are private... and trapped inside by the privacy of our senses and the individuality of our minds” (Peters, 64). This construct of the bounded self will be discussed in chapter 4 “Materializing Leaks”, though it will focus more intently on René Descartes’s (1998) dualism. Peters contends that Augustine’s interiorization foregrounds ideal communication as being *outside of the body*—here, perfect communication occurs directly between souls, a transcendental communion. Peters’s framing of *interiority* as a condition for communication demonstrates how modern philosophy and theology are entangled with media and communications theory.

communications, expansive information networks, big data, fiber optic cables transmitting information at the speed of light, may appear to be milestones towards immediate communication, but as Peters reminds us, we are still stuck in the in-between. Though this perspective emphasizes an enduring condition of being “stuck”, many theorists argue that our chances of catastrophic failure grow alongside any hope that technological development can get us through. Jean Baudrillard (1994) asserts that the hope for perfect fidelity in communications is useless. This is not necessarily a question of the abilities of communication technologies, but rather a conviction that there is no “real” to strive for.

Leaks signify the futility of perfect communication, they remind us that in spite of immense technological progress, there are structures that refuse transparency. In some sense, communications systems have become so complex that they demand failure. However, we cannot just assign this “failure” as a problem of technology. We must also question how the entangling of the political with media and communications might very well be the force that demands catastrophe. While theorists such as Paul Virilio and Friedrich Kittler can be argued as taking a technological determinist approach in their assertion that the inevitability of accidents rests in the technology itself,<sup>27</sup> neither would reject the idea that technological disaster is often

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27. See, for example, Douglas Kellner’s “Virilio, War, and Technology” (in Armitage 2000), where he argues that Virilio’s “entire mode of thought is a form of military technological determinism” (121). Kittler, on the other hand, is himself rather direct in noting his determinist inclination, prefacing *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999) with the assertion “Media determine our situation, which—in spite or because of it—deserves a description” (xxxix). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explicate the complexities within, and critiques of, technological determinist approaches, it is worth noting W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark Hansen’s (2010) assertion “media are themselves mediated” (xv) complicates any linear causation between technology and society. To these ends, Mitchell and Hansen contend that, rather than imposing “a language of cause and effect, we propose a language of necessary (but not sufficient) conditions, a vocabulary of catalytic effects and conflicted situations rather than determining forces” (xvi). In this sense, the question becomes not, do communication technologies determine society, or does society determine communication technologies, but rather what effects do these

exploited for political ends, and moreover that there are political incentives that underline the push for faster and faster technologies. The chronological order of these occurrences (technology, failure, political gain) can be argued whichever way—ultimately, this is the materialist question that theory has been obsessed with since Marx ([1867] 2003). The fact is that either is possible: political incentive ensures technologies fail and/or technological failures ensure particular political dynamics. Nonetheless, this chapter will focus on the particular “failure” of leaking, and the ways that political motivations, reactions, and responses become entangled in media and communications technologies will be explored later in this chapter.

However, I assert here that the failure of communications cannot be solely attributed to the failures of communications technologies, but that these failures are material in nature nonetheless. My primary point of emphasis here, is that perfect communication is impossible by way of media, and thus perfect precision cannot be the aim of media and communications theory. The space of perfect fidelity is the process of communion—the eradication of difference between subjects, in contrast to communication, which necessitates distinction. The differentiation between communion and communication is drawn in Tim Ingold’s (1986) assertion that “communion suggests the interpenetration or merging of conscious subjects, as opposed to their individuation, which we take to be a precondition for communicative interaction”, he continues, where “persons are joined in communion, they are separated as individuals in communication” (276). Ingold’s assertion regarding separation cannot be construed to imply that communication undoes relation. Rather, communication, with its precondition of separation, becomes the basis for sociality and social relationships (Ingold 1986). This idea echoes Valentin Voloshinov’s

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actors have on each other? Ultimately, I assert relationality and assemblage-thinking (as outlined in chapter 1) undoes deterministic assertions—so while I contend the importance of materiality, I avoid the language of cause and effects as recommended by Mitchell and Hansen.



(1973) premise of sociality and language where he contends that signs only arise in their location “between organized individuals” (12). Vološinov asserts that it “is essential that the two individuals be *organized socially*, that they compose a group (a social unit); only then can the medium of signs take shape between them” (12). Here, communication only exists as a possibility because of the differentiation between actors, and it is this differentiation that becomes the guarantor of infidelity, but also the precondition for sociality. In this sense, communication studies must recognize media and communication as simultaneous threats to, and possibilities for, connection—this argument reflects my assertion of leaking as both threat and opportunity. The following will interrogate how these dynamics between sociality, communication, technology, and leaking become complicated through networks.

### **Technology, Networks**

It is here that I want to focus on the question of technology raised in the previous section—however, I must first open with a caveat. The introduction to this project references the difficulty of trying to contain the subject of the leak in what is perhaps one of the most overdetermined and rigidly structured cultural forms—that of the doctoral dissertation. It is out of great respect to my program of Communications & Culture that I am attempting to represent the question of technology as one of media and communications. However, it is also out of great respect to the interdisciplinarity of my program that I am insisting that the technology question does not simply nor easily fit here. Rather, this section weaves in and out of discourses, sites, and logics that will be explored later in this work. It introduces ideas and moves away from them quickly. The question of technology, like the question of the leak itself, concerns politics, the body, the material world, and theoretical possibilities—each of these subjects make up individual

(though, not entirely distinct) chapters that will be encountered later in this work. Nor are the questions raised here entirely separate from questions about media and communications noted above—rather they are extensions, another thread in the knot. I ask the reader to bear with me as I introduce some thoughts about technology that may seem only loosely relevant until this work is taken as a whole.

I want to reassert some of the ideas from above that continue into this section on technology. Firstly, that media are the intermediary connection between actors and thus are the form of communication. Secondly, that communication is not a zero-sum game, but rather exists as a spectrum. The absence of communication (zero) only exists as a hypothetical, in a vacuum—in our reality of multiple actors (more than zero), communication is a question of quality—not a question *whether* we are communicating or not, but rather *what* we are communicating, *to whom*, and *in what form* and venue.<sup>28</sup> To these ends communications theory becomes subsumed within questions of technology, public spheres, transmission—the means, modes, and sites through which communication may take place. In regards to the perspective of technological determinism,<sup>29</sup> we must remember that that dilemma that is put forth “is probably a false problem, since technology is society, and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools” (Castells 2010a, 104). In this sense, society itself can be understood as a technology, an amalgamation of dynamics which serve particular ends. But to understand technology as a set of particular social dynamics requires us to consider the ways power is often exercised through these means. Michel Foucault’s (2000) work on power largely

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28. This assertion follows Stuart Hall’s foundational framing of encoding and decoding media whereby the process of communication is one of signification and interpretation.

29. Andrew Feenberg defines technological determinism as follows: “determinism rests on the assumption that technologies have an autonomous functional logic that can be explained without reference to society” (2010, 8).

considered government as “a function of technology”, as opposed to the “hard technology, the technology of wood, of fire, of electricity” (364). A substantive discourse on technology must, of course, consider both. These dynamics are constituted by the interaction of social systems and material factors that are so deeply entwined that we cannot consider them separately. Regardless of the materialist question of origin, “technology (or the lack of it) embodies the capacity of societies to transform themselves, as well as the uses to which societies, always in a conflictive process, decide to put their technological potential” (Castells 2010a, 104). But our “technological potential” is often overdetermined—as Andrew Feenberg describes “technology gives the illusion of godlike power to master nature and bend it to our will” (2017, 1). Here, technology is often thought of as a tool, a mechanism through which a thing, object, or outcome might be obtained. Thinking of technology as a “means” emphasizes its origination from the concept of *techné*. Jonathan Sterne, citing Aristotle, notes that *techné* is the “process of producing things in the world... and the capacity or knowledge of contingency—practical knowledge—that allows and accounts for that production” (91–92). *Techné* is thus the means through which possibility is transformed into materiality. To these ends, Sterne argues that we should think of communication *as techné*, the means through which we make things happen. Here, he echoes Castells’s assertions about the impossibility of separating technology, communication, and society: “A concept of communication as *techné* also requires us to rethink the relationships we posit between bodies and technologies. Modern media are vast aggregates or assemblages of techniques, institutions, and technologies” (94). *Techné*, in this sense, is a dynamic, more so than it is a series of objects. The material aspect of technology is less of a concern in Martin Heidegger’s exploration of *techné* in “The Question Concerning Technology” (1977), perhaps one of the most well-known postulations on the subject. Here, he describes *techné* as the

“revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing” (18). For Heidegger, technology is a mode of setting forth. Heidegger sees technology as a simultaneous opportunity and threat—he suggests an incredible possibility in its tendency for revelation, ascribing it the ability to unveil truths. However, harnessing the potential of technology is dangerous—to harness, to both control and make use of, requires a constraining of technology’s potential. Here, the revelatory ability of technology becomes limited by the process of enframing—a mere “setting upon” of a desired potential, rather than the “coming-to-pass” of truth. Thinking of technology as a means to something else limits its real potential. Heidegger asserts that “the question concerning technology is the question concerning the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, comes to pass” (18). In this, he asks us to consider the ways the world reveals itself beyond our attempts to enframe it. Here, we can recognize the essence of modern technology as a mechanism of control, but also how the world can reveal itself through both the successes and the failures of technology. This theory of technology becomes particularly useful in thinking about modern ICTs and the expository possibilities of leaking. Technological leaks bear the same messy attributes as “unconcealment” in Heidegger’s view of technology. Leaks are the outcomes of our attempts to enframe—they are literal revelations. For some, communication failures, broken technologies, and malfunctioning devices may represent the limitations of technological developments, but what this project asserts is that these moments are fruitful opportunities to explore the limitations of our expectations and our assumptions about structure. Here, leaking represents possibilities for revelation, something worthwhile of further investigation.

While Heidegger's text is foundational for disciplines such as science and technology studies and philosophy of science,<sup>30</sup> his conception of technology is rather auxiliary to areas of study such as professional communications, communication design, and media production. Rather, most vocational and lay discourses tend to consider technology in terms of instrumentality as opposed to essence. Instrumental conceptions of technology often define the phenomena in terms of usefulness (communications, production, logistics), benefits (speed, efficiency, entertainment) and technical and industrial advancements (electricity, telecoms, robotics). In certain discourses, the machinic, non-human, elements of technology are at once over and underdetermined: on the one hand the human aspect of technology is only considered insofar as it becomes a tool or prosthetic for human need, but is thought to be entirely distinct from the organic world and only animated by our will; on the other, it is seen as a devious departure from the natural, something that threatens what it means to be human, something that is, in a sense, self-animated, and a non-moral agent. This polar framing of technology, much more common in the first instances of autonomous self-regulating machines, is much more difficult to uphold considering the deepening entanglements of human and technological networks in the present moment.

Philosophical discourses, on the other hand, have a more nuanced tradition in thinking about the ways that the body (and by extension, the natural) are entangled with technology. An example of this comes from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012) whose narrative of perception asserts that the objects and technologies through which perception is extended, are, in

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30. Foundational is not meant to imply that it is not critiqued or contested within these disciplines.

some sense, extensions of the body.<sup>31</sup> While philosophy has addressed the intersection of the body and technology more substantively than other discourses, Don Ihde (1991) asserts that these philosophical traditions have underplayed the material realities of questions of technology (1991). What becomes apparent through the literature written before the network saturation of the latter half of the twentieth century, is that single disciplines cannot address the complexity of our social and embodied relationships with technology. It is only through the interdisciplinarity that develops alongside technology itself that our imaginaries about mechanical and natural life develop a theoretical compatibility. Here, technology and machines become “an extension of life, of vitality, of living force” (Hacking 1998) as seen in the works of Georges Canguilhem’s ([1952] 2008) *La Connaissance de la Vie* and Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” (in Haraway [1985]1991). It is at this point, with the enmeshing of the machinic and living, that we begin to figure the network as an intersection of both human and non-human (or rather, more-than-human) actors. Here, the network becomes the means through which technological processes and human processes blend together—where the human and the technological become increasingly implicated in one-another. None of this is to suggest that this is a new phenomenon, but rather, that networks and technology become increasingly imbricated, and their imbrication further exacerbates their development and entanglement with one another. So while neither networks nor technology are themselves new, they are particularly pervasive in the contemporary moment.

The interconnectivity of devices with each other, with their users, and their users with each other has been argued to mark the later part of the twentieth century as the “network

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31. It is, however, worth noting that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology intersects here with Marshall McLuhan’s later assertions from within communications theory that “all media are extensions of our own bodies and senses” (116).

society” (Castells 2010; Van Dijk 2006). The deepening of ICT networks amongst and within primordial (though never fixed) social and cultural networks has, in some senses, moved us closer to the immediate. Simply, networks connect us. Castells sets the beginning stages of the network society in the United States (if not, more specifically, in California) in the 1970s on the back of the booming electronics industry and military funding into technological advancement. While, I agree with the significance that Castells’s places on this era, the rise of network thinking in the tech industry cannot neglect the influence of Cybernetic thought forwarded by Norbert Wiener in the 1950s and 1960s. Wiener’s thinking on machine systems asserted that computational processes demonstrated a complexity that can be found in nature (in organisms and social dynamics alike) and exceed the complexity of our own natural systems. While Castells’s reading of the origins of “network society” does not reference cybernetic theory, this mode of thinking defines the ontological possibility of even conceiving of confluences between natural systems and technology that underlines our societal shift into one of entangled networks. James Carey and John Quirk (1970) situate networks, the internet particularly, in a lineage of earlier electronic technologies including electric power, electronics, cybernetics, computers, and information technologies. While Castells’s epoch-making work focuses on the embeddedness of networks after these origins, the general discourse of media and communications is generally in agreement that the immense technological development of ICTs and network systems in the twentieth century transform out of a long lineage of social and industrial relationships (Crary 2007; Kittler 2010).

Our thinking on society, the body, and the self, and the ways these intersect with questions of technology evolve out of, and alongside, the development of the internet. The internet, the origins of which are aptly addressed in the abundance of works that make up

“internet studies”,<sup>32</sup> has become a defining technology of the postmodern era. My purpose in discussing the internet here, is to illustrate how the technology underpins our conceptions of networks in the contemporary—that, in some sense, the internet sits as a network “par excellence” in the mind of the public that it has created. This is not to suggest that the internet is the only network that underlies the flows of ideas, capital, people and things, but that it is a central thoroughfare in which these circulations take place. Moreover, the internet is not only a dominant means through which these things are logistically organized, but it has ontological, epistemic, and ideological consequences, and thus infiltrates the organizing principles of life itself. It would be difficult here to even gesture towards a mere handful of works that possibly define the discourses concerning the social implications of internet technologies on contemporary life—the reality is that this idea informs nearly all sociologically concerned work produced since the 1990s. My main point of emphasis regarding the intensification of increasingly networked spaces circles back to Virilio’s accidentology: that while networks, by definition, link together, they also form new sites for failure.

In spite of the internet’s origins as a technology of the military, a net-utopianism around the democratic and social possibilities of a web 2.0 was in full force by the mid-1990s. John Perry Barlow’s (1996) “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” avowed the internet as “the new home of Mind”—and while certain activists felt empowered by the idea of a world wide web “that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live,” the technology’s radical reworking of publics, identities, and relationships has been somewhat more

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32. See, for example: Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet, Inside Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); and Andrew Feenberg and Norm Friesen, *(Re)inventing the Internet: Critical Case Studies* (Rotterdam; Boston: Sense, 2012), and Katherine Hayles. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).



complex than the strictly emancipatory opportunity imagined by some. I am not asserting predominantly positive or negative consequences of net technologies, but am rather following the generally accepted assertion that these technologies have both disrupted, and entrenched, positive and negative social dynamics simultaneously. Navigating the increasingly deterritorialized spaces of online life has been described by Ken Hillis (2009) as an experience of “online leakiness”—a constant fluidity, a disorientation in navigating representation, personae, bodies, and physical space (232). Here, we navigate new spatializations defined by the interactions of media networks, technologies, social systems and ideologies. The entanglement of media within cultural, political, technological and spatial realms, particularly influenced by the expansion of networked media, encouraged media and communications theory to think through media in terms of ecology. While the discourse of media ecologies predates the internet as we know it today, its logic concerns the extension of technological networks into natural systems, as opposed to natural environments themselves. For Anna Munster, the “flows” of networking are “expressed through its graphs, visualizations, links and nodes—with quite specific choreographies, diagramming, databasing, auto- and allopoietic loopings which energize network ecologies” (105–106). Here, she notes that these aspects of the network become intertwined with the *networked dispositif*. This entanglement of power and networks will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter, but for the purpose of this section it is imperative that we recognize that networks have the potential to mobilize many flows—not solely the emancipatory opportunities outlined in the net-utopianism of the late twentieth century, but flows of power, control, and domination as well.

Gabriella Coleman and Christopher Kelty note “in 2017, it is nearly impossible to open a newspaper and not stumble upon something about hacks, leaks, or breaches” and that “with the

scale of computer use and reliance on digital forms of data, no sector of society is immune to these data dumps, infiltrations, and floods” (2017). This first section of this chapter sought to outline the existing discourses in media and communications theory that together trace a trajectory towards this current moment of leakiness that Coleman and Kelty describe. In laying out these works I hope to emphasize the material and affective conditions that underlie media and communications discourses as they may relate to leaking. Firstly, that media denotes an in-between that is born out of a desire to communicate, and that while media work to traverse the space between, immediacy through traditional communication (e.g., through language, ICTs, etc.) is impossible. It is in this sense, that media is always an intermediary. The spaces between what we desire, what we communicate, and what is received cannot be contained and transmitted in perfect fidelity, if there were to be such a thing. Secondly, communication does not, nor has it ever, existed separate from technology. Rather technology denotes the making of possibility, and it has become increasingly entangled within network-centric thinking as technology, systems and culture are increasingly imbricated within each other.

Throughout these discussions I have gestured towards the idea that affect, aesthetics, and ethics, if they are granted space within the realm of media and communications theory, bear a certain possibility for addressing (though not eliminating) the idea of communication failure—or rather, how we come to terms with mediation (and its non-immediacy). In stressing that the past century has seen to the entrenching of network technologies within culture, I have glossed over certain ideological effects of this material shift—moreover, I have not accounted for the way this shift implicates embodiment. While this chapter will remain focused around the material concerns of leaky media (especially in the contemporary moment, as signaled to by Coleman and Kelty), the genealogy traced above will be reasserted three times over once this work is

completed. The scaffolding of modernity underlies the technologies developed to generate, manage and circulate information. If we know these structures are beginning to leak, what can we expect of the technologies operationalized to control power and capital (chapter 3), in addition to bodies and material flows (chapter 4)? While this project as a whole addresses these structures and conditions together, the next section will consider the contemporary state of leakiness by way of the information leak.

### **Analogue and Digital Leaks**

Mass communication technologies inevitably influence the nature of the leak, inciting the question of how we might think of the analogue versus the digital leak. The analogue equivalent to 2010's Cablegate release, which will be explored later in this section, was the 1971 leak of the Pentagon Papers. Daniel Ellsberg's account of the leaking of classified material about the Vietnam War involved locked safes, photocopiers, and reams upon reams of paper. This varies greatly from Chelsea Manning's horrifically banal account of bringing compact disks disguised as home-burned pop music<sup>33</sup> into her work terminal in order to discretely transfer less than two gigabytes of information. In this section, I explore these two leak events as a means of interrogating how *form* effects media's ability to signify. Patrick McCurdy (2013) argues that "the transition from an analogue age to the network society... shapes who can be a leaker and how the process of leaking can be carried out" as it has "fundamentally altered how information

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33. In an online chat with Adrian Lamo—the person who eventually turned her in to investigators—Manning described the process of moving information as follows: "i would come in with music on a CD-RW...labelled with something like "Lady Gaga"... erase the music... then write a compressed split file...no-one suspected a thing... =L kind of sad...i didnt even have to hide anything... everyone just sat at their workstations... watching music videos / car chases / buildings exploding... and writing more stuff to CD/DVD... the culture fed opportunities" (Merged Manning-Lamo Chat Logs 2010).

is generated, accessed, controlled, distributed, and, ultimately, leaked” (123)—it is from this point that this section questions how the leak has shifted throughout the twentieth century and into the contemporary moment. These differences will be explored through two case studies of leaks: firstly, the leaking of the Pentagon Papers, and secondly, the Cablegate leaks. After introducing these cases, they will be explored comparatively to demonstrate how material and technological shifts influence leaking over the forty year period between the two occurrences. These cases will provide a framework whereby the material effects of technological shifts can be recognized as influential variables in leaking more generally, interrogating how our contemporary and near—future relationships to information and data affect how leaking functions in culture. In spite of this project’s commitment to interdisciplinarity, the political implications of leaking (in the cases of the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate releases—in addition to others) will be explored separately in chapter 3 “Political Realities of Leaks”. While the material (in terms of the *form* of the leak) and political consequences of leaking are anything but separate, they will be disentangled over these two respective chapters for the purpose of organization. While the *realpolitik* of the leak can be somewhat constrained here in order to leave space for a thorough examination of it in the following chapter, I hope to make the more amorphous implications of “the Political”, to use Chantal Mouffe’s term (2005), present throughout this entire project.

Before delving into the cases, I want to consider the analogue and the digital more generally. The medium of the leak is consequential to how it flows—whether the content of the leak takes form through new or old media, bears weight on its circulation. Irrespective of the dynamic of leaking, the interplay of form and content underlies any question of a media object’s capacity for signification. While the material implications of leaks and leakiness are explored

throughout this work, the material effects of medium itself—in this case, digital versus analogue media—are pertinent for understanding a particular medium’s propensity for leakiness regardless of whether it ever becomes an information leak or not. In exploring the work of Wendy Chun, McKenzie Wark poses the question of whether “the relation *between* the analogue and the digital” is “itself analogue or digital” (234)? The relation between analogue and digital media types is most often framed in terms of difference. In *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich (2002) makes the distinction between new and old media based on the following characteristics: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding. Regardless of whether media were originally digital, or converted from analogue media, Manovich argues that new media “are composed of digital code; they are numerical representations”—to these ends, new media “can be described formally (mathematically)” and “is a subject to algorithmic manipulation” (27). This numerical representation presupposes the other conditions (modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding). Manovich’s argument contends that certain “old” forms of media follow digital logics, and thus some distinctions between analogue and digital, and new and old media are troublesome. Through the cases below, we can see how the distinction between analogue and digital becomes slippery, but what is also evident, is that the form of media-objects, and their susceptibility to certain distributions, profoundly affect their place in culture. Here, it matters less whether the object is purely digital or analogue (or, as in most cases, a hybrid of many media forms), but rather how media forms inscribe certain movements and flows. In exploring existing media and communications discourses, the first section of this chapter continued to circle back to the themes of intermediaries and interfaces, and these also continue here.

While theorists such as Galloway (2012) and Fuller and Goffey (2012) gesture towards the furtive nature of interfaces in their tendency to conceal and obscure information processes, they would not contest that user usability is often a guiding intention in interface design. The concern in terms of the interface occurs because of the absolute proliferation of interfaces in culture today. So, while the usability of interfaces appears as a benign and worthwhile goal, interfaces have a determinate role in influencing our actions in essential areas of life. The digitization of media has increased this *interface effect*, as Galloway would refer to it. Manovich (2002) frames this intensifying of interfacing particularly within the prevalence of computers:

The term [human computer interface] HCI was coined when the computer was mostly used as a tool for work. However, during the 1990s, the identity of the computer has changed. In the beginning of the decade, a computer was still largely thought of as a simulation of a typewriter, a paintbrush or a drafting ruler—in other words, as a tool used to produce cultural content which, once created, will be stored and distributed in its appropriate media: printed page, film, photographic print, electronic recording.

By the end of the decade, as Internet use became commonplace, the computer's public image was no longer that of a tool but also that of a universal media machine, used not only to author, but also to store, distribute and access all media. (69)

While the implications of analogue and digital mediation will be explored in the case studies below, my point of emphasis here is that the material forms of the media that we interact with influence how we interact with that media and how that media in turn operates within culture. It is to these ends that I move to interrogate how the shifting in the materiality and form of media influences the fact that “hardly a day passes without news of a major hack, leak, or breach,” (Coleman and Kelty 2017) and moreover, question how the materiality of these leaks have affected the way we interact with them. These are the questions that guide the case studies below.

## *The Pentagon Papers*

*What did photocopies mean—on their own terms—before the digital media that now frames them as old and analog?*

Lisa Gitelman,  
“Daniel Ellsberg and the Lost Idea of the Photocopy”

As the “first television war”<sup>34</sup> the American conflict in Vietnam has been a particularly fruitful subject of investigation for media scholars. Taking place from 1955–1975, the war occurred during the “Golden Age of Television”—George Bailey notes:

All those years there were newscasts, radio and television, local and network, morning and evening. There were also the regularly scheduled interview and magazine programs, plus news specials, documentaries, congressional hearings, elections, press conferences, and even Vietnam-influenced entertainment programs. Without question the war was one of the longest running stories in the history of television news. (147)

But while coverage of the conflict was present across media from its onset, it was not until the escalation of 1965 that the war became of particular concern to the American public (Lunch and Sperlich 1979, 22). Bailey (1976) argues that “the significance of the 1965–1970 period is, in part, that it was the bitter middle phase of the war, the dark center section of the tunnel. The period ran from Johnson’s escalation to Nixon’s troop withdrawals” (149). The intersection of the American public’s concern regarding the war, paired with the increase coverage of the conflict on American news networks, resulted in a general belief amongst media theorists and

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34. The source of the original designation of the conflict in Vietnam as the *first television war* is difficult to determine. By the time the war was over, its status as being the first war to have been documented via television was common and widespread—almost matter-of-fact. A review in *Variety* magazine from May 4, 1966 notes a 30 minute program airing on WMAQ-TV Chicago titled “The First Television War” (“Television Reviews”, 182)—this is the earliest reference to this description that I can confirm. Since then, the idea has been analyzed by scholars such as George Bailey (1976), Michael Mandelbaum (1982), Daniel Hallin (1986), and Stephen Vlastos (1986), as well as communicated throughout news media and popular press articles.

politicians that the news coverage of the conflict in Vietnam greatly influenced public opinion. Often attributed to Marshall McLuhan, the idea that “Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America”<sup>35</sup>, echoes through to contemporary analyses of the intersection of media and military endeavors—these arguments assert with certainty that the opinions of, and reactions to conflict, are influenced by its mediation. When the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force began compiling and analyzing the documents into a report on the United States’ actions during the war, half of Americans viewed US troops’ presence in the country as a mistake—by the time the confidential report was leaked in 1971, that number had grown to nearly 70 percent (Lunch and Sperlich 1979). The mediation of the Vietnam War has been interrogated by a wide range of scholars, but the war itself is not my subject here. Rather, this case study focuses on the leaking of one of the war’s media objects—the Pentagon Papers. Here, I explore how the functioning of the leak, and its material form, are constituted in a particular social context. In looking at the leaking of these documents, I want to pose the question of how our relationship to leaking (in this case information) has shifted over time—this will be done through a comparison of the 1971 Pentagon Papers leak with the 2010 Cablegate release introduced later in this section.

The “Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force,” known more popularly as “the Pentagon Papers” can be most easily accessed through a quick visit to The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration’s (NARA) website. Here it can be downloaded in full, occupying, in total, 6.32 GB of space on your personal computer’s hard drive. The complete report, in its physical and original form is described as consisting of “48 boxes and approximately 7,000 declassified pages” (NARA 2011). I want to stay with this difference: that

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35. See, for example, *Oxford Essential Quotations* (2016), which notes this remark was made by McLuhan to *The Montreal Gazette* May 16, 1975 (Ratcliffe). In spite of being commonly attributed to McLuhan, I have not been able to confirm him as the original source.



is, the difference in form (size, shape, configuration) between the now publicly accessible report available online and the 1971 leak of the documents as featured in newspaper reports. Also relevant here is how the aforementioned forms differ too from the “top secret” paper commissioned in 1967. The "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force" originally took the form of 47 bound volumes, 15 copies of each, distributed amongst a variety of chief staff members within the US government and at RAND Corporation. The report, according to Lisa Gitelman (2012), was produced by thirty-six authors compiling 4,000 existing documents and 3,000 pages of original narrative (116)—in total it weighed 60 pounds (Schoenfeld 2010). Authored by the appointed Vietnam Task Force and ordered by then Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the report provided a written record of the United States’ actions in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967. The report was confidential from its onset—it was even written without the knowledge of then president Lyndon B. Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

Though the original document was not identical to what was leaked, its form influenced the process through which Daniel Ellsberg could set it forth. Having previously contributed insights into the “papers”, Ellsberg had already been aware of the report’s existence when he learned two copies of the completed volumes were being held by the RAND Corporation for whom he worked. Ellsberg requested one set of the documents to be sent to him where he then stored them in his office safe for a number of months. As his anti-war sentiments grew, Ellsberg (2016) came to confront the fact that “what I had in my safe at Rand was seven thousand pages of documentary evidence of lying, by four presidents, and their administrations over twenty-three years, to conceal plans and actions of mass murder. I decided I would stop concealing that myself” (193). Gitelman describes the process of copying what came to be known as the Pentagon Papers as “a lengthy disaggregation and multiplication process” (2012, 114).

Photocopying the volumes required removing bindings, collating, transporting, and the manual “declassification” of the materials. Official declassification processes are complex and contentious (Pozen 2013, 50)—as a means of avoiding suspicion from copy shop employees, Ellsberg’s declassification of the documents was achieved by way of cutting off pages’ “top secret” headings, or by masking the notations during their Xeroxing. This endeavor, eventually completed by Ellsberg with the help of others who he trusted (including his own children), required hours upon hours of work, a host of tools, various locations, and intense logistical planning—all before the documents were even circulated to the press.

The coordination of actors required to put the leak into action was complicated—it required the organization of several news outlets, moving the leak strategically, across several jurisdictions in order to avoid injunction as it was delivered, literally, into the public’s hands. The material reality of leaking the Pentagon Papers played a fundamental role in how the leak



Figure 3: Still from the 20th Century Fox film *The Post* (2017) showing Ben Bagdikian (played by Bob Odenkirk) transporting one of the Xeroxed copies of the report from New York to Boston.

was constituted. Gitelman (2016) argues that Ellsberg's replication of the documents via Xerox machine is what came to define the unitary Secretary of Defense Task Force report—a single whitepaper out of the Pentagon—as ‘the Pentagon papers’ (emphasis on *papers*—plural) and eventually ‘the Pentagon Papers’ (emphasis on *Papers*—capitalized) (114). Here, the material form of the leak, and the processes through which it is produced, imbues the leak with particular set of consequences and opportunities. In the process of being photocopied, it became a new document: no longer the report from the Secretary of Defence Task Force, but the Pentagon Papers. To have the leak *in-hand*, to encounter it, initially meant dealing with banker boxes of full of documents. While Daniel Ellsberg has provided several accounts of his leaking of the documents,<sup>36</sup> the most visually captivating representation of the leak can be seen in the 20th Century Fox film *The Post* (2017). There are several scenes where we get glimpses of the leak: for example, in the movie-still above the character of Washington Post journalist Ben Bagdikian can be seen transporting the documents from New York to Boston.<sup>37</sup> Here, the leak occupies its own seat on the plane, the boxes, bound by packing string, buckled in like a personified informant. When the leak finally arrives to Ben Bradlee (the executive editor of the Washington Post, played by Tom Hanks in the film), the viewer sees it spread across his living room floor, a near-insurmountable pile of papers, being shuffled, fingered through, mapped out in physical

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36. See, for example: Daniel Ellsberg (2003). *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. New York: Penguin Books.

37. In spite of the movie's portrayal of Ben Bagdikian transporting the documents, Robert Boyd , Washington bureau chief of Knight Newspapers Inc. (then parent company of the Philadelphia Inquirer) has said “There's a scene in *The Post* where a man is on an airplane with a cardboard box...that would have been me” (Rowan 2018). Boyd's account of coming into possession of the documents are as complicated as those depicted in the film. From this we can speculate similar experiences of all people involved in moving the documents around the country, from news outlet to news outlet.

space. Regardless of whether some of these aspects were embellished for the film, this was the material reality of the leak—it was big, it was heavy, a literal data dump.



Figure 4: Still from the 20th Century Fox film *The Post* (2017), which depicts several Washington Post journalists searching through the thousands of documents from the McNamara study in the living room of Post editor Ben Bradlee, played by Tom Hanks.

### *Cablegate*

*its open diplomacy... world-wide  
anarchy in CSV format... its  
Climategate with a global scope, and  
breathtaking depth... its beautiful,  
and horrifying...*

Chelsea Manning,  
“Merged Manning-Lamo Chat Logs”

In 2010, a vast number of US diplomatic cables were published online. This release-event, which came to be known as Cablegate, drew numerous comparisons to the 1971 leaking of the Pentagon Papers. Through its name, Cablegate bears a direct relation to its predecessor.

The actions taken by the Nixon Administration to address the leaking of the Pentagon Papers resulted in an audio-taping controversy that later developed into the “Watergate scandal”. The clandestine nature of the break-in at the Watergate office-complex set forth a sardonic nomenclature for spurious situations—from celebrity gossip to National Security issues the suffix *-gate* continues to designate a variety of scandalous events. The severity of the secrets contained in the cables obtained by WikiLeaks decades after the events surrounding the release of the Pentagon Papers, resulted in the 2010 leak’s designation as “Cablegate”. But in spite of being a namesake of a related controversy, the material differences between Cablegate and the Pentagon Papers are profound and will be explored throughout this second part of the chapter.

Chelsea Manning’s delivery of the Iraq and Afghan War logs (along with other diplomatic cables) to Wikileaks did not require the purchase of an extra seat on an airplane, nor did it require her to directly hand the information off to the organization’s founder Julian Assange in person. Rather, the files were copied from their home in the Department of Defense and CDNE databases—systems networked across numerous US military stations and government buildings—via rewritable compact discs, transferred to Manning’s laptop, and then moved onto a secure disk (SD) media card. This SD card was not even the final form of the leak before it was eventually released into the public. The files were moved across countries, networks, media forms, and devices before they were ever posted for the public to trawl through themselves. Manning’s discussions with Assange did not involve strategic networking of cryptic dialogue over payphone calls (as we see in the Hollywood account of the delivery of the Pentagon Papers to their publishers), rather her exchanges with Assange were casual conversations that took place over online chat protocols such as IRC and Jabber. The eventual transfer of the original cables was completed via The Onion Router (TOR)—free software

available for download by anyone. This is not to say that the leaking of the Iraq War logs and the other documents released as part of Cablegate was a simple task,<sup>38</sup> but rather that releasing, disclosing and divulging information does not require the same actions that it once did.

Manning continued to leak information to WikiLeaks over the course of several months, and while both releases (Cablegate and the Pentagon Papers) attest to the United States' ethically



Figure 5: Still from the video “Collateral Murder”, WikiLeaks (2010)

dubious and horrifically violent yet unsuccessful navigation of foreign conflicts, the intensity between the media are incredibly distinctive. WikiLeaks's first release from the data they received from Manning was the video footage “Collateral Murder”<sup>39</sup> and it was announced on

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38. Nor is it meant to underplay the emotional reality where, in both cases, the leakers knew that they would likely be facing charges under the Espionage Act if their identities were discovered. The legal frameworks of leaking information will be explored in the following chapter.

39. “Collateral Murder” is the title WikiLeaks gave to the video footage of a U.S. airstrike on July 17, 2007 in Baghdad, Iraq. The video captures several strikes by an Air

the site as follows: “5th April 2010 10:44 EST WikiLeaks has released a classified US military video depicting the indiscriminate slaying of over a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad...”, the concluding paragraph notes “WikiLeaks wants to ensure that all the leaked information it receives gets the attention it deserves.”<sup>40</sup> The footage was released with a host of supplementary information including a transcript of the video, weblinks to media reports on the incident at the time of the original event’s occurrence, as well as previously leaked copies of the “US Rules of Engagement for Iraq”,<sup>41</sup> which official responses to the incident claimed the perpetrators of the event to be operating within. WikiLeaks’s publication was not merely the video footage—it was an assemblage of documentation, statements, policy, images, and transcripts. It was not just a leak, but a map of where this leak sits within a diagram of power.

The question I want to pose here is how a media-object’s form affects its signification. While this inquiry becomes bound by Marshall McLuhan’s famous assertion that “the medium is the message” (1994), I want to explore how this idea functions particularly in the case of leaking. In situating the leak within media studies, the first section of this chapter asserted that the leak is at once a medium itself and is also incredibly mediated. The leak is defined by what it leaks out of, what it leaks, and what it leaks into. As Katherine Hayles (2002) has argued about the text, so too is true of the leak: “to change the physical form of the artifact is not merely to change the act

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Weapons Team including opening fire upon a group of men suspected to be insurgents. More than a dozen people were killed, including two Reuters reporters whose equipment had been mistaken as a possible RPG. See WikiLeaks (2010).

40. WikiLeaks. “Collateral Murder.” WikiLeaks.com, April 5, 2010.  
<https://collateralmurder.wikileaks.org/>.

41. Wikileaks summarizes the document as follows: “On first reading, the document contains a number of items of interest to the press, including rules about mosque attacks, detention of immams, cross border incursions (including Iran and Syria), the use of mines and riot control agents, terrorist targeting, the destruction of Iraqi government property used by insurgents and even kafkaesque rules for attacks on WMD mobile production labs” (WikiLeaks, 2008).

of reading (although that too has consequences the importance of which we are only beginning to recognize) but profoundly to transform the metaphoric network structuring the relation of word to world” (2002, 23). Implicated in this are the changing network dynamics that developed in the time between the two leaks. The section below will explore the material differences between the 1971 leaking of the Pentagon Papers and the 2010 Cablegate releases. Here, I will interrogate how the media objects’ forms affect their signification and attempt to account for how these releases have transformed the metaphoric network that structures their relations to the world.

### **Material Differences**

While Patrick McCurdy (2013) asserts that “the rise of the network society has shaped the landscape of leaking and, in fact, has changed the type of person who can be a leaker” (134), this section argues that networks change the leak itself. I want to turn back to Joseph Vogl’s (2007) assertion that media, while making things readable, audible, visible, perceptible, can render phenomenon anaesthetic, and ask how we might consider the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate leaks as aesthetic or anaesthetic events? In the case of the release of the Pentagon Papers, the leak took two forms: firstly, as the Xeroxed duplicates (and additional partial copies) created by Daniel Ellsberg and eventually delivered to the press; and secondly, as a series of articles published in the *New York Times*<sup>42</sup> and the *Washington Post*. In both instances the leak is not the original. The "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force" now exists in many forms: firstly, as the original physical report, which took the form of fifteen copies of forty-seven volumes stored in government official’s offices and in “top secret” safes at RAND

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42. And by extension the book *The Pentagon Papers: The Secret History of the Vietnam War* by Neil Sheehan, E. W. Kenworthy, and Hendrick Smith ([1971] 2017)



Corporation,<sup>43</sup> and secondly, as the digital archives of the declassified report, hosted on the NARA website, publicly accessible since 2011.

But even the original document—that is, the bound multivolume work—is a pastiche of reproduced documentation. The original document is a compilation too, a history “made with and out of photocopies, it seems—and photocopies of photocopies, photocopies of transcripts and cables, photocopies of hectograph copies, etc.” (Gitelman 2012, 116). Lisa Gitelman, based on Leslie H. Gelb’s account (the person who directed the document’s preparation), notes that the



Figure 6: Robert McNamara's personal copy of “United States—Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967” [“Pentagon Papers”], 1969, archived at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts. Photograph by author.

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43. Two of the fifteen original copies of the report are archived at NARA. The whereabouts of the thirteen others are unknown to me.

heterogeneity of the final version was only apparent once it was typed and replicated in-house at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (116). The document was made up from transcripts, cables, and maps, mere representations of the covert operations happening on the ground in Vietnam. These components were assessments designed by the interpretations of the report's collaborators for presentation to policy hawks, bureaucrats, and administrators. Daniel Ellsberg remarks that "official reporting... is grossly inadequate to the job of educating high-level decision-makers... beyond the chain of paper and electric signals, out from Saigon, into the world of red dirt, green rice fields, burned schoolrooms..." (quoted in Gitelman 119). This comment illustrates how the document likely (always) failed to convey the severity of the conflict to even its intended audience. It is in this sense that we can interrogate, as Vogl suggests, whether medium (in this case, official reportage and analysis) renders experience anaesthetic. Ultimately, this is the very problem that has always existed within discourses on representation—and posed directly in reference to images of Vietnam by Susan Sontag (2004) in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. The question that I want to pose is whether there are possibilities for aesthetic and affective experience opened up through the leak. As Gitelman points out in the case of the Pentagon Papers "a leaked copy has the potential to mirror—one might say reproduce—its iteration as a form of critique" (120). So while the medium of the official report might collapse aesthetic possibilities—in that embodied experience simply becomes rendered as typed-words on paper—the reproduction of the report, and its circulation beyond the hands of officials may open up opportunity for criticism. To this point, I argue that criticism cannot exist in a vacuum—it presupposes affective response. If we follow Gitelman's (2012) assertion that reproduction (in this case by way of Xerox) provides for the possibility of critique, then it is possible for affect to exist through mediation. This is not to say that I contest Vogl's premise—

while affect and mediation do not necessarily preclude each other, different modes of mediation bear different possibilities for affect and action. To these ends, leaking can act as a catalyst for affective experience. This idea will be explored in comparing the Pentagon Papers to the content of the Cablegate leaks.

When the Pentagon Papers were first published the leak was described as “The Hottest Leak of the Year” (Roche 1971), “A Great Test” (Frankel 1971), and “Spectacular” (Greider 1971). However, in spite of referring to it as “the most massive leak of secret documents in U.S. history”, *Time* magazine (1971) noted that “the mass of material seemed to repel readers and even other newsmen”. The proclaimers of the exciting nature of the leak were, in fact, the press itself—the response from the public, the entity in which Ellsberg wanted the papers made available to the most, was unclear. In terms of those who find the released report inconspicuous, the question remains whether it was a failure of the *New York Times* and other outlets to convey the significance to the public, or the simple fact that the report, itself, fails to convey its own significance. This is not to say that the content of the report was not important, but that it is rather unremarkable. Leaks can exist in a variety of forms. First, they can be physically and materially identical to the previously contained form (as would be the case if Ellsberg turned over the *original* editions of the report to the press). In this case the object becomes leak once it passes a certain boundary (from private holding into exhibition). Second, leaks can be full adaptations, original fragments, or partial residues of withheld contents. In this case the leak is either transformed from the original when it crosses into an “outside”, or it can be created as leak in the case of duplicates, reproductions and copies. Leaks can also take the form of gestures; whispers, stories, passed notes, memories and recollections. In whatever form, leaks can fall into

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework as indexical, symbolic, or iconographic.<sup>44</sup> While information leaks are more likely to be reproductions or suggestions of their originals than they are to be originals themselves, the information leak most often resembles its original greatly.

In the case of the "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force", the first instantiation of its leak, the Pentagon Papers (the photocopies produced by Ellsberg), shared some resemblance to the news stories that they resulted in. The ways in which it was not identical to its original at once made the aesthetic condition of the copies appear both more, and less, subversive. Ellsberg's declassification of the documents made them appear, purposefully, less surreptitious (i.e. the removing of "classified" notations). However, the process of copying, marred the leak with artifacts: electrostatic markings resulting from Xeroxing Xeroxes (Gitelman 2012). These refraction-motifs represented qualities unique to the leaked copies not present in the original document, and some sense reinvigorated the leak with a furtive aesthetic. Lisa Gitelman also notes that Ellsberg's "do-it-yourself" declassification resulted in the phrase "top secret" to "crop up like dragon's teeth" across the top of many sections (116). But these documents did not end up in the hands of the public, rather the exposition of the contents of the report to the public first appeared as "six pages of deliberately low-key prose and column after gray column of official cables, memorandums and position papers" (*Time* 1971). The material realities of the newspaper printing press at once, provide for, and resist spectacular divulgences. The below section considers the history and development of newspaper printing technologies (and their social influence) in order to question how the media object of the newspaper functioned at the time of the Pentagon Papers' release.

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44. The indexical is the sign that exists out of a direct, physical relation with the object. The symbolic refers to the sign that is interpreted as the object by way of habit of association. The iconographic refers to signification by way of resemblance with the object (Peirce 1991).

## *The Newspaper*

In spite of once unfathomable technological developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) over the past several centuries, the printing press continues to occupy a space of incredible importance for media and communications scholars. From its classification as the progenitor of nationalism (Anderson [1983] 2006), capitalism (Weber [1905] 2003), and the globalized world (McLuhan [1964] 1994), the printing press solidified communication in the Western world as largely typographic for a great period of time (McLuhan [1964] 1994). The printing press allowed for relatively large-scale production and distribution of printed matter which saw to the standardization of languages and increases in literacy rates (Eisenstein, 2009). It is beyond the scope of this project to account for the history of newspapers in its entirety,<sup>45</sup> but it is important to emphasize the historical relationship that newspapers have with information leaking. While history prior to the advent of mechanically reproducible texts bears instances of things falling into the wrong hands—it is difficult to imagine information leaking, as we know it today, without the invention of the printing press, and with that, the development of the newspaper. Information “falling into the wrong hands” does not have the same connotation as information being *leaked*—where the former suggests a transfer of possession from the clutch of one person’s hand into another’s, for something to be leaked implies a *release* from containment, a dispossession of sorts. But what is at the centre of both of these scenarios is the ability to possess information, materially, physically, in a tangible form. I argue here, that the leak always has material implications. This argument follows Graham Jones’s (2016) assertion about media secrecy: “that any objectification, instantiation, or

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45. An incredibly detailed history of these technologies can be found in other works: for the history of the printing press, see Eisenstein (2009); regarding the history of paper documents see Gitelman (2014); as well as the theorists referred to earlier in this section.

entextualization of a secret—an ineluctable feature of its existence as a social phenomenon—creates risks of unintended communicability” (56). This is to say the leak was born out of the conditions of being able to possess information for ourselves—and therefore the origins of information leaks begins with the printing press. While this does not fully address what might constitute “leaking” in primarily oral cultures, nor does it consider whether oral cultures would conceive of the leak in the same way as literate cultures, I assert the condition of information leaking, as it exists today in Western societies, necessitates private ownership of information.<sup>46</sup> This is not entirely surprising considering I have defined the leak throughout this work as a strategic movement from an inside (containment) to an outside (divulsion), and what is private property if not the ultimate instantiation of an inside/outside (private/public)?

It was possible for information to be privately held before the development of the printing press. Prior to the printing press, small edition and unique texts were held by institutions such as cathedral and monastic schools, madrasas, museums, hospitals, and observatories. Being the products of the entangled conditions of immense labour and high costs, books not held by institutions would have only been found in the private possession of the elite. The inability to replicate and circulate information quickly and efficiently meant that texts were rare and special objects, collectibles of the upper class—at this point, even if information could have been made widely available, the public would not have been able to decipher it. This is to say, that while private information existed prior to the invention of the printing press, the information leak could

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46. Here, we can think of the distinction that Walter Ong (2009) makes between orality and literacy. With literacy and the codification of communication, argues Ong, comes certain separations (between memory and the written record for example). Here, communication and property intersect: Print, Ong asserts, “created a new sense of the private ownership of words” (128). He continues, noting that “of course, words were not quite private property...they were still shared property to a degree” (129), however I consider this intersection between print and property to be productive field of inquiry into contemporary notions of privacy.

not have. Returning to the idiom of “falling into the wrong hands,” information in the pre-press era could covertly end up in the possession of another elite, but it was not until the development of the printing press, that information could be divulged in a manner that would connote leaking. It was with the expansion of the popular press, and ultimately in the circulation of relatively affordable newspapers, that the material conditions for the information leak were made possible.

The printing press became not only the material manufacturer of the leak, but if we are to follow the argument of Benedict Anderson (2006) and others, the printing press manufactured the public to which to leak. This, of course, happened over some time—the political economy within which the first newspapers came to be, thwarted the development of substantive critique. Jürgen Habermas (2009) demonstrates that the press played an integral role in the development of the public sphere—that fission between the state and bourgeoisie occurred as “private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated ‘intellectual newspapers’ for use against the public authority itself” (75). The separation between the state and a public of individuals laid the grounds (or pipes) for leaking—it delineated the space of inside/outside. Mark Hampton (2010) qualifies Habermas’s “politics by public discussion” as representing the “educational ideal” in thinking of the press as the fourth estate—whereby “the press serves as an agency of public discussion, in which rival ideas and interests compete with each other until, ideally, the “truth” or common good prevail” (5). Hampton differentiates this idea from what he terms the “representative ideal”, which asserts that the press serves to reflect the public’s interest (6). But despite this distinction, both models assert, in George Boyce’s terms, that the press represents an “‘indispensable link’ between a representative government and its constituents”(6). As emphasized in John Durham Peters’s

account of media noted earlier in this chapter, it is important to stress that these ideals of communication, tend to become complicated and most often go unfulfilled.

This account of the history of the newspaper may give the impression of a trajectory towards boundless information leaks out of secrecy and into the public forum by the time of peak newspaper circulation in the 1970s—but this is not the case. Rather, I argue that the information leak, by way of newspaper, represents certain failures of medium. Not simply in the sense of being doomed to existence in pre-network society—a prospective, and often noted fear of the journalism industry—but new media forms have cultivated new publics that have dampened the effects (as well as affects) of the newspaper leak. In the case of the war in Vietnam, the failure of the newspaper leak to convey the severity of withheld information to the American public, can largely be attributed to the successes of other mediums of the time (the colour photograph and television, for example)—and while this idea will be explored later, here, I want to focus on the aesthetics of textual documentation, which tend to follow a particular form.

The material form of the newspaper at once benefits and prohibits its circulation. What was at a time considered to be light weight and easily distributed is by today's standards, thought to be inconvenient and more logistically challenging than providing web-based news services. Similarly, what was once considered to be an incredible turnaround time—from the moment of the event to its publication in the paper the following day—newspapers in the contemporary moment are considered to be a rather slow form of media compared to the real time updates of events that are now accessible online. Prior to the widespread implementation of radio technologies, the potential of news immediacy made possible through the newspaper was promising. But even at the height of the newspaper, its content outgrew and outpaced its form. In



Tricia Nixon Takes Vows In Garden at White House

WASHINGTON, June 12—In a garden at the White House, Tricia Nixon took her wedding vows to her father-in-law, President Richard Nixon, and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Nixon, on Sunday.

Tricia Nixon, 23, was married to her father-in-law, President Richard Nixon, and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Nixon, on Sunday. The wedding was held in the Rose Garden at the White House.

CITY TO DISCLOSE BUDGETARY TRIMS FOR DEPARTMENTS

Mayor Lindsay has announced his intention to disclose the details of the budgetary cuts that will be made in the city's various departments.

AS MAYORS MEET

Philadelphia, June 12—Mayor Lindsay of New York and other mayors met in Philadelphia to discuss the economic challenges facing major cities.

Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U. S. Involvement

A massive study of how the United States went to war in Indochina, conducted by the Pentagon three years ago, demonstrates that four administrations progressively developed a sense of commitment to a non-Communist Vietnam.

NIXON CRITICIZED AS MAYORS MEET

PHILADELPHIA, June 12—Mayor Lindsay of New York and other mayors met in Philadelphia to discuss the economic challenges facing major cities.

Vast Review of War Took a Year

By HERBIE SMITH In June, 1967, at a time of great national disenchantedness, the House of Representatives passed a resolution to review the Vietnam War.

Jet Hijacker Held Here in \$200,000 Bail

By JOSEPH P. FRIED Court in Brooklyn yesterday ordered a \$200,000 bail for a jet hijacker who was held in custody.

U.S. WOUNDS INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS TO USE RESTRAINT

WASHINGTON, June 12—The United States appeared today to endorse the massive movement of East Pakistanis to India.

First Public Appeal

Statement is Said to Reflect Fear of Warfare if Flow of Refugees Continues

WASHINGTON, June 12—The United States appeared today to endorse the massive movement of East Pakistanis to India.

Crime Rate of Women Up Sharply Over Men's

By STEVEN V. ROBERTS LOS ANGELES, June 12—Major crimes rose 61.3 per cent for women and 35.2 per cent for men in the Los Angeles area.

TRAGEDY GUNSHOTS IN FLIGHT: Joseph Zito, deputy U.S. Marshal, takes wounded hijacker, Gregory Wain, to Brooklyn Federal Court for arraignment.



MEMBERS OF CREW: Robert E. Elder, pilot, describing the accident. At left is Catherine Carter, a stewardess, whose screams alerted the crewmen of hijacking.



Today's Sections

Table listing today's sections: Page 1: Front Page; Page 2: News; Page 3: Sports; Page 4: Review of the Week; Page 5: Features; Page 6: Business; Page 7: Education; Page 8: Entertainment; Page 9: Classifieds; Page 10: Index to Subjects.

Figure 7: First publication of the Pentagon Papers in the Sunday June 13, 1971 issue of the New York Times with Neil Sheehan's "Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U.S. Involvement" featured on the front page.

the case of extraordinary events, newspapers often issued “extras”—additional sheets of reporting concerning incidents that took place after that day’s papers had already been through the press. Speaking of the newspaper extra, Joseph Pulitzer claims they were often “hastily prepared and incomplete” thus “lowering the prestige of the newspaper as a chronical of information which the public desires and which it thinks it is entitled to hear at the earliest possible moment ” (quoted in Stamm 2011, 65). Pulitzer also argued that the “speed, accuracy and public convenience” of the radio news bulletin was simply “a condition and not a theory” (*ibid.*) and therefore newspapers’ only hope would be to coopt new technologies for the purpose of reporting the news. Here, we see expectations for increased immediacy in the reporting of the news outgrowing the material restraints of newspaper journalism.

In terms of design, Walter Benjamin (2008) described the newspaper as an object “read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane” (171)—this reorientation into the upright, he deemed the “dictatorial perpendicular” (172). To these ends, Benjamin argues that text in the urban environment tended towards a particular one-dimensionality as opposed to inciting contemplation from the reader. The form of the newspaper, not unlike other forms of media, dictates the way it is to be read. McLuhan describes the manner of the modern newspaper reader as “skimming the headlines of a newspaper and glancing down at its columns to glean any point of interest, racing through the pages of some dissertation to discover whether it is worth his more careful consideration, and pausing to gather the argument of a page in a few swift glances” (88). This is the same manner that provokes Benjamin’s (2008) assertion of the passive newspaper reader:

Thus, science and belles lettres, criticism and literary production, culture and politics, fall apart in disorder and lose all connection with one another. The scene of this literary confusion is the newspaper; its content, "subject matter" that denies itself any other form of organization than that imposed on it by the reader's impatience. For impatience is the

state of mind of the newspaper reader. And this impatience is not just that of the politician expecting information, or of the speculator looking for a stock tip; behind it smolders the impatience of people who are excluded and who think they have the right to see their own interests expressed. The fact that nothing binds the reader more tightly to his paper than this all-consuming impatience, his longing for daily nourishment, has long been exploited by publishers, who are constantly inaugurating new columns to address the reader's questions, opinions, and protests. (359)

The proscriptive nature of the document, page, text, is one of the reasons why early internet enthusiasts insisted a particular disruptive possibility of digital communications, and despite Benjamin's critiques around the in rigidity of the newspaper's form, he recognized that "a dialectical moment lies concealed" (359). Not unlike the tensions explored in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (2008a), Benjamin argues that "writing gains in breadth what it loses in depth"—that it is the very condition of reproducibility and lack of substance that allow for the text to be accessible (both in its circulation and vulgarity): "And it is at the scene of the limitless debasement of the word—the newspaper, in short—that its salvation is being prepared" (360). It is in this sense, that I argue the newspaper represented a particular possibility in terms of leaking—that while the significance of information revelations may not have been particularly communicable through its proscriptive form, the material possibility of revelation made possible through the newspaper, and its ability to document and circulate, granted it a certain potentiality for leaking.

I want to emphasize that my argument that the newspaper does not operate as successfully as other media in terms of leaking because it is considerably more *anaesthetic* than other forms of documentation, is not simply because of the newspaper's rigidly prescribed format (typically black and white, text-based, non-fiction form). The limitations of the newspaper to leverage affective responses, rather, arise in the context of the wider, mid-century, media landscape of which the newspaper was a part. Had Ellsberg's duplicates themselves ended up in the hands of the public, perhaps this argument would be moot—the question here would

not concern the leak's representation (and, in this case its embodiment, through newspapers), but would rather concern the aesthetics of the leak itself. In the case of the Pentagon Papers, the newspapers acted as a still for the leak: the non-authorized photocopies of "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force" became vapor: on July 12, 1971, General Lyman Lemnitzer was quoted in *The Washington Post* describing the Pentagon Papers as "nothing more than a memorandum written by a Joe Blow in the Pentagon" (*The Washington Post* 1971). At this point, it may seem like this section forms a contradictory argument about the newspaper as leak-site: that it at once stands as the material form through which the leak is made possible; in that it defines, exacerbates, and bears new potentialities of information leakiness; all while performing dismally at the point where this potential culminates. However, this is not an issue of contradiction but rather another instance of communication failure discussed earlier in this section. The possibilities imbued in the newspaper information leak were not foreclosed upon solely because its material form, but also through the transformation of publics around other modes of mediation which shifted, and blew open, new possibilities for leaking. The comparison between the leaking of the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate, is not only to emphasize difference: both cases involve the movement of information—though circulations, transmission, and discourse. As Russ Castronovo (2013) argues, "meaning is bound up with movement, especially the propagation of messages and other texts across epistolary, print, and digital cultures" (427). Ellsberg's leaking of the Pentagon Papers forced the documents into new flows—it was not lost on him that newspapers were perhaps not the best venue,<sup>47</sup> but the refusal of other institutions to disclose the documents left him with few options for revelation.

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47. Ellsberg notes in several accounts of the leaking of the papers, that his initial goal was for Congress to bring the document forth so it could be entered into the Congressional Record. I

## *The Data Dump*

While much of the content uploaded to WikiLeaks echoes the aesthetics of the Pentagon Papers,<sup>48</sup> I argue that the contemporary register of the information leak, today, is vastly different. Similar to Lisa Gitelman's (2014) efforts to "broach the question of how or whether documents are somehow different when aggregated and served up by databases rather than collected and fished out of filing cabinets" (117), this section interrogates the difference between analogue and digital leaking. Where the leaking of the Pentagon Papers resulted in multi-page newspaper articles on the contents of the reports turned over by Ellsberg, Cablegate came with direct access to the source material. Moreover, the substantiveness of the information turned over in these leaks, was not simply a question a quantity, but also of intensity. Where the turning over of the "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force" to the press granted the public, to some degree, access to confidential government information—it was not a direct tap into the war in Vietnam. Rather, it was a snapshot of a stagnant pool, a report that barely made the rounds even amongst those who had the clearance to access it. In describing the Iraq war logs, Julian Assange provides the following summary:

Getting down into Iraq, that was 400,000 documents, each one written in military speak; each one having a geographic coordinate down often to 10 meters, a death count of civilians, U.S. military troops, Iraqi troops and suspected insurgents. It was the largest and most detailed significant history of a war to have ever been published, probably at all, but definitely during the course of a war. It provided a picture of the everyday squalor of war, from children being killed at roadside blocks to over a thousand people being handed over to the Iraqi police for torture, to the reality of close-air support and how modern military combat is done, linking up with other information such as this video that we discovered of the men surrendering, being attacked. As an archive of human history,

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am not arguing that this would have been a better venue, but rather I want to note Ellsberg's fundamental concern was the "release" of the Papers from being withheld from the public.

48. Alexis Madrigal of the *Atlantic* notes "most of the State Department cables engage in dry analysis of geopolitical issues" in his introduction to the site's "Cablegate Chronicles" which distills random cables into short story narratives (2010).

this is a beautiful and horrifying thing, both at the same time. It is the history of the nation of Iraq during its most significant development in the past 20 years. And while we always see newspaper stories revealing and personalizing some individual event or some individual family dying, this provides the broad scope of the entire war and all the individual events, the details of over 104,000 deaths. (quoted in Breveni et al. 2013, 255)

In this section I will be exploring how the leak undulates into something bigger than the newspaper leak as media technologies develop. I will address how leaks find increasingly permeable membranes, build pressure, and come to demand their own release in the case of the Cablegate.

The landscape of media technologies has changed vastly over the period between the leaking of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and the occurrence of Cablegate in 2010. These shifts were set in place over a century earlier with the mid-1800s ushering in the use of photographic reproduction technologies. This resulted in new conceptions and possibilities for documentation. Image photography, the electric pen, and the microfiche resulted in the ability to capture more substantive detail, faster production, ease in reproduction, and new possibilities for archiving. Electrification saw to new variations of photography with the electric lamp spurring moving image photography and electric charges allowing for static electrophotography (also known as Xerography). Here, the ability to *reproduce* media becomes increasingly easy and more efficient. These technologies lead to new strategies for storing and archiving material, but also develop alongside communication technologies including telegraphy and telephony, further imbricating mediation with logistical pursuits. These advancements deepen our considerations in thinking about how information is moved and dispersed and not simply stowed and retrieved (Kittler 2010). This intensifying imbrication of media storage and communications invigorates thinking around ICT networks. Simultaneous development of these technologies alongside transportation systems and deepening logistical chains intensifies globalization, the widening of certain public spheres, and complex network flows. Communications and transportation networks become key

components in the continuation of colonial pursuits, resource extraction, and international military endeavors—these logistic networks form new possibilities for surveillance and control. But in addition to forming a systematic network for the *realpolitik* to flow, these networks also become an integral part of defining the social experience of the twentieth century. The communication systems that largely developed in hopes of improving information soon become the means through which we experience entertainment. Serious reportage and amusement become bedmates through various media, regardless of form. This messy entanglement of social, economic, and political factors with information and entertainment drive Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's (2002b) critique of mass media as *the culture industry*. The way that medium becomes embedded within and operationalized by the culture industry vary, but what I want to emphasize here is that systems of power underlie all information leaks. Providing any history of the data dump would significantly rely on the general history of network technologies that I offered in the first section of this chapter. Moreover, the history of the data dump is not entirely separate from the history of the newspaper offered above.

Our first forays into computerized information technologies largely concerned the digitization of physical material—while some information was produced digitally, much of it was allocated physically and then digitized, requiring the investment of time, labour, and money. Matthew Kirschenbaum (2013) notes that we must now come to terms with the fact that documentation, archival practice, and databasing largely interact with materials that have always been digital. Here we can make the distinction between media types like NARA's Pentagon Papers Archive—a digital repository of the physical report leaked in 1971—and Cablegate, the leaking of content, that for the most part was “born-digital”. Kirschenbaum notes that the complexities that arise in attempting to distinguish the effects of such shifts, require a “vibrant

interdisciplinary conversation... driven in no small measure by the obvious sense in which digital objects can, indeed, function as a “primary record” (in the MLA’s parlance), forcing a confrontation between our established notions of authority and authenticity and the unique ontologies of data, networks, and computation” (59). This “birth” of already-digital information that can then be immediately stored, trawled, and analyzed digitally, has resulted in the exponential growth of information itself, and has thus affected the amount of information that can then be leaked. But regardless of whether their initial existence were analogue or digital, Kirschenbaum asserts that “media, as so many before me have said, matter” (60). The fact remains that we are still concerned with qualifying information in material terms. Our material preoccupation however is, more often than not, either over or undetermined. On one hand, certain narratives have relegated particular forms of materiality as inconsequential: for example, it was only after nearly a decade of widespread corporate testimony around the freedoms of cloud computing and other (seemingly) deterritorialized aspirational technologies that critical theorists began to map out the material realities of these advances.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, virtual objects can be unnecessarily rematerialized, sometimes figurately, and other times literally. While the reasons for rematerializing digital information depend on circumstance, a common occasion to do so is to aid in the visualization of virtual information. Data born-digital predate intellectuals born digital. Theorists, authors, researchers and activists in the areas of science and technology studies, information studies, or simply any discipline affected by data cultures (assumedly all) are, until very recently, part of generations with particular ties to material

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49. See, for example: Metahaven, *Captives of the Cloud Pt. 1* (2012), and Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack* (2015).



mediation. Consequently, the deterritorialization of information can be disorientating,<sup>50</sup> therefore information is often rematerialized in order for us to make better sense of it. Take, for example, Patrick McCurdy's (2013) quantification of the 2010 Cablegate release:

If Cablegate were released as an analogue leak, and assuming each cable is a page or less, it would take 41.8 hours of straight printing at a rate of 100 pages a minute. The print job would use almost 503 reams of paper. Yet, in a digital age, the Cablegate and related files were not printed but were digitally distributed. Each trove was eventually made available on the Internet as a reasonable-sized torrent: Cablegate (1.61 GB), Afghan War Diaries (75.7 MB), Iraq War Logs (354.18 MB), and the Collateral Murder video and raw Apache footage (249.19 MB). Given that the average CD-RW holds around 700 MB, these files could fit, likely with room to spare, on 4 CDs or on a single USB flash drive. (136)

I draw on this to reassert the tension between the material and the virtual—not only in the object in question, but the tensions and anxieties resulting from the seeming deterritorialization of the material into the virtual. While the ways that these processes both *de-* and *re- territorialization* affect our perception of events and actors as either threats or possibilities will be addressed in chapter 5, I want to focus here, on how these shifts in the materialization of information affect the way data is leaked. McCurdy's rematerialization of the Cablegate leak emphasizes its volume in two ways: firstly, that it is relatively large in comparison to the leaking of the Pentagon Papers,<sup>51</sup> and secondly, that it is also comparatively small when considered alongside the sea of data that now circulates. McCurdy's rematerialization of the leak gestures to the shift in the material forms and volume of information that occur in the time between the release of the Pentagon Papers and the Cablegate leaks. In speaking specifically of hacking, Luca Follis and Adam Fish (2017) make the distinction of the "slow" and insistent "leak" or a cataclysmic data "dump"—they argue the intensity of disclosures are "overwhelmingly determined by the volume

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50. I'm qualifying "us" as myself and likely anyone who reads this within ten years of publication. While having used the internet since a young age is often used as a determinate of generation Z, the following generation will be the first to be "born-digital".

51. More than 250,000 sheets of paper versus the measly 7000 of the Pentagon Papers.

and pacing of the disclosures, a fact that can substantially eclipse the revelatory (and factual) nature of the material itself”. Follis and Fish emphasize the importance of pace as opposed to content in terms of the leak’s impact—they categorize releases of information into three temporalities: fast, slow, and inert. Here, they lament that “the sheer volume, speed, and frequency of disclosures is greatly outpacing our capacity to separate politically salient or criminally significant acts and facts from the ambient digital noise they come bundled with” (2017). While I do not disagree with Follis and Fish’s premise, we cannot disregard that volume, speed, and frequency are informed by materiality, and that content cannot be entirely severed from its form. As Fuller and Goffey (2012) contend “a set of words in a report, article, or illicit data dump becomes significant in a different way when placed in a mechanism that allows or even solicits unfettered access, than when that set of words is lodged in a closed directory or laid out as a book; allowing such open access has direct and pragmatic effects on the reception of ideas, to mention just one scale at which they might be operative.” (2).

Data dumps are not necessarily leaks. The term simply denotes a vast amount of information delivered in a single bundle. Though leaked information in the contemporary moment often takes the form of large masses of data dumped from its original bounds, it is important to stress that these increased amounts of particularly voluminous leaks are not themselves indicative of a growing emancipatory potential. Leaking does not necessarily elude the power dynamics that the leak’s revelatory capacity extol. Follis and Fish (2017) echo this sentiment in Virilian terms in arguing “the dromology of the data dump feeds into and strengthens already existent power asymmetries”. However, in spite of this recognition of embedded power structures, as well as inciting a Virilian technologically determinist nihilism, Follis and Fish propose a rather pragmatic solution to the failure of publics to leverage the

potentiality of substantive data leaks: tactically timed publication strategies. But as Naomi Colvin (2017) argues, “publication strategies that align ‘time and scale’”, are not sufficient in resolving the political tensions often incited through leaks.<sup>52</sup> When the Panama Papers were leaked in 2016, Frederik Obermaier, et al. note that they contained “approximately 11.5 million documents—more than the combined total of Wikileaks’s Cablegate, Offshore Leaks, Lux Leaks, and Swiss Leaks” (“Panama Papers: This is the leak”). This seeming exponential progression of leaked information, at least in terms of size, is not solely a matter of increased cracks, fissures, and holes. The continual growth in the volume of leaks can simply be attributed to the exponential increase in the amount of information that circulates in the contemporary moment. But while this phenomenon is, at least in some sense, merely a question of scale, it is not to imply that leaks, in our current social structures, function as they once did. Rather, the magnitude of leaks that we are experiencing now have provoked the development of new networks of actors that become enmeshed within the leak assemblage. While some theorists may recognize the opportunity that underlie these networked relations, I follow Colvin’s concern that arguments such as those of Follis and Fish neglect the role of the public in these critical assemblages and that “leaks, particularly when accompanied by public access to source material, have provided some of the few instances where that divide has been successfully negotiated” (2017). One of the characteristics particular to contemporary data dumps of leaked information—as opposed to leaks of previous eras most often exposed through news exposés and reportage—is the way that publics can now interact with the content of the leak. I argue that

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52. The explicitly “political” function of leaks will be discussed more substantively in chapter 3.

these new forms of interactions develop from the material conditions of the leak and are fertile grounds for affective experience and ethical action.

In accounting for the shift from the newspaper leak to the data dump, the changing role of journalism needs to be addressed—unfortunately the scope of this question exceeds that of this chapter.<sup>53</sup> What I do want to emphasize however, is that the shift into the era of the data dump has not eliminated the role of the journalists in the mechanisms of leaking. Though “journalistic practice is undergoing a period of radical upheaval in the digital age and leaks are a major part of the process whereby the formation of narratives has been opened up to wider scrutiny” (Colvin 2017), the dynamic of the leak in the contemporary moment concerns less (a real or perceived) demise of news journalism, but rather the broadening assemblage in which information revelation is just one part of leaking. In speaking specifically of the Cablegate release, Colvin gestures towards the deepening participatory structures of leaking—she notes:

Leaks have become politically important because, at a time when trust in institutions is collapsing across the board, they represent a rare instance of elite power being dissipated in a way that has genuinely broadened participation and brought with it surprisingly large social benefits. Without the parallel scrutiny of journalists, experts, readers, and researchers, Cablegate would not have been the phenomenon it was: journalists alone would not have been able to generate anything like the same world-changing, emancipatory impact. (2017)

Regardless of whether one agrees with Cablegate’s classification as “world-changing”, what this argument highlights is the broadening networks that become entangled within the leak-assemblage as a result of negotiating the sheer size of the data dump. Moreover, the technological means through which this data is dumped, or rather, shared, is materially responsible for the networks of actors that develop around it. Of course, with this, valid questions

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53. For works addressing the role of journalism in the contemporary moment of leaks, see, for example: Breveni et al. (2013); Lynch (2013); and Reich and Barnoy (2016).

around access and participation arise. It is worth reminding ourselves of the criticisms that grew out of the net-utopianism of the 1990s: that data is not neutral, access is often limited, participation can be passive, and conventional power dynamics can underwrite seemingly decentralized networks. These same critiques have been explored thoroughly in the works of many scholars.<sup>54</sup>

In transitioning into the next section of this chapter, I will attempt to draw some continuity between the sections above. The above sections have operated on the argument that media are in-between—in spite of technological development that strives for immediacy (the absence of an intermediary between communicating actors), media is always indicative of the rift between actors. This project asserts that leaks, at once signify this in-between, and gesture towards overcoming it—leaks are both constituted by boundaries as well as their ability to refute them. Media and communications technologies, in their desire for immediacy, have exacerbated leakiness. The aspiration for “perfect communication” eradicates the perceptibility of medium—in this sense, desire and medium become anaestheticized in the tendency of media to render themselves imperceptible. Increased mediation comes with increased leakiness, and I argue that this leakiness signifies a particular aesthetic possibility. While the substantiveness of networks can always be questioned in terms of breadth, depth, and ethics, I assert that leaks constitute new networks, and thus, new sites of relations. The leak at once *mediates* relations (as the means through which certain connections can be made) and is itself *mediated* through existing relations that affect the way it moves, flows, and circulates. The leak, in this sense, becomes part of an affective assemblage whereby relationships are redistributed, reified, rearranged and

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54. See, for example: Gitelman (2013); Morozov (2011, 2013); Pasquale (2015); and Postman (1993).

reconstituted. I argue that the proliferation of data and networks has exacerbated leakiness. The abundance of information accumulating exponentially throughout the modern project perpetuates leaking in the contemporary moment—leaks, in their ability to draw new connections are always an aesthetic and affective event, but at once represent both opportunity and threat. The comparison between the material realities of the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate demonstrate these complexities and the ways that the leak has shifted in these decades of increased mediation. In the section below I will return to the two leak events in order to demonstrate the way affective possibilities are at once born out of, and are collapsed upon, in the structure of the leak. After fleshing out the aesthetic operations of the leak, the final section of this chapter will consider how the leaked image, particularly, is imbued with value.

### *Leaky Affects*

The shift in information leaks from being newspaper-bound to digitally delivered is not merely a reflection of where the public gets its news. The fact is, news outlets are still reporting on these leaks—as evidenced in WikiLeaks partnerships with numerous “co-publishers”<sup>55</sup>—whether they are online or in print, delivered through conventional or non-conventional media outlets, newspapers continue to provide an opportunity for ekphrasis.<sup>56</sup> In the case of the of the

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55. This includes: the *Associated Press*, *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, *Der Spiegel*, *El País*, *Le Monde*, *Rolling Stone*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*, amongst others. For the full list see WikiLeaks (n.d.).

56. By conventional outlets, I am referring to newsstands, newspaper boxes, subscription delivery, or even publishers’ homepages. I would consider unconventional distributions as the circulation of articles and headlines over social media sites or linked through user-created content. This line is becoming increasingly blurred with sites like *Buzzfeed*, having previously been focused around content like *listicles* and *click-bait*, establishing themselves as a reputable source for serious reporting.

Panama Papers in 2016, documents were initially leaked to *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who eventually requested the help of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in the management of the information. The newspaper and its networks continue to play an integral role in the leak assemblage in the contemporary moment. However, the difference between the leak at the height of newspaper journalism (exemplified in my case-study on the Pentagon Papers), and the leak now (as reflected in my analysis of Cablegate), is greatly affected by media shifts occurring in the time between these events. Ultimately, the difference between leaking in the era of the Pentagon Papers, and now in the era of (post) Cablegate, is the question of immediacy, not only in the sense of time and delivery, but in terms of closeness. Our closeness to the data dump leak is twofold: firstly, they are delivered to us (by way of leaking) in a nearly identical format as they are delivered to the original recipient; and secondly, as is the case with material such as transaction reports, diplomatic photographs, video, topographical maps, audio files, and satellite imaging, new forms of connection develop in that viewers can bear witness to certain acts, further imbricating leaks with the notion of *evidence*.<sup>57</sup> I want to emphasize here, how affective and aesthetic encounters through leaking have been transformed via new modes of mediation. In noting that Ellsberg “fervently believed that providing the executive, and ultimately the president, with better information about the course of the war would contribute to bringing it to an end with honour” (478), Weiskopf and Willmott (2013) direct our attention to the very media optimism this chapter has sought to question. The idea that the question of the ethical (in this case “an end with honour”) can be addressed through “better information”

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57. On the imbrication of evidence within the tension of the visual/material, see, for example. *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Forensic Architecture 2014).

demonstrates a blind faith in medium and form. Ellsberg, in his account of how he came to the decision to leak the document, notes his wife's reaction in encountering the report:

She had seen something in those pages which I hadn't seen when I first held them in 1964–5 or even when I re-read them in McNamara's study. She pointed out to me that passages about alternative bombing programs were filled with phrases about "a need to reach their threshold of pain" ... "Fast/full squeeze" option versus "Progressive squeeze-and-talk"; the "hot-cold treatment", our "salami slice bombing program"; "ratchet"; "one more turn of the screw"... Patricia said, "This is the language of torturers." Her eyes were filled with tears. She said, "They have to be exposed. You've got to do it." (quoted in Weiskopf and Willmott 2013, 480)

It is here I want to highlight the disjuncture between a desire to promote "better information" and the possible opportunities in affective connection. Weiskopf and Willmott frame Ellsberg's actions in line with Michel Foucault's interpretation of parrhesia—they note: "parrhesia is a communicative public act... [it] intervenes in the material context of power relations and demands responsibility from the powerful other as truth is spoken to power" (483). My argument here is that while particular leaks fulfill the requirements of making public, they do not necessarily disrupt the material context of power. I am not making the argument that Ellsberg's leaking of the Pentagon Papers was not important, but rather assert that it was easy for the public to dismiss the reporting of the leak in the form in which it was delivered. On one hand, the confirmation of the U.S. Government's explicit tactic to keep the American public in the dark affirmed the already existing belief that the government did not have control of the conflict in Vietnam and on the other, the leak's content sat comfortably with those who trust the intentions of government regardless. While the aftermath of the Pentagon Papers lead to legal actions that avowed the press's right to publish, the lasting effect of the leak on the general public is debatable. But the question remains of how it differs from the Cablegate case, and whether the medium of the leak is what we can attribute these differences to.



While all newspapers are documents, not all documents are newspapers—therefore this section will address some characteristics through which the newspaper, specifically, operates, but also the characteristics that are absent in the medium (but present in other documentary devices). While it seems unlikely one would argue against an assertion that documents can represent, employ, and operate as power, the aesthetic register of the document is often assumed to be *anaesthetic*. While this can very well be the case, it is not often the case. Rather, I argue that the documents are, quite regularly, intensely aesthetic and that these aesthetic aspects of the document, are by and large, deeply entangled with their political potentiality. Simone Browne (2015), reflecting on the work of Franz Fanon, notes the significance of the *mise en fiches de l'homme*: “records, files, time sheets, and identity documents that together form a biography, and sometimes an unauthorized one, of the modern subject” (16). While Browne and Fanon emphasize these structures in order to show how individuals (and collectivities) become the subjects of power and surveillance, we can imagine too how documents of this nature also define the power of the state through their ability to define state subjects. Here, we can see how this process works in both directions—documentation’s power to define the state by demonstrating the state’s power to define its subjects. This idea is consistent with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s (2009) notion of the diagram, Michel Foucault’s (2002) theorization on words, and Giorgio Agamben’s (1998), theorization of *homo sacer*.<sup>58</sup> While documentation is sometimes assumed to be a passive process, it actively extends the relationships codified in its form forward temporally. In the case of “official” documentation, the information asserted is assumed to be

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58. These arguments will be explained in more detail in chapter 3 “Political Realities of Leaks”.

particularly truthful, valid, and uncontested. At play within these forms of representation are particular aesthetic operations that cannot be neglected.<sup>59</sup>

Alberto Micali (2018) asserts that scrutinising leaks needs to move beyond socio-political considerations, and that “politics of data leaks has to be considered instead through, and studied in, an affective register” (53). I am not arguing that the Pentagon Papers do not operate on an affective register, but rather that they operate on a different one than the leaks we are seeing in the contemporary moment. Returning again to Vogl’s (2007) idea that media make evident what was previously absent, I insist that Cablegate is a more accurate index of absence. What becomes evident in the release 250,000 pages of diplomatic cables—yet less than 3GB of data—is a better diagram of power, a more affective actor, than was the case with the Pentagon Papers. The release of these cables, signify the amount of data, information, strategy, and networking behind every forward facing distillation of power—beneath every policy paper, each press release, and every public statement is a data dump. I am not intending to create a hierarchy of medium whereby the spectacle of video (say, in the case of Collateral Murder) is assumed to perform within a more legitimate and affective register than a text-based document. This is not a prioritization of media forms—paper versus video feed—but rather an assertion of certain media’s ability to signify intensity. The question here, as posed by Daniel Ellsberg , is to what degree do official reports fail to convey certain realities to policy makers is: what is apparent “...beyond the chain of paper and electric signals”? The question of leaks’ intensities is a

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59. See, for example, Susan Schuppli’s work *Evidence on Trial* (2014) which operates within these *evidentiary aesthetics*. The description of the exhibition notes, *Evidence on Trial*, is “a wide range of materials sourced from the archives of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which is comprised of 9.3 million documents and objects, including videos, photographs, audio, aerial footage, X-rays, diagrams, models, maps and even remnants of charred timber” (Schuppli).

question of how much closer they might get us to this *beyond* and how much closer can publics be brought to the material conditions “on the ground”. There is less room for interpretation and rationalization when we bear witness to what takes place on the ground.

What came with the entrenching of the typographic form into Western culture was a relatively static style of presenting information. With the onset of photographic capabilities, this shifted somewhat, but in most cases photographic aesthetics developed alongside standards for documentation as opposed to immediately disrupting our commitment to the written word. This visual register is at once threatening and productive. While the following section will explore the opportunities possible in visualizing leaks, important to note here is how both image and text, as part of the visual register, serve the modern project’s inclination for documentation and classification. What foregrounds my question about the materiality and the form of the leak, are questions concerning materiality and form more generally. Questioning through what material and in which form the leak can be operationalized most effectively warrants a discussion of materiality and form beyond the dynamic of leaking. But for these questions we have a deep history, and fruitful present, of theorists forming and reworking these discourses.<sup>60</sup> Rather I want to consider the way that medium and form dictate the networks within which media objects sit. Digital media objects are often assumed to be less *affective* than those in the realm of the traditionally material. Brenda Danet (1997), evoking the Benjaminian notion of *aura*, contends “as a consequence of the processes of disembodiment, in the digital era this aura of texts is now being eroded” (9). What is neglected in this fashioning of pre-digital texts is the way that the medium has historically (as well as contemporaneously) been used in processes of literal

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60. For works concerning form, see for example: Foucault (2002); Krauss and Bois (1997); and Sheldon (2010).

disembodiment<sup>61</sup>—moreover, the text can be argued to be indexical of the author’s absence as much as it is indexical of author’s presence, therefore the text is imbued with disembodied tendencies even prior to digitization. Abby Smith (1998) contends that “when all data are recorded as 0’s and 1’s, there is, essentially, no object that exists outside of the act of retrieval,” however, this is not to assert the digital as entirely dematerializing, but rather that “the demand for access creates the “object,” that is, the act of retrieval precipitates the temporary reassembling of 0’s and 1’s into a meaningful sequence that can be decoded by software and hardware”. This interactive reality, whereby the act of retrieval constitutes the subject/object has particular implications in thinking about the digital versus the analogue leak. The media object and the networks in which it sits are co-constituted. This is to say that the material conditions of the media object affect the way it moves through time and space, and that the way time and space move are affected by the media object. It is in this sense that the media object both creates networks and is created by networks. And while this is true of both the analogue and digital leak, the network of the digital leak is exponentially larger, and substantively more complex, than that of the analogue leak.

While size, in terms of the leak and its network, is not necessarily indicative of greater intensity, it is indicative of greater potential. My argument is not that the digital leak, by nature of its virtuality, is inherently more *affective* than the analogue leak, but rather that it has a greater potential, to perform affectively. This is also not to assert that the Cablegate leak had a greater and more measurable impact than the Pentagon Papers. Rather, this dissertation affirms that mounting leakiness signifies opportunities. This opportunity is not strictly constructive—the

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61. Here, I am referring to the role of documentation in the intersection of colonial and modern projects in the creation of *subjecthood* alluded to above.

speed and intensity in which mediation occurs poses pragmatic difficulties, as is the case with any breaking news. This imbrication of time, affect, and aesthetic possibility build throughout this work, and ultimately will be explored in its conclusion.

### **The Leaked Image/Leak-image**

While images are situated deeply within the genealogy of the leak I laid out above, they also warrant their own exploration considering their particularly important role in the contemporary culture of leaks. The photographic image fundamentally shifted how we think of representation. The eventual fixing of the image through chemical processes granted the ability to capture scenes with unprecedented accuracy, and the new medium of photography influenced a shift in content of other media. While painting was liberated in certain regards, the photographic image was confined to ensure that objectivity suppressed “interpretation, judgment, or theory in the reporting and picturing of scientific subjects” (Saltz 2015, 204). Here, photography’s role became “to produce a perfect mimetic copy rather than something anew” (ibid.). In this sense the camera freed painting of its obligations to linear perspective, recognizable forms, and depicting reality—coinciding perfectly with Foucault’s epistemic post-representational shift. One can only speculate as to if a post-representative temporality could have existed without the photograph—or if the episteme was only possible once some desire for “true representation” had been satisfied. The political implications of photography are boundless even if its causal effects can only be speculative. There has been no shortage of theorists in attesting to the inherent violence of the photographic image.<sup>62</sup> Photography at once secured the

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62. See, for example: Azoulay (2008); Barthes (2010); Rancière (2009); Sontag (2001), (2004); and Sturken and Cartwright (2009)

relationship between visibility and materiality (by encouraging the possibility of true visual representation of the material), and absolutely disrupted it.

The tension between the visual and the material have culminated into a postmodern moment that has been argued by different discourses as being indicative of both a “material turn” and a “visual turn”. While the focus of one element over the other is common practice, and dependent on one’s disciplinary allegiances, we are arriving a point in theory where this distinct separation between the two seems rather forced. Gillian Rose and Divya Toila-Kelly (2012) account for the material implications of the visual by asserting, rather, a condition of *visuality/materiality*. While these aspects are acknowledged as affecting one another, our tendency to think of these as separate factors threatens the ability to account for the political implications of the dynamic *between* the visual and the material. To these ends, an increased emphasis on how visibility and materiality are co-constituted can go a long way in focusing discourse around the relational and political implications of the more-than-visual encounter.

In some sense, a more substantive account of the aesthetic—as in the sensual—could address concerns around the political implications of images—and, as I have argued earlier, the implications of media more generally. Asserting that aesthetic encounters can culminate in empathy and compassion regardless of the image’s form, renée c. hoogland (2014) attributes the image’s poignancy to the viewer’s subjective encounter with it. This argument follows Roland Barthes’s idea of the *punctum*, which denotes a wounding, affective, capacity of certain photographs, an uncoded essence in the image that may well (but is not guaranteed to) *prick* the viewer (2010). Referring to the digitization of photographs, hoogland makes the argument that this affective capacity exists regardless of the photograph’s form. However, while she asserts that the image “remains unaffected by the evolution in the media’s technology” (2014, 102), I

question how this assertion can be made; if the poignancy of the image “occurs on the side of the viewer” (102), all this would mean is that we could not know whether a change in mediation affects it or not. If the aesthetic encounter and its possible meanings are entirely subjective, it is unlikely that the general notion of sensation can be operationalized into a codified ethics. This is not to suggest that there is a better option, a more ethical possibility in light of pragmatic functionality, but rather that possibilities, and political implications of visibility are always already unmanageable. This is the dilemma that Walter Benjamin accounts for in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (2008a); the reproducibility of images, their increasing circulation and availability, becomes a means for both opportunities and closures. Reproduction and circulation allow at once “a getting closer to things” (Benjamin, 9) and a distancing from them. This was precisely the same argument made by Lisa Gitelman (2012) in regards to Ellsberg’s photocopies. This dynamic can only be accounted for in thinking through the relational tensions between representation and materiality, as is true when we are thinking about the leak more generally.

Photography, amongst other modes of visualization, “takes part in the stabilization of what is seen” (Azoulay 2008, 14)—but this is not to suggest that representations are always stabilizing. Rather, images provide the illusion of a certain fixity of the world, a phantasmagoric overlay to a world defined through complex interrelations. In speaking of the importance of exploring media, it may seem as if I am prioritizing certain forms however, I do not intend for this to be the case. Rather, in speaking of media such as documents, newspapers, videos, and images, I am hoping to elucidate that medium is never *just* a representation—a singular, knowable, entity. Ariella Azoulay (2013) asserts that photography “cannot be reduced to any of its components” (85). The image is always an assemblage of relationships—and in this regard

the leaked photographic image is particularly complex. Because photographs appear as “fixed” it is tempting to think of them as stoppages—but asserting this would require us to neglect the flows in which the image is implicated. Tom Gunning (2007) reminds us that medium tends to become transparent, unnoticed, and unaccounted for, in the wake of its message (98), an argument not unlike Joseph Vogl’s (2007) that I have referenced many times throughout this chapter. In accounting for medium, I am not aiming to reassert it as the primary concern, but rather call for re-aestheticizing of it. Doing this requires recognition of the complex assemblages in which images exist, particularity in the case of those that are leaked—and the constant reminder of the other senses and relations at play beyond the realm of the visual.

Paul Klee’s (1969) famous assertion “art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible” is not what it used to be (76). *Making visible* has become a tired insurrectionary of the sensible—just talk, no action, simultaneously irritable and idealistic. I argue that “making visible” is a reactionary approach to aesthetics that has come to operate within the very logic of the distribution of the sensible that it originally served to contest. While media typically stand between, they are also the site of a new relation, and politics, both etymologically and practically speaking, is relational. Relations and communication become *politicized through* medium—the material differences between certain media bear particular implications in how, and what is seen. However, an a priori account of the affective natures of media threatens the chance for possibilities to arise out of existing structures. Though the historical production of modes of visibility (either through typography or image) have entrenched certain dynamics between content and form, they are not absolutely rigid. While the post-representational episteme has yet to shed its allegiance with visibility, the possibility to do so still exists. The excitement over media interactivity that currently exists in popular culture is hardly transgressive, however there



is immense political potential in thinking through media in terms of *intra-action* (Barad 2007)—the claim that objects cannot be knowable in themselves is something that will be explored more thoroughly in the concluding chapter of this work. Because media is inherently relational, we cannot assert a potential for politics without acknowledging the relationship between representation and materiality (and all the things between).

In June 2015, digital artist Molly Soda leaked nude photos of herself onto the internet. *Should I Send This?* is a collection of revealing images and sexts<sup>63</sup> that Soda had resisted sending out in the moment of their creation. Rather, the images and the messages were stored in the memory of her phone until they took up too much space. In an interview with *Dazed*, Soda recalls being faced with deleting the archive but could not (Mosey 2015). After some time, Soda could no longer be inclined to contain the contents of her phone—thus the collection was leaked. In spite of Soda’s “self-leaking” of the work—her piece was leakage nonetheless.

How is it that the self-leak can still be considered a leak? How does the self-leak operate, as was the case with Soda’s work? The self-leak happens when contents’ desires outweigh your own—it resists the flow you subject it to, it builds up, it piles up, and it demands release. Regardless of Soda’s own role in the distribution of the content, it forged its path out of her phone and into the open. The leak, especially the self-leak, offers us a resounding lesson of medium, form, and content—that works have agency beyond that of their artists, whether we call this a will, a desire, or a disposition. Alice Mosey speaks of *Should I Send This?* as an exercise in “how we construct our intimacy while hiding behind a screen” (2015), a comment that follows the sentiments of Hillis’s *online leakiness* discussed in the “Networks, Technology” section of

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63. *Sext*, in this sense, is a portmanteau of “sex” and “text” (as in a text message, a note sent through a messaging application, Short Message Service (SMS), or over social media service)—it refers to a message with sexual content whether it be through words or images.

this chapter. Here we can think about how leaks' complication of insides and outsides, and private and public, hold certain implications for how we think about intimacy. Soda's images were semiotically conditioned as leaks regardless of her intentions behind the image. This example will be taken up again in chapter 4, "Materializing Leaks", but for now, I ask the reader to consider the ways some substances are always already conditioned to leak.



Figure 8: Image from "Should I Send This?" by Molly Soda (2015)

Both the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate releases represent radical overturns of information. Chapter 3 will focus on how leaks can be utilized and coopted as a means of maintaining existing power structures, but for the purpose of this section I ask the reader to consider the slow drips—ostensibly banal leaks, whereby information, images, matter appear to push themselves into perceptibility. This can be seen in the example of “iPhone Girl”. On August 20, 2008 user ‘markm49uk’ posted three photos that he found on his new iPhone 3G to the *MacRumors* forum. The photos show a girl on the iPhone assembly line smiling and flashing a ‘peace sign’ at the camera. These images, left there by whoever took them from within the factory, appeared saved on the new owner’s phone.



Figure 9: Images posted as part of forum post titled “iPhone 3G - already with pictures ! (aka "iPhone Girl")” on the MacRumours.com forums on August 20, 2008.

Ananya Roy (2011), speaking of the typical invisibility of these factories, refers to iPhone girl as an “indelible trace”, an example of the rare instances when the labor that makes possible our cosmopolitan lifestyles becomes visible (316). The photos circulated on the websites of major news outlets, on social media, and were shared within numerous forums and blog posts. These images prompt us to consider how the leaked image functions within the politics of aesthetics. While some might contest whether an image that evades deletion constitutes a leak, I argue that the iPhone Girl images are indeed a leak—though not images leaked with intent, these images negated their normative course and immediately made visible cybercapitalist flows that are often ignored.

It is here that I want to focus on how visualizations and images intersect with our conception of networks. While network diagrams are not uncommon, the aesthetics in which these visualizations operate often take forms we may not typically think of as diagrammatic. Here, Anna Munster notes that “The very sameness of this rendering, operating across all and any network, creates the idea of the network as infinitely transposable, in spite of what might be specifically visualized” (2). Munster refers to this as *network anesthesia*—“a numbing of our perception that turns us away from their unevenness and from the varying qualities of their relationality” (2). Here, Munster joins our growing lists of media theorists lamenting the anaesthetic tendencies of media.

Media studies, as a discipline, has been somewhat confused—it thinks the immediate belongs to it. The absence of a middle, a membrane, a something in between—is not to be understood solely by a discipline that demands its presence. The inclusion of communications (in addition to an expanding interdisciplinarity that invites cultural studies, humanities, philosophy, amongst others) signals the discipline’s desire to make the middle as frictionless as possible—

“spaces of flows” as Manuel Castells would call it—but as this project suggests, through its exploration of leaks, the absence of a middle is something best sought through ethics, affect, and the aesthetic (none of which are separate from the other). To continue to seek the immediate solely through speed, communications technologies continue to invent their own accidents as Virilio insists. At the core of this project is the assertion that it might just be possible, through the inclusion of questions of affect, ethics and aesthetics, for media studies to collapse itself, and recognize the middle as a fold. However, this possibility will not be substantively explored until the conclusion of this work. This chapter has sought to demonstrate some of the implications of leaking in the context of media and communications theory—but this conclusion does not mark the end of thinking through the leak in terms of mediation. Rather, the following chapter, “Political Realities of Leaks”, serves to introduce the explicit question of *the political* (Mouffe 2005) into the complex dynamics that I have attempted to trace here. In chapter 3, I will continue to assert the particular leakiness of the contemporary moment and account for just some of the ways mediation and politics become further entangled with questions of visuality and materiality.



CHAPTER 3/  
Political Realities of Leaks

*When a social formation exhausts itself  
and begins to leak on every side,  
all sorts of things come uncoded,  
all sorts of unpoliced flows begin circulating...*

Gilles Deleuze, "On Capitalism and Desire"

It is not possible to contain the subject of the leak to a single discipline. While chapter 2 "Leaky Media" asserted that there is a special relationship between "leaking" and the discourses of media and communications studies, interrogating this relationship becomes fraught with questions concerning the political implications of the leak. Ultimately, I do not consider these political consequences as separate from the questions I raised previously around mediation, or the questions I will continue to pose around ecologies, bodies, and theory. For the purpose of structure however, I am attempting to concentrate my argument on the political nature of leaking within the following chapter. Here, I continue with the premise that leaks are at once materially constituted, and become value-laden through the complex sets of relationships through which they exist. Not unlike my assertion that leaks are media themselves, and incredibly mediated, leaking can emanate from political relations, define political relations, and be further politicized in the ways that they are operationalized. In chapter 3, I want to return to matters that I previously introduced, but abandoned, and build upon the entangled mess that leaking exists within. I am hoping that the theories, events, and questions that I seek to address throughout this chapter are ones that have already crossed the minds of readers, and perhaps felt like an absence in chapter 2. In introducing (explicitly) the question of politics here, I am hoping to reinvigorate certain topics introduced previously; the power dynamics that undercut information technologies,

complexities in legislation, and the exacerbation of leaking in the twentieth century, for example. But I also present new sites that could perhaps be at home in any other part of this work. Evident here is that any disciplinary containment of the leak, its site, and its movement, collapses the subject incredibly. Because of this, I feel the need to restate the caveat that I began with in chapter 2; some of the ideas that I return to, or that I introduce here, will make brief appearances in this chapter, only to be revisited later in this dissertation. Again, I ask the reader to bear with me as I attempt to untangle a subject whose whole form we might only catch a glimpse of by the end of this work. What is at the centre of this chapter is an interrogation of the ways that leaking is always already political. Moreover, I argue that the further politicization of leaks is a common tactic in the realm of traditional politics, but that opportunities can be leveraged provided we recognize the ways they are imbricated in *the political*.

The first point of order for this chapter will be to account for what I mean by the political reality of leaks. In asserting that leaks are political actors themselves, and/or actors that can be utilized politically, I am speaking to a very particular interpretation of what constitutes politics. The first part of this chapter explores the discourses of political and social thought that motivate my claims about the leaks relationship to politics. The review of this literature will take place over three sections: “Defining Politics”, “Structures of Politics”, and “Sites of Politics”. Part 2 of this chapter explores a series of cases that elucidate the intersection of politics with leaking. The first section of part 2—“Presidential Leakiness”—explores the ways leaks become a significant actor in the 2016 United States presidential election and resulting presidency. From concerns of information security raised in the discovery of Hillary Clinton’s private server to tales of a Donald Trump “Pee Tape”, the 2016 election, “more than anything else”, was one “dominated by leaks” (Timm 2016). The second part of this section, “Making Politics Legible”, returns to

questions raised in chapter 2 regarding information leaks, and how legislation seeks to address the seemingly growing phenomenon. Further, I explore the ways “liquid” analogies operate in reference to capital, and pose the question whether the leaking of financial documentation can help illustrate capital flows. The following section, “Political Leak Sites”, considers how borders both produce leaks, and are threatened by them. Here, I will deliberate how leaks complicate jurisdictions, but also how certain sites are made possible through their material leakiness. I contemplate how the U.S.-Mexico border wall becomes an extension of Trump’s fears of leakiness. The question of leak-sites is further explored through the example of Hong Kong—here, I will consider how the port city becomes a particularly saturated site of political relations in this exceptionally leaky part of modernity.

### **Defining Politics**

Not unlike my intentions regarding media in the previous chapter, I want to turn politics away from its professionalized and pragmatic connotations. Even if we were to accept politics, simply, as “the relations between state and society” (Nash 2001, 77),<sup>64</sup> leaking would be a relevant site of inquiry, but the political reality of leaks that underlies this chapter is much more amorphous. Ideas of what constitute politics tend to follow either an assertion of a particular arena (that is, the site in which politics takes place) or are qualified by particular processes (certain types of interactions) (Nash 2001; Leftwich 2004)—in either case, the nation-state has occupied a privileged place in constituting what traditionally qualifies as “political” since the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. While conventional conceptions of politics remain relevant for this chapter—they are not substantive enough in accounting for the political realities

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64. Nash asserts this definition of politics as one that should be rejected.



of leaking in the contemporary moment. Rather, my assertion about the political possibilities and threats that arise with leaks presuppose *the political* as something much more salient than simply “being about government” (Leftwich 2004, 10). Rather, I follow Chantal Mouffe’s (1993) assertion that “the political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society”, but rather, “must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition” (3). To these ends, I assert that the political reality of leaks is one whereby the relationality between actors (over and beyond institutional interactions) transforms along with certain slippages—that “the political” delineates the realm in which in we affect one another. This construction of the political does not exclude our typical understanding of politics, but rather exceeds it. In this section I will outline the existing theory that firstly, collapses the political into something far too rigid, as well the work that has sought to open the political back up to account for aesthetic experience.

What definitively constitutes politics is not accounted for here. The lack of a determinate classification of the concept within this next section is not simply an issue of scope. Rather, I refrain from building my argument on a succinct exposition of politics because no rigid definition of politics can be substantive enough to account for its complexity and nuance. What the notion of *politics* delineates changes over time, differs between people, and bears both normative and prescriptive significations—it cannot be comprehended through a concise textbook definition. In his edited volume *What is Politics?* Adrian Leftwich (2004) asserts, that politics, being “such a highly contested subject”, ensures that “debates about its proper definition and the scope of its subject matter are themselves political” (2). It is with this in mind, that this section of this dissertation conveys not what politics *is*, but rather how the leak becomes part of

processes generally accepted as political. This argument differs from the more common characterization of politics as either an *arena* or a particular *process*.<sup>65</sup> While I do not contest that politics often happen *within* particular arenas or *through* certain processes, my account emphasizes the political as a dynamic set of relationships that cannot be isolated as either a site, nor type of action. Chantal Mouffe (2005), following Martin Heidegger's distinction between the *ontic* and the *ontological*, argues "that the ontic has to do with the manifold practices of conventional politics, while the ontological concerns the very way in which society is instituted" (8–9). Heidegger (2010) classifies the ontical as that which concerns the "nearest and familiar" (44)—that is, that which concerns actually existing beings and things—as opposed to the ontological which considers the "theoretical question of the being of beings" (11). Mouffe (2005) aligns the distinction between politics and the political with the distinction between the ontic and the ontological: she argues that we can distinguish between politics: "the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created"—and the political: "the dimension of antagonism... constitutive of human societies" (11). Recognizing this distinction, for Mouffe, is necessary in order to understand the limits of democratic action in the redress of certain power dynamics. Politics, in its ontical configuration, denotes the spaces, events, and actors that we typically tend to assign the concept: governments, legislation, politicians. The political, as an ontologically derived concept, rather, signifies "the expression of a particular structure of power relations" (18).

Mouffe conceives of political space as one of agonism. While I do not disagree that the political is often agonistic, as it signifies the intersection of actors, my argument rests on a

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65. Leftwich argues that theorists tend to think of politics as being either an arena or a process.

conception of the political that rejects that the political is *intrinsically* rooted in struggle.

Mouffe's focus on the conflictual nature of the political is intentionally constructed against other political theorists who consider the political as the site of agreement and negotiation. Speaking against Hannah Arendt's (2018) conception of the political as a space of freedom, and Jürgen Habermas's (2009) formulation of politics as the site of rational deliberation, Mouffe (2005) asserts that the political, rather, is "space of power, conflict and antagonism" (9). The root of the antagonism at the centre of the political can be attributed to the structure of power relations—something that will be explored more in depth in the following section. Mouffe's assertions about antagonism are premised on "recognizing the hegemonic nature of every kind of social order" (17). But what if we reject that this assertion the social relations are always hegemonic? Mouffe's conception of social relations are contingent on ordering, and presumes "every order is political and based on some form of exclusion" and that "there are always other possibilities that have been repressed". Thus, the political is always antagonistic. This conception of the political is in some sense a zero-sum game—because agonism assures that antagonism is always a possibility, the political, for Mouffe, is inherently antagonistic—but even stating that certain opportunities must be repressed, she notes that these possibilities "can be reactivated" (18). It is in this sense that I want to reconcile the Mouffian political with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's idea of *multiplicity* that I referenced on the very first page of the dissertation. I want to simply gesture to Deleuze and Guattari, here, in order to contest Mouffe's assertion that the existence of "other opportunities" always implies exclusion. In arguing that sets of relations and collectivities are always indicative of ordering, Mouffe forecloses on the possibility of

“multiplicities of multiplicities” (Deleuze and Guattari 2008, 3).<sup>66</sup> Rather, Mouffe (2005) takes up the work of Elias Canetti and Sigmund Freud, the very theorists whose ideas are contested through the notion of multiplicity, to speak of affective politics. What Mouffe does here, and what I want to take with me in her conception of the political, is recommit to the affective possibilities that underlie collectivities—however I argue that this is not possible if we are to accept politics as inherently antagonistic. While I reject that the political is necessarily oppositional, I admire Mouffe’s (2005) recognition of “the affective dimension in politics” that underlies the political, and not simply the ontically derived “rationalist model of democratic politics, with its emphasis on dialogue and rational deliberation” (70). I argue however, that this “affective dimension” is the only dimension of the political. While the affective nature of relations within the political are often antagonistic, the only thing at the centre of the political are affective relations themselves.

While Mouffe does not identify the thought of Jacques Rancière as being particularly influential on her own, both theorists assert a certain resentment towards ontical assumptions of what constitutes politics. Further, both theorists’ conception of politics reject the idea of the site of the political as one of rational consensus. Rancière (2005) asserts that politics “is not the exercise of power”, and that what “is specific to politics is the existence of a subject defined by its participation in contraries” (27). Both Rancière and Mouffe’s interpretation of the political reject the assertion “that there is a way of life that is ‘specific’ to political existence, enabling us

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66. Mouffe (2005) makes passive reference to the “Deleuzian vocabulary” (112) of multiplicity only to dismiss Hardt and Negri’s mobilization of it in their work *Empire*: “this is where the Deleuzian vocabulary mobilized by Hardt and Negri can be seductive. It allows for the multiplicity of the resistances expressed by this global movement to resonate with the notions elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it would be a serious mistake for the anti-globalization movement to adopt the perspective put forward in *Empire*” (114).

to infer the political relationship from the properties of a specific order ...” (Rancière 2005, 28). Further, both theorists’ ideas follow the premise that “there is no consensus without exclusion” (Mouffe 2005, 73) and that consensus, in some sense, represents the “end of politics” (Rancière 2005, 42). And though I contested Mouffe’s assertion that the political is inherently antagonistic, I concede to Rancière’s framing of politics as dissensus as particularly productive. The difference between Rancière’s *dissensus* and Mouffe’s *agonism* is ultimately situated in the political possibility, or lack thereof, of democracy. Mouffe’s central conceit is that democracy can only be upheld through agonism, not through the deliberative model. Here, Mouffe asserts an enduring radical potential in democratic politics provided that we reject the expectation of, or demand for, consensus. By contrast, Paulina Tambakaki (2009) argues: “through Rancière’s lens, we are confronted either with an impasse or hyperpessimism, because all possibility for reinvigorating democratic politics today appears to be closed off” (103). To these ends, Rancière’s dissensual politics does not concern revitalizing antagonism into ontic politics, as is the case for Mouffe, but rather asserts that *consensus* polices the realm of the political. Tambakaki argues that Rancière’s thought fails to offer us much in the way of reinvigorating democratic politics the way Mouffe’s does, but I argue that “agonism” and “dissensus” serve different purposes. While Mouffe offers democratic redress by way of reinstating ontologically derived antagonism into the ontical applications of politics, Rancière’s thought identifies the dynamic whereby ontic politics (by way of policing) institute ontological constraints on forces of dissent through the distribution of the sensible. Here, Mouffe seems to suggest that ontic politics can be repaired with the inclusion of the ontological, whereby Rancière’s claim is simply that the ontic threatens the ontological. I am situating my conception of politics through both Mouffe and Rancière to assert that politics and the political, while discursively useful to distinguish between,

are always entangled. Ontological conceptions of the political allow for the reopening of political possibilities in realms often neglected by the conventional study of politics, however the ontological is ineffectual if we fail to recognize its intersections with politics on the ground.

While thinking through the ontological realm of politics allows for the inclusion of broader phenomena into the political, a critique of this formulation is its tendency to dismiss the economic as a mere actor of the ontic. Here, economic concerns tend to be excluded from configurations of the ontological-political. Slavoj Žižek (2010) follows this line of critique in asserting “that all the new French (or French oriented) theories of the Political, from Balibar through Rancière and Badiou to Laclau and Mouffe, aim at is—to put it in traditional philosophical terms—the reduction of the sphere of economy (of material production) to an ‘ontic’ sphere deprived of ‘ontological’ dignity” (75). In spite of this critique, Žižek acknowledges a particular capacity in Rancière’s “assertion of the aesthetic dimension as INHERENT in any radical emancipatory politics” (76). Though, I follow Žižek’s reading of Rancière, I want to further his assessment by asserting there is an aesthetic dimension inherent in politics more broadly (emancipatory or not). This project defines politics as the dynamicism constituted through the interactions between actors within a particular assemblage: politics includes both ontic and ontological realities and undercuts other phenomena including (but not limited to) the social and the economic. In this sense, the aesthetic experience stands in as the original site of politics.

To think of the aesthetic as the primary location of politics pushes the concept beyond its vernacular meaning. Beth Hinderliter et al. (2009) categorize common assumptions of aesthetics as either the preoccupation with beauty or as “bourgeois mystification”—they go on to argue “in both cases, the immediately political aspects of aesthetics are denied” (5). Building on the work

of Rancière, Hinderliter et al. assert “politics is aesthetic in principle because it reconfigures the common field of what is seeable and sayable” (8). To these ends, politics underwrites the “‘distribution of the sensible’, a generally implicit law that defines the forms of partaking by first defining the modes of perception” (Rancière 2010, 36). While the configuration of sensation is certainly a political act, I assert that the intersection of politics and aesthetics occurs more immediately than through organization. Following Terry Eagleton’s (1990) assertion that the aesthetic “is born as a discourse of the body” (3), Susan Buck-Morss (1992) provides the following explication of aesthetics:

It is a form of cognition, achieved through taste, touch, hearing, seeing, smell—the whole corporeal sensorium. The terminae of all of these—nose, eyes, ears, mouth, some of the most sensitive areas of skin—are located at the surface of the body, the mediating boundary between inner and outer. This physical-cognitive apparatus with its qualitatively autonomous, nonfungible sensors (the ears cannot smell, the mouth cannot see) is "out front" of the mind, encountering the world prelinguistically, hence prior not only to logic but to meaning as well. Of course all of the senses can be acculturated—that is the whole point of philosophical interest in "aesthetics" in the modern era. But however strictly the senses are trained (as moral sensibility, refinement of "taste," sensitivity to cultural norms of beauty), all of this is a posteriori. The senses maintain an uncivilized and uncivilizable trace, a core of resistance to cultural domestication. This is because their immediate purpose is to serve instinctual needs for warmth, nourishment, safety, sociability—in short, they remain a part of the biological apparatus, indispensable to the self-preservation of both the individual and the social group. (6)

While chapter 5 will expand this conception of aesthetics and thus politics even further, this section asserts the initial site of politics as “the mediating boundary between inner and outer”. Here, we can begin to conceptualize how the aesthetic could be argued to be the site of subjectification—one that undoes modern conceptions of subjectivity as originating through cognition and language. As Buck-Morss (1992) notes, the aesthetic is situated “prelinguistically, hence prior not only to logic but to meaning as well” (6). Here, I argue that we need to reconsider the political subject with aesthetic experience in mind. The question of how this project conceives of politics will be expanded upon in the following two sections: structures of

politics and sites of politics. Though this section contends the impossibility of a rigid definition of politics, I offered several components that influence how I constitute the leak as a political (or politicized) actor. Firstly, I dismiss definitions of politics as the actions and organizations of government for being too constricted. Using Chantal Mouffe's (2005) Heideggerian distinction between the ontic and the ontological, I call for a more-than-ontic conception of politics. Here, I argue that politics represents a site of relations that precede distinctions of antagonism. In comparing Mouffe's agonist politics with Jacques Rancière's (2010) dissensus, I call for a conception of politics that acknowledges the imbrication of ontic politics with the ontological interrogation of the political—this assertion builds from Slavoj Žižek's (2010) observation that the ontic division of politics from the political removes the economic from the political. To these ends, I assert the aesthetic as the first instance of the political—returning to the notion that politics is the dynamicism generated between interactions of actors within particular assemblages. It is here that I want to insert the leak back into the discussion.

The leak, in whatever form, is a political actor originating out of aesthetic experience. As an actor that breaches boundaries—of the body, of containment, of state borders, of medium and form—it constitutes an aesthetic experience between insides and outsides. The leak, in this sense, is a means through which we can interrogate both politics, in the ontic sense, and political-ontological notions of being. Through the case studies introduced in part 2 of this chapter, I demonstrate how the leak can allow for the tracing of political and aesthetic action and experience. The following section will attempt to outline the (leaky) structures of the political, and help to further develop what I am speaking of when I assert the leak as a political actor.



## Structures of Politics

Politics, in most scholarly pursuits, is conceived as a set of processes or structures through which power functions within a particular assemblage. While this definition is much more succinct than what I gestured to above, it is still considerably more broad than common references to politics. Most often, we think of politics as the specific operation of power through states, state-actors, and governments. I argue, that even in this most narrow sense, the leak remains a fruitful site of investigation. This section considers the structure of politics through power, sovereignty and containment—that, while often operationalized by the state, are also structures that underlie everyday life. My argument here is that the structure of politics is leaky—to these ends, I outline the existing discourses that inform this assertion. Beginning with Carl Schmitt’s (2005) assertion that the “sovereign is he who decides on the exception” (5), I outline how power becomes imbricated with containment. From here I account for the discourses that extend power beyond the state—those which assert that “power in its exercise goes much further, passes through much finer channels, and is much more ambiguous” (Foucault 1980, 72). Using Gilles Deleuze’s (1992) concepts of *modulation* and *control*, I will argue that the leak becomes an increasingly prevalent actor as we move later into modernity—an assertion that will extend into the following section “Sites of Politics”.

In the previous section I asserted that the political is primordial to ontic understandings of politics, and this current section asserts that while politics and power are often situated in the state, they underlie all relations more generally. This argument requires an excising of power and politics from state-centric discourses, and to do this we must account for the structuring of the state. If we are to look at the etymological origins of politics, it would perhaps seem best to begin with the concept’s root, *polis*—that is, the Greek city-state or body of citizens most famously

analysed in Plato's (2005) *Republic*. Alternatively, I could begin with any other organization of actors predating the nation-state: those organized by religion, by feudal lordship, by collectivity, by terrain, all of which bear a particular political power structure. My choice to begin with the nation-state is largely tied to my contention that the leak is implicated within a particular reality from the onset of modernity forward. I argue that modernity is a temporality of fastidious containment, central to which is the categorization of nation-states into units of sovereignty. It is beyond the scope of this section to account for even a handful of the theorizations of sovereignty that have been asserted, therefore I focus on the one that underlies the intersection of power, politics, and leaking.

In thinking through the structure of politics, I want to start with the Schmittian formulation of sovereignty as "he who decides on the exception" (2005, 5). The state of exception, for Schmitt, cannot be anticipated nor accounted for prior to it being enacted—it "frees itself from all normative ties and becomes in the true sense absolute" (12). It is to these ends that "sovereignty is the highest, legally independent, underived power" (17). It is from Schmitt's conception of Sovereignty that Giorgio Agamben (1998) notes that the "paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (15). Here, I argue that the structure of politics is a transcribing of insides and outsides, power is the ability to traverse boundary spaces while restricting others, and sovereignty is the ability to do so without consequence. Agamben illustrates that power, for many theorists, has been inscribed through the capability to establish what is within, and what is forced outside:

It has often been observed that the juridico-political order has the structure of an inclusion of what is simultaneously pushed outside. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari were thus able to write, "Sovereignty only rules over what it is capable of interiorizing" [(2008, 360)]; and, concerning the "great confinement" described by Foucault in his *Madness and Civilization*, Maurice Blanchot spoke of society's attempt to "confine the outside" (*enfermer le dehors*), that is, to constitute it in an "interiority of expectation or of

exception." Confronted with an excess, the system interiorizes what exceeds it through an interdiction and in this way "designates itself as exterior to itself" [(Blanchot 196)]. (18)  
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While Agamben's reading of Schmitt accepts the *realpolitik* of Schmittian sovereignty, he also argues that sovereignty undercuts biopower and biopolitics as much as it acts through hard power and hard politics. Building on Foucauldian notions of power, Agamben argues that "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power" (6). The Foucauldian notion that "power is essentially that which represses" (1980, 89–90) is crucial for understanding the leak as a political actor and will be explored below.

My argument above—that power is the ability to move freely across boundaries while constraining others within them—follows from Michel Foucault's notion of power, which is closely tied to subjectivity. Foucault (2013) notes that "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (208), and it is through these models of division and containment that this section explores politics and power in terms of leaking. The division of the subject occurs through the exercise of power either through *political techniques* or through *technologies of the self*. Foucault's (1980) analysis of power moves us away from explicit theories of state, and rather concerns how "power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain". He continues:

It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (98)

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67. The page numbers and dates included within this quotation from Agamben (1998, 18) have been adjusted in order to correspond to the Blanchot (1993), Deleuze and Guattari (2008), and Foucault (1988) references included in my bibliography.

It is from here that I want to gesture back to the dynamic of politics and aesthetics as described in the previous section. The structure of politics is the very structure of relations—all of them. This assertion will be fleshed out and returned to again in chapter 5, but what I want to assert here, is that power is diffuse through a transmutable and dynamic political structure of insides, outsides, classifications, rationalizations, and stratifications. The subject, for Foucault (1980), is produced by these relations: “the individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation” (98). What I want to emphasize here is the ways that these “networks of power” have developed, shifted, and become leaky throughout modernity.

The imbrication of politics, power, and sovereignty has made for messy conditions of the self. Modernity has at once scaffolded the subject, the self, and seen to its effacement in certain regards.<sup>68</sup> The following section, “Sites of Politics”, will attempt to account for the present leaky moment, however, I want to focus here on the methods through which logics of power endure. Building on Foucault’s (1995) assertion that power has shifted from punishment to discipline, Gilles Deleuze (1992) notes of the second half of the twentieth century: “a disciplinary society was what we already no longer were, what we had ceased to be” (3). This “new” logic is not a reversal of the previous structures of containment—rather, this “crisis in relation to all environments of enclosure,” whereby “liberating and enslaving forces confront one another” should be thought of as control (3–4). Deleuze argues that societies of control are “different internments”—where “enclosures are molds.... but controls are a modulation, like that self-deforming case that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or, like a sieve

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68. Here, I am referring to the conditions of late modernity—particularly disembeddedness as theorized by Ulrich Beck (1992). This will be explored in the following section “Sites of Politics”

whose mesh will transmute from point to point” (4). While the shift away from punishment may give the impression of opportunities for emancipation, Deleuze, following Foucault, notes that societies of control preclude the possibility of an outside. Here, there are no prospects for escape—room is provided for movement, the illusion of freedom, but within unknown, yet still predefined, limits. Networks of power operate through this logic. Friedrich Kittler describes how this dynamic extends to networks: “we are all being controlled through our machines, and the more networked these machines become, the stricter the mechanisms of control and the safeguards will get. And this also holds true for the bureaucracies that are built into that system” (quoted in Virilio et al. 1999, 84). Deleuze gestures towards the influence of capitalism in this shift away from *discipline* to *control*, thus situating the amorphous nature of these logics within the grander scheme of the postmodern condition. My argument here, is that while the shifting structure of institutions and the logics at their foundation become more transmutable, they do not necessarily evacuate power. Rather, power (through logics of control) become increasingly deterritorialized and thus more difficult to navigate. The following section considers how these shifts in power affect the sites of politics—where the political is situated and how it operates in late modernity.

### **Sites of Politics**

The distinction between *sites* and *structures* of politics is somewhat arbitrary, and the line that I draw here is a blurry one. In tracing out the structure of politics, I argued, following Foucault’s archaeology of power, that politics become dispersed throughout everyday life. I assert that modernity was largely a project of containment, and that the ossification of the nation-state (as the sovereign’s constitution of insides and outsides) becomes a significant site for the

leak as a political agent. In this section I focus on how the site of the leak shifts in late modernity. In the previous chapter, I argued that the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the entrenching of networks within society, affect both leaks themselves, and how they are operationalized. And while the significance of the material reality of networks will be returned to through my case examples in part 2 of this chapter, this section focuses on the discourses that account for the political and ontological shifts that undercut modernity in the late twentieth century. Here, I trace the discourses that insist that the institutions through which power is wielded (the state, discourse, the penal system, hospitals, etc.) deform in late modernity. I consider this mutation a destructuring of sorts, not a complete demolition. I use “sites of politics” to refer, not to a specific place of the political, but to account for a habitat of which politics is a part. This section is organized into two sites of politics and the discourses around them: late modernity and territoriality. None of these subsections are entirely separate from one another and together (along with the sections above) contextualize the meaning I make of *politics* when speaking to the political nature of leaks.

### ***Late Modernity***

I cannot address the entire discourse of late modernity here—I will, however, outline the foundational works that inform my argument that leaking in the contemporary moment is influenced by a variety of factors that underwrite the present temporality. Many of the works that I will introduce are further explored in the concluding chapter of this work—my intent in the following few pages is to merely outline how late modernity further develops the leak as a political actor. In referring to this moment as late modernity, I have chosen one of many possible designations for a postmodern moment. This is not a rejection of the discourses of

postmodernity—as they inform my argument heavily—but rather, I make this distinction to convey a certain specificity to the site that I will tease apart. Jean-François Lyotard (1984) contends “postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant” (79)—whether postmodernity (Baudrillard 1994; Lyotard 1984; Jameson 1991), late modernity (Connolly 1991; Giddens 2013), reflexive modernity (Beck et al, 1994), or liquid modernity (Bauman 2000), the idea that the structures of modernity have shifted, but still endure, forms a core part of the discourses theorizing the current temporality. The site of politics that underwrites my argument in part 2 of this chapter is liquid-like. Not only does this designation rhetorically affirm my assertion that this moment is one of particular leakiness, but its features, as outlined by Zygmunt Bauman (2000), describe the conditions that exacerbate leakiness. In citing the “reasons to consider ‘fluidity’ or ‘liquidity’ as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present”, Bauman notes:

Fluids travel easily. They ‘flow’, ‘spill’, ‘run out’, ‘splash’, ‘pour over’, ‘leak’, ‘flood’, ‘spray’, ‘drip’, ‘seep’, ‘ooze’; unlike solids, they are not easily stopped—they pass around some obstacles, dissolve some others and bore or soak their way through others still. From the meeting with solids they emerge unscathed, while the solids they have met, if they stay solid, are changed—get moist or drenched. The extraordinary mobility of fluids is what associates them with the idea of ‘lightness’. There are liquids which, cubic inch for cubic inch, are heavier than many solids, but we are inclined nonetheless to visualize them all as lighter, less ‘weighty’ than everything solid. We associate ‘lightness’ or ‘weightlessness’ with mobility and inconstancy: we know from practice that the lighter we travel the easier and faster we move (2).

It is this boundlessness, or at least potential boundlessness, that leads Bauman to designate the present as part of a liquid modernity—and while broader connections will be drawn later, it is the particularly political implications of liquidity that will be fleshed out here.

In outlining my definition of politics above, I argued that the political is the dynamic that undercuts the interaction between actors that establishes them within a set of relations. As relations are constituted by interaction, I argued that power is the ability to define those

interactions through containment and flows. This dynamic becomes unsettled in late modernity with the liquifying of certain boundaries. While the dissolution of boundaries can give the impression of power waning, rather than disappearing, power becomes increasingly diffuse.

Bauman argues:

The favourite strategic principles of the powers-that-be are nowadays *escape, avoidance* and *disengagement*, and their ideal condition is invisibility. Attempts to anticipate their moves and the unanticipated consequences of their moves (let alone the efforts to avert or arrest the most undesirable among them) have a practical effectivity... (40)

Here, Bauman echoes Deleuze's account of the shifting nature of power where, "for all practical purposes, power has become truly exterritorial, no longer bound, not even slowed down" (Deleuze 1992, 11). This unbounded site of politics varies greatly from the institutions, structures, and narratives of earlier modernity that situated power in much more explicit ways. Wendy Brown (1995) paints a picture of the site of postmodern power as "tentacular, roving, and penetrating," constantly "diffusing and decentralizing itself" (32). Modernity was not static—it was generative, accelerative, and progressive, but its political sites were locatable as such. Modernity saw to the building and entrenching of certain regimes of truth—though not inert, the structure of modernity was one of containment, visible edifices of rationality, and knowledge. The fluidity of late modernity was not necessarily marked by a material change in these structures of containment,<sup>69</sup> but rather came with the exposure of the imposed character of all knowledges—here, Brown argues, "the groundlessness of discovered norms or visions" becomes palpable (47–48). It is this exposure that marks late modernity—not an undoing of groundedness, though certain ideas of poststructuralist and deconstructivist theories might say otherwise. The late modern moment occurs when the contents of certain structures, are not freed, but instead

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69. Though the tearing down of the Berlin wall may feel like a particularly apt representation.



leak out. In describing modern, bourgeois society Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (2010) decry “all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air...” (212). Bauman (2000) argues that this melting of solids is a permanent feature of modernity (6). In the following subsection I am going to explore one of these melting-processes: deterritorialization. For now, I ask the reader to imagine the site of politics in the postmodern moment, not as purely liquid, but as what Rod Giblett (2009) refers to as a “quaking zone”—he contends:

The quaking zone... is a mediating category and site between the solid and the liquid, and between fire and air. It represents temporal and spatial transition between dryland and open water, and between dry air and hot fire. Principally the native quaking zone is the swamp, or other wetland.... (6)

So rather than imagining ourselves floating in water, let us consider the ways we are still trekking through mud.

### *Territoriality*

It seems as if there are analogies that we cannot help but rely on when speaking of the postmodern moment. Whether we think of it as “disembeddedness” (Beck 1992), “groundlessness” (Brown 1995), “melting” (Bauman 2000; Berman 1988; Marx and Engels 2010), or deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, 2009; Hardt & Negri 2003), the site of the political in postmodernity becomes unfixed. What I assert here is that politics’ seeming sublimation into formlessness is at once an opportunity and threat. On one hand these gaseous, fluid, and liquid sites of politics are more difficult to locate and uncover. However, this diffuse state comes with an increase in surface area that can instigate innumerable sites for interrelation. These opportunities for encounters are underwritten by power, but nonetheless represent

possibilities. But what is equally important to note is that this unfixing of power is often overestimated in certain discourses on postmodernity and globalization.<sup>70</sup> Stuart Elden (2009) asserts “properly critical” theories still need to consider the “the quantification of space and the role of calculative mechanisms in the commanding of territory, and the establishment of borders” (xxviii). This section explores the embeddedness of politics within territory, the complicating of this dynamic in late modernity, as well as the discourses that affirm the ultimate reterritorialization of politics through both old and new modes of power.

The history, politics, and implications of territory, as a concept in and of itself, are far beyond the scope of this section.<sup>71</sup> In his account of the concept’s birth, Elden (2013) argues that “territory” can only be understood through the interrogation of “the relation between place and power” (7). And while any simple definition of territory cannot fully account for the connotations of the concept, for the purpose of my argument, I utilize two definitions noted by Elden: firstly, territory as “a *relation* that can be understood as an outcome of territoriality”<sup>72</sup> (3) and second, through Anthony Giddens’s (1987) argument that territory is a “bordered power-container” (120). In either case, territory is more-than-terrain—terrain being a condition often projected onto our conventional understandings of territory. To these ends, to say that late modernity is a period of particular deterritorialization is not to imply the total severing of our relations to space, but rather a shifting in the relations that underlie the assemblage of territory, power, sovereignty. Moreover, in spite of the sweeping imaginaries of postmodernity (e.g., the

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70. This is especially reflected in political discourses of the mid-1990s theorizing the waning importance of the nation state. See, for example: Dunn (1994), Gottlieb (1993), and Held (1996).

71. For more information on the production of territory see Stuart Elden’s (2013) *The Birth of Territory*.

72. Emphasis added.

end of the nation state), Elden (2009) asserts “the continual remaking reshaping of spatial relations.... is not a vision of a static world of fixed territories suddenly thrown into flux, as it is in much of the literature on deterritorialization” (xxvii). Here, I follow Deleuze and Guattari’s (2011) assertion that deterritorialization is “inseparable from correlative reterritorializations” (560). While late modernity has troubled previously rigid structures, it has not necessarily evacuated them of power—this argument aligns with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s (2003) theorization of the contemporary moment as one of Empire. Hardt and Negri note:

The passage to Empire emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty. In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. (xii—xiii)

However, as Stuart Elden (2006) implies, Hardt and Negri’s notion of Empire, fails to account for the “concomitant reterritorialization that coincides with deterritorialization”(Elden, 61)

This section asserts that the consequences of late modernity have been incredibly influential in determining the site of politics in the contemporary moment. To be of late modernity, does not simply designate a site in a temporal sense—the distinction of hyper/late/post-modernity (whichever description one prefers) shapes the political site spatially as well. My assertion here is that there is no specific site of politics to which the leak exclusively relates. This is an extension of my argument that the political is a site of aesthetic relations, undercut by the power of certain actors to delineate the conditions insides and outside. Though early modernity saw the erection of rigid structures through which politics and power operate, in late modernity, deterritorialization and reterritorialization trouble these forms. Not unlike Deleuze’s account of the shift from logics of containment to logics of control, the material conditions of capitalism influence these deterritorializations. Frederic Jameson (1991) accounts

for postmodernism as the “cultural logic of late capitalism” whereby capitalism denotes the economic base for culture in postmodernity. The material conditions that ensured the exacerbation of globalization throughout the twentieth century were born from the immense technological progress that came with industrialization.<sup>73</sup>

Ellen Wood (1997) asserts that “all these factors—cultural and economic, with their technological foundations—have been brought together in the concept of ‘postmodernity’ and the proposition that in the past two or three decades we have witnessed a historic transition from ‘modernity’ to postmodernity”(539). However, Wood remains skeptical of this distinct epochal shift, arguing rather, that the seemingly distinctive features between modernity and postmodernity are continuous developments of the capitalist machine. She argues:

...by definition ‘globalization’ entails a weakening of the nation-state; and however much this conception may permit us to acknowledge the incompleteness of the globalizing process and the residual powers still left to the state, it has far greater difficulty in accommodating the simple fact that the global economy—the transnationalization of markets and capital—not only presupposes the nation-state but relies on the state as its principal instrument. If anything, the new global order is more than ever a world of nation-states; and if these states are permeable to the movements of capital, that permeability has as its corollary, indeed as its condition, the existence of national boundaries and state jurisdictions. (553)

What I wish to emphasize here is that the mechanisms through which globalization operates are not representative of an *involuntary* incontinence of the nation-state, but rather a controlled permeability. Though states (in most cases) tend to develop their borders to be particularly permeable to capital, capital is itself amorphous,<sup>74</sup> and thus is increasingly resistant to containment by conventionally political means. Rather than “ungrounding” the structures of power and sovereignty referenced throughout this chapter, this section serves to remind us of the

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73. This overview glosses over the violence that underlies this intensification of globalization, industrialization, and technological progress.

74. Though this is not to suggest that capital operates without relation to the material but that it operates *beyond* the material.

ways technology, network technologies, and information and communications systems can reify certain political structures, but also how they operate in spite of them. Benjamin Bratton (2015) asserts “while trade and migration perforate borders, state supervision over information flows are also dramatically reinscribed and reinforced” (3). Rather than viewing networks as an example of the diffusion of power in late modernity, Bratton asks us to consider how these planetary computational systems form an *accidental megastructure*.

As discussed in chapter 2, “Leaky Mediation”, the internet is argued to be both an example of a “networked dispositif” (Munster 2013) and the means for “new forms of democratic practice” (Kelly 1996). Regardless of which of these viewpoints one subscribes to, the internet should be approached as a site of politics. Following my assertion that *politics* is the dynamic between actors assembled through interaction, and that power is the ability to constitute insides and outsides amongst and within these assemblages, I assert that the internet, as a political space, is one of both threat and opportunity. However, I want to move this discussion beyond the standard nexus between the networked and the political. The discourses on the conventional political implications of the internet often revolve around “questions about governance and power... who does this space belong to, what rules and forms of governance should apply, and who should set and enforce them?” (Flyverbom 2011, viii). And while these concerns undercut nearly all of the cases featured in part 2 of this chapter, my emphasis here, rather, focuses on how leaks trouble these factors.

The net-utopianism of the early 1990s has always seemed somewhat detached from the technology’s roots in military communications. Perhaps this should have been taken as an omen considering now, nearly thirty years after the United States Army turned the technology over to the National Science Foundation, the political possibilities of the internet remain highly

contested. Natalie Fenton (2012) argues that “rather than the internet signalling a newly vital oppositional political culture, we are witnessing an era of easy-come, easy-go politics... where collective political identity has a memory that is short lived and easily deleted” (149–150). Easy-come politics, according to Fenton are an “excitable and often exciting approach,” though often failing “to take account of the prevailing conditions and particular contexts of power and control” (150). On the other hand, to suggest that in the realm of the online, all politics are “easy-go”, fails “to take account of the felt experience of real and potential political solidarity...” activated in online spaces” (150). While I agree with Fenton’s assertion that most approaches in accounting for the intersection of politics and the internet either overplay or disregard the technology’s political potential, I do not necessarily follow her conclusion that “whichever way you look at it, the internet is at the heart of radical politics in the digital age” (150). I am not suggesting that the internet is of no influence to radical politics, but simply I cannot conceive of it as the heart of radical politics. Rather, this section asks the reader to consider the way conventional politics are both reified and contested in online spaces through acts of leaking. Moreover, I want to assert that the internet cannot be interrogated as an individual actor, or as a concise, simple network of user-actors. The internet cannot be read separately from greater, intersecting assemblages. Hito Steyerl (2013) avows the internet as an almost incomprehensible space:

But this space is also a sphere of liquidity, of looming rainstorms and unstable climates. It is the realm of complexity gone haywire, spinning strange feedback loops. A condition partly created by humans but also only partly controlled by them, indifferent to anything but movement, energy, rhythm, and complication. It is the space of the rōnin of old, the masterless samurai freelancers fittingly called wave men and women: floaters in a fleeting world of images, interns in dark net soap lands. We thought it was a plumbing system, so how did this tsunami creep up in my sink? How is this algorithm drying up this rice paddy? And how many workers are desperately clambering on the menacing cloud that hovers in the distance right now, trying to squeeze out a living, groping

through a fog which may at any second transform both into an immersive art installation and a demonstration doused in cutting-edge tear gas?

It is this constant switching of online spaces, networks and structures, that entangles them so deeply within questions of power and politics. As Bauman (2000) asserted of the objects of modernity, “shaping them is easier than keeping them in shape” (8)—so is true of networks. To these ends, the case studies explored in part 2 assert the internet as part of broader networks that undercut distinctions between ontic politics and the politico-ontological.

This section has attempted to introduce and constrain the theories that will be explored in the following section within their respected discourses. I have asserted the leak to be a political actor based on a more-than-ontic conception of politics. This approach accepts Chantal Mouffe’s (2005) assertion that “the political” is an ontological category that extends beyond what is often considered within the realm of conventional politics. I argue that understanding the political realities of leaks requires us to consider the imbrication of politics and the political. This work does not attempt to define exactly what constitutes the parameters of the political, but rather asserts it as a dynamic emanating from the interactions of actors within assemblages. Though I follow Mouffe’s attempt to account for the “affective dimension” of politics through her dismissal of consensus as a necessity of democracy, I argue that the political is primordial to distinctions of antagonism or agreement. Rather, I call for the connecting of politics and aesthetics through the work of Jacques Rancière (2006; 2010) and Susan Buck-Morss (1992). This assertion situates the political at the point of aesthetic experience—at “the mediating boundary between inner and outer” (Buck-Morss 1992, 6). In further addressing the intersection between leaks and politics, I assert that the structure of politics is leaky. I argue that politics is structured through the power to control insides and outsides, and account for how this perspective informs existing discourses on sovereignty and state power. Following the work of

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, I argue that these structures are increasingly diffuse as we move later in modernity. While I assert that there is no specific place of politics, I attempt to account the features of time and space within postmodern discourses. Here, I argue the leak to be an agent of destabilization. Having asserted in the previous chapter that technological progress has ensured an increase in leakiness—so too has it been argued to compress time/space (Harvey 2003; McLuhan 1994). This time/space compression is one of the markers of the shift into postmodernity that troubles the boundaries of grand narratives, institutions of power, and collectivities—these factors underlie Bauman’s (2000) use of “‘fluidity’ or ‘liquidity’ as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways novel, phase in the history of modernity” (2). My final assertion is that we have yet to witness the possibilities that network technologies such as the internet have to offer us in way of redress. In part 2 of this chapter I will put these ideas to the test. I argue that tracing the leak through its many capacities, processes, and forms, allows for us to glimpse certain flows—particularly flows of power and capital. None of the below cases have a distinct starting or ending point—I cannot account for any of them in any sort of totality. Rather, we will be hopping in mid-stream.

While I argue that the political nature of the leak needs to be considered beyond ontic conceptions of politics, this section contemplates how the ontic and the ontological are always implicated at the site of politics. This section will explore *leaking* through three lenses in order to argue that leaks are saturated sites at the intersection of the political and the aesthetic: ‘Presidential Leakiness’; ‘Making Politics Legible’; and ‘Situating Leaks’. Categorizing these cases of leaks this way is merely an organizational choice. What is evident through these examples is that through tracing leakages we are likely to come across connections with other leaks—where one site of leaking begins and another ends, is only ever a question of scope.



Beginning with “Presidential Leakiness”, I argue that the 2016 United States’ presidential election and resulting presidency exemplifies a particular leakiness. Through exploring a series of events around Donald Trump’s election—politics, in the most conventional sense—I argue that the present dynamic of leakiness bears particular implications for “the political”. This section is followed by an account of the United States’ Espionage Act—the legislation utilized against whistleblowers like Daniel Ellsberg and Chelsea Manning. Here I note how documents can be operationalized into leaks, as well as enforcement against acts of leaking. Noting the difficulties of in visualizing capital, I argue that leaks (such as the 2017 reporting on the Paradise Papers) can aid, but also obfuscate political relationships. The section that follows, “Situating Leaks”, will examine the political relationship between leaks and borders. Building on my argument concerning the Paradise Papers, I examine how capital eludes restraint and promotes the constraint of human bodies. This section will also use the site of the port city to illustrate the intersection of material and political realities in leaking. While some of these cases seem disparate, my goal through this chapter is to account for just some of the ways that the leak operates as a political actor. To these ends, I use the leak as a frame for addressing the complex entanglement of actors often oversimplified in conventional academic, journalistic, and professional analyses. Throughout this part of the chapter, I will signpost the reader to substantive accounts of the events that I will draw on, however my analysis intends to demonstrate how leaks underlie political phenomena, rather than to provide a totalizing account of the events to which I refer.

## Presidential Leakiness

The simultaneous threat and opportunity posed by leaks has been particularly evident throughout Donald Trump's candidacy and eventual presidency of the United States of America. Trump's foray into politics has been one of incredible leakiness. Campaigning strategically around Hillary Clinton's use of a private server, his characterization of Clinton as "crooked Hillary" became a staple part of his campaign rhetoric. Moreover, Trump proclaimed his love of Wikileaks after the organization published a searchable database of Clinton's emails during the candidates' campaigns. Following the release, which made evident that a large number of emails had been deleted prior to Clinton having turned over the contents of her server to the State Department, Trump organized a press conference where he declared "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," (2016). Here the candidate was welcoming of the possibility of exposition by an unauthorized party. As the result of the FBI's investigation into Clinton's inability to secure her communications, she was deemed "extremely careless" by then director James Comey. In these cases, leaks came to be a means to illustrate Clinton's incompetence and sneakiness in the eyes of the Republican Party. However, Trump's views on leaking oscillate depending on the information disclosed. Just weeks after Trump's election win, news outlets began to comment on the President's new distaste for leaks.<sup>75</sup> With both candidates' campaigns leveraging leaked information, the 2016 election was one of particular leakiness (Timm 2016). But beyond the election, leaks have continued to plague the Trump presidency.

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75. See, for example: Jackson (2017), "Trump Team: WikiLeaks Is Different Now That Trump Is Being Hacked"; Johnson & Parker (2017) "After Loving WikiLeaks as a Candidate, Trump Decides He Doesn't like Leaks as President"; and Shear (2017), "After Election, Trump's Professed Love for Leaks Quickly Faded".

This section utilizes a sample of leak-events surrounding Trump's presidency in order to illustrate how the leak functions politically. These moments, which either attest to Trump's love of leaks, or hatred of them, flow somewhat chronologically from his campaign for President to his current tenure in office. During his campaign, and prior to his election, Trump references leaks with a certain endearment, often praising Julian Assange and WikiLeaks for its releases of information to the public. However, Trump's sentiment towards leaking seems to shift after he is sworn into his position in the Oval Office. In accounting for Trump's former love of leaks I examine statements from his campaign trail where he repeatedly claims that the stuff of leaks "tells you the inner heart" of politics" (Trump Oct 12, 2016).

Part and parcel of Trump's relationships to leaks are derogatory comments made throughout his campaign about women's leaky tendencies. Following this, I compare Trump's previous comments about leaks to those made after his election and examine statements of Trump's behavior in 2013, accounted for in the Steele Dossier, in order to demonstrate his inconsistent position on leaking. I argue that President's relationship to leaks is political. As I have asserted throughout this work, leaks can disclose truths, substantiate evidence, provide critique, defy the status quo—it is not difficult to attest to the political nature of these abilities. However, my argument here is not that leaks uniquely threaten heads of state, or states themselves, but that leaking connotes a particular dynamic that undoes, and reforms relations between actors. I will use the examples below to demonstrate how leaks, though utilized frequently within politics, signify a universal political in that they constitute a set of relations amongst actors.

My analysis of Trump's sentiment towards leaks does not formally consider his possible collusion in the hacking into and release of documents from the Democratic National

Committee's (DNC) severs.<sup>76</sup> Rather, my focus is on the U.S. President's expression of the value in leaking. Prior to the release of the DNC emails, Trump's first leak-controversy was a remark made while recalling Fox News Anchor Megyn Kelly's questioning at the August 6, 2015 Republican presidential debate. Following the debate, in an interview with Don Lemon on *CNN Tonight*, Trump remarked that Kelly had "blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever" (Aug. 8, 2015). In referring to bloody eyes, one can assume Trump was reaching for the idiom of "seeing red"—the implication being that the antagonism underlying Kelly's question was due to her preexisting anger towards him. As far as bleeding from her "wherever," many people felt that the intended connotation was that Kelly was menstruating. Trump dismissed the backlash to his comment as peoples' obsession with being "politically correct" (@realDonaldTrump, Aug 8, 2015) though also clarifying the comment was actually a reference to blood coming out of her nose (@realDonaldTrump, Aug. 8, 2015). In speaking with Jake

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76. On May 17, 2017 a Special Council investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election was instigated by the Attorney General of the United States. Lead by former FBI Director Robert Mueller (and often referred to as the Mueller Probe) the inquiry sought to investigate the concerns of possible coordination between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and the Russian government, including the 2016 Democratic National Convention email leaks. On January 25, 2019, Roger Stone, an associate of the Trump campaign, was indicted by a grand jury on several counts, including obstruction—the indictment documents a direct connection between the Trump campaign and WikiLeaks. In spite of this direct relation, my emphasis in this section will be on Trump's *sentiments* regarding leaks, not on his suspected direct involvement in any particular leak. On March 22, 2019 Mueller's report was submitted to Attorney General William Barr, and on April 18, 2019, a redacted version was publicly released. On March 24, Barr submitted a letter to Congress stating that "in cataloging the President's actions...the report identifies no actions that in our judgement, constitute obstructive conduct...." (Barr 2019, 3). This address has drawn criticism considering that once the report itself was submitted to Congress, its conclusions were less explicit than Barr let on his statement. The executive summary of the Mueller Report noted: "if we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the President clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, however, we are unable to reach that judgment" (Mueller 2019, 2).

Tapper, he asserted “only a deviant” would assume he was referring to Kelly’s vagina, and that “you almost have to be sick” to imagine that he was inferring menstruation when he has said that she was bleeding (Aug. 9, 2015). Regardless of Trump’s intent behind the comment, the President has a documented discomfort around women who bleed. In posing the question, “why is the president so disgusted by women and our blood?”, *Time* magazine’s Samantha Cooney (2017) recalls Trump’s response to a question posed by Howard Stern in 1997: “Will you have sex with a woman if she's having her period?” to which Trump responds “well, sometimes you get there by mistake”. While the social construction of the menstruating woman as threat will be explored further in the following chapter, it is relevant here in that Trump’s disdain for women’s incontinence aligns closely to his feelings about leaks in general. Two years after the Megyn Kelly remark, Trump took to twitter to address a long-time feud with *Morning Joe* hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski, calling them out for wanting to spend time with him at Mar-a-Lago—here, he noted that Brzezinski, to whom he referred to as “crazy Mika”, “was bleeding badly from a face-lift” (@realDonaldTrump, Jun. 29, 2017). While Trump’s contempt for women can be argued on many grounds, their imagined inability to contain themselves seems of particular concern for him. His comments on their physical leakiness (whether true or not) become a means through which he can interrogate an adversary’s sagaciousness. Moreover, his rhetoric concerning leaks extends into his campaigning, and political strategy surrounding the securing of borders, something that will be explored later in this chapter.

In spite of his previous track-record of discomfort with women’s leakiness, Donald Trump demonstrated a sheer excitement over leaks beginning in early October 2016. After reviewing transcripts of his speeches from the final thirty days of his presidential campaign, ThinkProgress.org calculated that Trump mentioned WikiLeaks 164 times (Israel 2019). His

sentiment towards the organization in his remarks, particularly at the end of his campaign, was incredibly positive—for example: at a rally in Cincinnati, Ohio he stated “it’s been amazing what’s coming out on WikiLeaks” (Oct. 13, 2016); at another Ohio rally in Delaware a few days later, Trump remarked “boy, that WikiLeaks has done a job on her, hasn’t it?” (Oct. 20, 2016); and one day later in Fletcher, North Carolina, he stated “...oh, we love WikiLeaks. Boy, they have really—WikiLeaks! They have revealed a lot” (Oct. 21, 2016). What instigated Trump’s delight was the organization’s publication of the “Podesta Emails” on October 7, 2016. While Trump utilized the contents of the leak throughout his campaign, the emails themselves are not of particular concern for my argument here—rather, what I wish to demonstrate is that Trump’s disposition to leaking is hardly continuous. Just thirty minutes prior to WikiLeaks’s release of the Podesta emails,<sup>77</sup> the *Washington Post* released behind-the-scenes footage from a 2005 *Access Hollywood* interview where Trump can be heard stating he “can do anything” with women including “grab them by the pussy” (Fahrenheit 2016). Later that day Trump, in a response posted to his Twitter, referred to the tape’s release as “nothing more than a distraction” (@realDonaldTrump, Oct. 8, 2016). Not long after the *Access Hollywood* video began circulating the *New York Times* published a report “Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately” (Twohey and Barbaro 2016), Trump responded: “it’s not a coincidence that these attacks come at the exact same moment, and all together at the same time as WikiLeaks releases documents exposing the massive international corruption of the Clinton machine” (Oct. 13, 2016). Of course, the same has been suggested of the Podesta email leak, that “it’s not coincidence” that the emails were posted “at the exact same moment, and all together at

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77. The suspiciously close timeline of events has been verified by PolitiFact (see, Sharockman 2016).

the same time” as the *Access Hollywood* tape was leaked (*ibid.*). Regardless of whether Trump had any involvement in release of the “Podesta Emails”, he spent October entangled in the tensions of leaking. He has since stated that he had plans at the time to sue NBC for the release of the *Access Hollywood* tape (who he believed leaked the footage to *The Washington Post*) as the tape “was done in a trailer secretly”—he stated “there are even questions about this tape, there’s many things going on” and “that was illegal what they did” (Aug. 9, 2015). Though Trump’s strategy around the tape during his campaign was a brief acknowledgement, followed by diversion, it is evident now that he has always felt wronged by its release.

After being sworn in as the President of the United State of America on January 20, 2017, things have only gotten leakier for Trump. John Cassidy (2018) of *The New Yorker* asserts “ever since Trump became President, the White House has leaked like a sieve”. Frank Bruni (2017), in an opinion piece for *The New York Times*, commented that Trump’s government is a “shockingly leaky vessel”, he continues “this much leaking this soon in an administration is a powerful indication of what kind of president we have”. The leaks, according to Jonathan Swan (2018), White House correspondent for *Axios*, “come in all shapes and sizes: small leaks, real-time leaks, weaponized leaks, historical leaks. Sensitive Oval Office conversations have leaked, and so have talks in cabinet meetings and the Situation Room. You name it, they leak it”. Since becoming President, Trump has been given the nick-name “Leaker in Chief”,<sup>78</sup> but unlike October 2016, Trump’s narratives around leaking have turned sour. We can pinpoint the moment of this shift to the beginning of January 2017 when *BuzzFeed News* published a dossier of personal and financial information pertaining to Trump’s business dealings with Russia. The document was

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78. This name has stuck and has been used throughout media references to President Trump. See, for example Haberman and Rogers (2018).

compiled by former MI6 officer Christopher Steele and the media reported the classified documents had been circulating for months with then-President Barack Obama and senior intelligence officials having been briefed on its contents. On January 10, 2017, *Buzzfeed News* published the full documents, eventually known as the Steele Dossier, to its site. On January 11, 2017, eventual White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, introduced President-elect Trump at a scheduled press conference opening with remarks on the leak: “the fact that BuzzFeed and CNN made the decision to run with this unsubstantiated claim is a sad and pathetic attempt to get clicks. The report is not an intelligence report, plain and simple” (quoted from Trump Jan. 11, 2017). Following press questions, Trump commented on the previously released Podesta emails (decrying the poor security of the DNC) noting he wanted to produce a report on “hacking defence” within his first 90 day in office—he continued “well, I think it's pretty sad when intelligence reports get leaked out to the press. I think it's pretty sad. First of all, it's illegal. You know, these are—these are classified and certified meetings and reports” (Jan. 11, 2017). After his inauguration, the President’s disdain for leaks was only further aggravated when information began to circulate that Trump-appointed National Security Adviser Michael Flynn had lied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) about being in communication with Russia’s ambassador to the United States.

Should we be surprised that President Trump’s stance on leaking has seemingly flip-flopped many times over? Certainly not. It has been argued that the President has valid reasons for his change in heart including contextual differences between acts of leaking—there is also the assertion that perhaps the President does not see his varying sentiments as a change of position at all. In investigating Trump’s position on leaking for *PolitFact’s* “Flip-O-Meter” feature Louis Jacobson notes:



Pressed on the question at his Feb. 16 news conference, Trump drew a distinction between the release of classified information (the leaks on Flynn and Russia) and the release of personal emails (WikiLeaks and the Democratic National Committee)... “In one case, you're talking about highly classified information,” Trump said. “In the other case, you're talking about (DNC chairman) John Podesta saying bad things about the boss (Clinton)[...] He said terrible things about her. But it wasn't classified information. But in one case, you're talking about classified (material). (2017)

In this explanation Trump seems to imply that leaks of unclassified material—leaks of the “saying bad things” variety—are fair game. Ultimately, Trump’s position on leaking is ruled to be “a Full Flop” based on the fact that he “was praising the release of private information during the campaign but criticizing it after he became president. The situations are substantially similar, but Trump’s sentiments are not” (Jacobson 2017). As part of the ruling, the article defers to the opinion of one of their “Flip-O-Meter” judges Benjamin H. Friedman, a research fellow in security studies at the libertarian Cato Institute:

Trump has done something worse than flip-flop [...] He’s showed that his stance of leaks depends on whether it helps him. Flip-floppers change their mind; Trump has showed that he doesn’t have a stance on leaks independent from his interests. He’s pretending otherwise now, but it’s not credible. (quoted in Jacobson 2017)

Further, the ruling cited a tweet of Trump’s from 2013, years before his presidency, as evidence of his opportunism: “ObamaCare is a disaster and Snowden is a spy who should be executed—but if it and he could reveal Obama's records, I might become a major fan” (@realDonaldTrump, Oct. 30, 2013). Jacobson concludes that “Trump may have been joking in this tweet. Still, it suggests that this dichotomy—between leaks that help him and leaks that don’t—has crossed his mind before” (2017). While Trump has demonstrated a wide range of sentiments towards leaking, the concluding ruling of *PolitiFact*’s “Flip-O-Meter” is contrary to the evidence offered. Rather, Trump’s position has always been, as Friedman suggested, absent of a stance independent from his interests. This is particularly evident in an interview conducted with President Trump by the Associated Press (AP) after his first one hundred days in office (2017).

In reference to U.S. Attorney General Jeff Session’s priority of arresting Julian Assange, the AP recounts that Trump had been “supportive of what WikiLeaks was doing during the campaign with the release of the Clinton emails” an exchange follows:

TRUMP: When Wikileaks came out ... never heard of Wikileaks, never heard of it. When Wikileaks came out, all I was just saying is, “Well, look at all this information here, this is pretty good stuff.” You know, they tried to hack the Republican, the RNC, but we had good defenses. They didn’t have defenses, which is pretty bad management. But we had good defenses, they tried to hack both of them. They weren’t able to get through to Republicans. No, I found it very interesting when I read this stuff and I said, “Wow.” It was just a figure of speech. I said, “Well, look at this. It’s good reading.”

AP: But that didn’t mean that you supported what Assange is doing?

TRUMP: No, I don’t support or unsupport. It was just information. They shouldn’t have allowed it to get out. If they had the proper defensive devices on their internet, you know, equipment, they wouldn’t even allow the FBI. How about this—they get hacked, and the FBI goes to see them, and they won’t let the FBI see their server. But do you understand, nobody ever writes it. Why wouldn’t (former Hillary Clinton campaign chairman John) Podesta and Hillary Clinton allow the FBI to see the server? They brought in another company that I hear is Ukrainian-based. (“AP Interview with Trump” 2017)

The leak itself is “just information”, its meaning, value, and possible threat comes from the broader sets of relationships that underlie its release. Where did it leak from? Into where is it leaking? Did it escape itself? Who is its owner? How does this information become useful? I asserted above that the content of the Podesta email leak was, at best, secondary to my argument—they demonstrated, amongst other things, that Hillary Clinton was privy to the questions she would face at debates ahead of time, and that Podesta, at times, did not think highly of her. This information however, was relevant for the Trump Campaign. What does interest my position on leaks however, are the contents of the Steele Dossier (2016)—the release of which, as mentioned earlier, provoked aggressive responses from Sean Spicer and Trump. Included in the dossier was a summarized account of information that Christopher Steele had uncovered while investigating one of the trips Trump had taken to Russia prior to his candidacy. The dossier reported that the Kremlin had sought to obtain compromising material that could be

leveraged against Trump. Steele had reason to believe that the Russian Federal Security Service had obtained compromising evidence by way of what is now colloquially referred to as the “pee tape”. The dossier notes:

According to Source D, where s/he had been present, TRUMP’s (perverted) conduct in Moscow included hiring the presidential suite of the Ritz Carlton Hotel, where he knew President and Mrs OBAMA (whom he hated) had stayed on one of their official trips to Russia, and defiling the bed where they had slept by employing a number of prostitutes to perform a ‘golden showers’ (urination) show in front of him. The hotel was known to be under FSB [(Russia’s Federal Security Service)] control with microphones and concealed cameras in all the main room to record anything they wanted to. (2)

The events of the Steele Dossier have not been corroborated or proven by any subsequent investigation, but they still signal something significant. The Steele Dossier marks the potential of another leak—the document’s release online left the public, media and likely the White House, wondering if the rumored “pee tape” would ever be revealed. It has also become embedded within a string of other leaks. After FBI director James Comey was fired by President Trump, he leaked a series of memos in which he referenced the President’s anxieties about the tape.<sup>79</sup> I am not postulating that Trump’s anxiety regarding the tape corroborates the events described in the dossier—rather I am suggesting that leaks are often entangled with feelings of anxiety.

The political nature of these leaks is so apparent, that it might make the distinction between ontic politics and the ontological political noted in the first part of this chapter feel unnecessary. However, by the end of this work, I intend to make the above leaks’ implications

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79. The leaked Comey memos note “The President brought up the ‘Golden Showers thing’ and said it really bothered him if his wife had any doubt about it. He then explained, as he did at our dinner, that he hadn’t stayed overnight in Russia during the Miss Universe trip. Twice during this part of the conversation, Reince tried to interject a comment about [REDACTED] and ‘why it was even in there,’ but the President ignored him. The President said ‘the hookers thing’ is nonsense but that Putin had told him “we have some of the most beautiful hookers in the world.” He did not say when Putin had told him this and I don’t recall [REDACTED]’ (Comey 2017, 9)

within the political—in its broadest sense—clearer. To gesture to these ends, I want to speak of Christopher Carter’s (2019) reading of Trump (and his administration) in terms of parapraxis. Here, Carter pushes parapraxis beyond its Freudian origins to include “the stumbles of the executive malfunctioning of the social machine”. He argues that we can consider parapraxis in terms of the political, in that it “no longer signals the operation of individual consciousness but rather a rhetorical ecology” (97). I argue that the slip of the tongue and the leak are of the same vein, as parapraxis denotes unconscious desires’ tendency to “regularly, but unpredictably, leak into conscious awareness and into the flow of social activity” (Billig 1997, 150). Carter contends that the *Access Hollywood* tape represents “an especially prescient example of a structural leak, a rogue eruption within the rhetorical ecology” (98). He continues:

The video shows nothing like a conventional slip of the tongue....What it does show, however, is the rhetorical ecology refusing to leave his indiscretions on the bus....What we encounter in the circulation of the *Access Hollywood* video, is systemic parapraxis, emanating not from the tongue alone, but coalescing as visual aural and kinetic modes.... The digital-organic ecology bringing his fitness for office into doubt. (98–99)

Carter frames divulsions of this nature as assemblages of relations—rhetorical ecologies—not unlike the argument I made through the example of iPhone Girl in the previous chapter. “Communicative materials”, he argues, “acquire unexpected purposes, converging and contending with human agency without being equivalent to it” (99)—in these terms, leaks can be complicit in their own divulgence, even when aided by human action as was the case of the *Access Hollywood* tape. While I follow Carter’s assertion of a more-than-individual parapraxis, I want to quickly address what possibilities and threats that are posed by the leak in terms of the individual. What underlies parapraxis, the leaking of the unconscious into public (at least in psychoanalytic theory) is most often desire, and nothing induces anxiety like desire does. Trump’s noted unease about women’s incontinence—bleeding from their wherevers, menstrual intercourse by mistake, inability to defend their servers from being hacked—along with

frustration over the increased amount of leaks within the White House, makes the contents of Steele Dossier resonate as true. The President's praise of releases that serve his interests, and anxiety over ones that do not, demonstrate a certain love for leaking providing that it remains within his control—perhaps as it could have been (had it remained truly private) in the Presidential Suite at the Moscow Ritz. This simultaneous possibility (desire) and threat (anxiety of desire) is always present in the leak.

### **Making Politics Legible**

In asserting that the political is a dynamic that constitutes the relationship between actors—an aesthetic experience at the boundary between insides and outsides—it is necessary to explore, again, the role of documentation in these processes. In chapter 2, I used the examples of the Pentagon Papers and Cablegate to interrogate the material differences between types of information leaks—in this section I want to explore two additional forms of documentation—legislation and financial reporting. Though often considered to be a passive record, the original denotation of *documentation* also implies something that actively imparts information.<sup>80</sup> While documents may serve as evidence of something that has previously occurred, they also involve present, even future, actions—they are not simply confirmations of past events, documents can engage current dynamics, demand reinterpretation, and inform. While leaking information might be considered a means where actors put documents into motion, I refer to etymology here to assert that documents, themselves, can aggravate forces into motion too. In this section, I want to consider the document's role in promulgation—that is, the role that the document plays in making something known. To promulgate, or to expose to the public, is a necessary requirement

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80. "Latin *documentum* lesson, proof, instance.... *docēre* to teach" (OED 2019)

of the liberal legal tradition. Though promulgation is expository, it differs from leaking in that it is an intentional record. To put something “on the books” publicly formalizes decrees. More colloquially, promulgation simply connotes the spread of something into knowledge. In either sense, politics, promulgation, and documentation are incredibly imbricated: the document, in the liberal Western tradition, is at once the original form of laws, a means of enforcing them, as well as being subject to them. This section reopens the question of the document and the leak in two regards. Firstly, I explore the juridical implications of “leaking” as conveyed through the United States Code (U.S.C.)—in the U.S., indictments of leaking state information cite violations of the U.S.C., Title 18 “Crimes and Criminal Procedure”, most often under Chapter 31 “Embezzlement and Theft” and/or Chapter 37 “Espionage and Censorship”. Here, I look at how the leak is structured as a criminal act. Secondly, I look at the role of financial documentation in the movement of capital and how it becomes operationalized in acts of leaking. Here, I argue that leaked financial reports can provide a means for tracing flows of capital. These documents can be read as diagrams of power, that when made visible, can provide a course for redress. I explore this specifically in reference to the release of the Paradise Papers in 2017. These “papers” represent troves of financial records revealing the off-shore holdings of heads of states, politicians, and the financial elite. While financial documentation becomes a means through which accountability is sometimes avoided, I argue that it can also be the means through which information surfaces.

### *Legislating Leaks*

I have made the argument throughout this work that we are facing a time of intensified leakiness. In referring to national security leaks, David E. Pozen (2013) notes that of the small

number of media leak prosecutions since the enactment of the Espionage Act, most have been brought by the Obama Administration (515). Prior to the Obama presidency, leak prosecution was relatively minimal.<sup>81</sup> While this growing number of leak prosecutions is not necessarily indicative of a growing number of leaks themselves, it certainly represents a shift in our relationship to them. Either leaking is more frequent or it is more frequently prosecuted—in either case this change in frequency is worth contemplating. On August 23, 2018, Reality Winner became the first person charged under the Espionage Act by the Trump administration. Winner was convicted and sentenced to five years and three months for leaking a top secret NSA intelligence report describing a Russian cyberattack on voting software suppliers for the U.S. 2016 presidential election.<sup>82</sup> While I do not focus on Winner’s actions and subsequent conviction explicitly, the punitive action against her signals a continuation of the previous administration’s momentum in prosecuting leakers. My intent here is to provide a sketch of how the U.S. Criminal Code, enshrines the United States’ relationship to leaks, but also how it obfuscates them. Considering that “leaking” does not emulate the language of the law, the component actions behind information leaks are not equally chargeable—this dynamic will be explored below.

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81. Both Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo faced charges under Nixon for the leaking of the Pentagon papers. Samuel Morrison, though pardoned by Bill Clinton, was sentenced to twenty-four months for sending images of a Soviet ship for publication in a reference book on the world’s warships. Under George W. Bush, Larry Franklin was charged with releasing Iran-related intelligence materials to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

82. While the Reality Winner case is beyond the scope of this project, it is worth considering the ways in which the *act of leaking* is regarded to be a particularly dissident action. As a slew of government and government-associated collusions became apparent through the Mueller probe (see note 13), the resulting charges and sentencing reflected a leniency previously denied to Winner. In December 2018, Winner’s mother published a letter in *The Intercept* asserting: “Treating Reality as an insider threat and using her and her sentence as a deterrent for others, yet allowing the likes of Cohen, Flynn, Gates, and Butina off easy for much more serious offenses undermines our entire system” (Winner-Davis 2018).

Though increasing leak prosecutions gives the impression of rising leak-threats, the public has never been privy to the exact ways that leaks function within government. Pozen (2013) asserts that “the majority of classified information leaks are not referred for possible criminal action” (555). To these ends, it would be naïve to assert that the number of indictments against people for the leaking of information represents the number of instances in which information is leaked. Pozen notes a number of “constraint narratives” politicians use when accounting for the barriers that governments face in investigating releases of classified information—but he ultimately asserts that “the idea that leak laws are inherently or peculiarly incapable of implementation is untenable”. Rather, Pozen argues that “energetic enforcement just comes at a cost—political, practical, personal—that relevant decisionmakers have been unwilling to accept” (558). What I argue here is that there is something to be gleaned in knowing that the cases the U.S. chooses to prosecute are the exception and not the rule. Since only certain acts of leaking are met with criminal charges, it can be garnered that some leaks simply are not threatening, or moreover, can be of benefit to operations. However, the lack of prosecution of known instances of leaking is not simply because of an unwillingness of individuals within government to face the possible costs of turning information over to the Department of Justice. In a 1983 *New York Times* article, Richard Halloran notes the leak is “a political instrument wielded almost daily by senior officials within the Administration to influence a decision, to promote policy, to persuade Congress and to signal foreign governments. Leaks are oil in the machinery of Government”. Leaks are utilized regularly within government, between governments, and between the government and the press as a strategic means of communication (Abel 1987; Pozen 2013; Sagar 2017).



While government's claimed inability to prosecute leakers is often overstated (Pozen 2013), it is not to suggest that litigating leak-cases is without difficulty. One of the particularities in indicting for information disclosures is the materiality of the leak. The most common charges brought against those indicted for leaking fall under Title 18, Part 1, Sections 31 and 37 of the United States Code. The interpretation of both sections indicates the necessity of a material object of sorts. When leak actions are charged under Section 31, §641, the allegation is that the leak was obtained through theft—it pertains to:

Whoever embezzles, steals, purloins, or knowingly converts to his use or the use of another, or without authority, sells, conveys or disposes of any record, voucher, money, or thing of value of the United States or of any department or agency thereof, or any property made or being made under contract for the United States or any department or agency thereof...

Section 37, §793(e), also alleges the possession or transmission of an object, stipulating the indicted as:

Whoever having unauthorized possession of, access to, or control over any document, writing, code book, signal book, sketch, photograph, photographic negative, blueprint, plan, map, model, instrument, appliance, or note relating to the national defense, or information relating to the national defense which information the possessor has reason to believe could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation, willfully communicates, delivers, transmits or causes to be communicated, delivered, or transmitted, or attempts to communicate, deliver, transmit or cause to be communicated, delivered, or transmitted the same to any person not entitled to receive it, or willfully retains the same and fails to deliver it to the officer or employee of the United States entitled to receive it...

Here, we must think of the ways in which the leak is construed as a “record, voucher, money, or thing of value” and/or as “any document, writing, code book, signal book, sketch, photograph, photographic negative, blueprint, plan, map, model, instrument, appliance, or note relating to the national defense, or information relating to the national defense...”. Interpreting the leak into these material parameters, by nature of confirming charges, further asserts my position from the previous chapter that information leaking as we know it, only becomes possible with the material

ability to possess information. The material aspect of the leak, while being an explicit requirement, is also implicated through the rhetoric of property that underlies charge of “theft” under section §641. In its application, the law targets the original sources of leaks as opposed to the media through which the leak is dispersed. It is the action of its removal from a bounded space that is punished—less common is the prosecution of facilitating its spread once it has passed this threshold. This is what Pozen (2013) deems the “punitive/permissive divide” (515)—he argues that this divide serves “a wide variety of governmental ends at the same time as it has efficiently kept most disclosures within tolerable bounds” (517). Criminalizing leaking “from both ends—at both the publication and transmission stage”, Pozen argues, “would risk compromising the government’s instrumental use of the press” (518). Ultimately, his account of the situation is that while “in formal terms this legal regime looks forbidding, draconian,” government’s stance towards leaking is a systemic “permissive neglect” (536).

In the previous chapter, I noted the material differences between the Pentagon Papers leak and the Cablegate release. Daniel Ellsberg avoided charges under the Espionage Act, as well as for theft and conspiracy, when the case against him was dismissed due to governmental misconduct.<sup>83</sup> At the point of Ellsberg’s trial, the federal government’s case against *The New York Times* had already been decided: on June 30, 1971 the Supreme Court ruled prior restraint cannot be exercised without the State meeting the burden of proof of “grave and irreparable danger”.<sup>84</sup> Justice William O. Douglas concurred that in “seeking injunctions against these newspapers, and in its presentation to the Court, the Executive Branch seems to have forgotten the essential purpose and history of the First Amendment” (ibid.). This ruling has been

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83. Specifically because of the break-in at Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office by the White House Special Investigation Unit (also known as “the Plumbers”) and illegal wiretapping.

84. *New York Times Co. v. United States*, 403 U.S. 713 (1971).

foundational in protecting the freedom of the press in the United States. Here, however we also see what Pozen (2015) calls the “source/distributor divide”. Pozen describes an unevenness of protections as follows:

[T]he First Amendment has been construed to provide so little protection for the leaker and yet so much protection for the journalist who knowingly publishes the fruits of the leaker’s illicit conduct and thereby enables the very harm—revelation of sensitive information to the public and to foreign adversaries—that the leak laws were designed to combat. In other areas of criminal law, downstream users of illegally obtained material are not similarly insulated from liability. (516)

While Ellsberg’s case was dismissed, the previous Supreme Court ruling protecting the First Amendment of the press, would not have been applicable to the charges that Ellsberg faced himself. This dynamic *source/distributor divide* remains the case despite the changing form of leaks—the explicitly actionable criminal offence is the action of *access/release* as opposed to the reporting that follows. This is not to imply leaking relationships are smooth ones, but rather that the structure of U.S. legislation criminalizes the agent that redirects the leak outside of its authorized container. The digital contemporary does not fundamentally change *this* aspect of the leak relation—the added complexity arises in that the potential leak is diffuse across networks.

When the Espionage Act was first enacted in 1917, obtaining and delivering information relating to national defense could only occur in a handful of ways—in spite of this, and thanks to the Act’s vague wording, it has been particularly adaptable to the contemporary moment (Feuer 2015; Pozen 2013; Papandrea 2014). There is nothing specific in the Espionage Act itself that makes its exceptionally apt to address the intelligence leaks of recent years. Katherine Feuer (2015) notes that “[c]ritics of the Act contend that it is both overly broad and overly harsh. It lumps whistleblowers and spies together and lacks any overarching policy or legal principle as to how vigorously it should be applied” (93). But this is also what makes it valuable to the state. I argued above that the increased amount of leak prosecutions are not necessarily indicative of an

increase occurrence in leaks, however I also contend the threat of leaks increase alongside expansive network technologies. The general consensus amongst legal scholars is that this increasingly diffuse information, along with increased points of potential access, “have led government officials to come down hard on leakers in order to stop leaks before they occur... In the digital age, the ability to engage in the mass dissemination of information is no longer reserved to an elite few, and this makes government officials nervous” (Papandrea 2014, 455). While the dematerialization of certain modes of exchanges (whether for communication or commercial purposes) lead to the enactment of the 1984 Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, the Espionage Act, though rarely operationalized against leaks until 2009, did not require major redress. What I want to emphasize here are the ways in which power can be at once incredibly flexible yet rigid. In the following section I will show how structures continue to be particularly adaptable to capital yet intractable in their exercise of power.

### *Visualizing Capital*

Underlying all relations are assemblages of politics, power, and economics. I am stressing this point because though it feels derivative to state that all subjects are at once politically and economically implicated, it would also feel like an omission not to. In asserting the leak as a political actor, I am also declaring it an economic one. The particular leakiness of the late modern moment carries through to contemporary economic relations. This subsection concerns the political economy of the leak—it questions how leaking is influenced by economic factors, and how, in exchange, leaks affect economic relationships. There are no shortages of metaphors in economic theory and the world of finance. Most relevant to this subsection are the metaphors of *pipes*, *flows*, *liquidity*, and *leakages* as elements of economic structures. The financial

analogies that I refer to here are not distinct from the ones I discussed in the section on temporality—*fluidity* resonates with a great deal of cultural conditions within postmodernity, precisely because of the material realities of late capitalism. As the historical materialist perspective attests to, cultural reality is always underwritten by the mode of production. Our current place in history has been secured through “technological innovation, along with processes of economic expansion, urbanization, and international migration,” and together these “have contributed further to the speed of transactions and expansion of markets through the ninetieth and twentieth centuries” (Knorr Cetina and Preda 2005, 7–8). The role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the development of networks has been explored thoroughly, both in the previous chapter, and in existing media and communication scholarship. Moreover, the integration of these network technologies into the realm of finance transforms local markets of goods into global flows of capital (Clark and Thrift 2005; Knorr-Cetina and Bruegger 2002; Rosenberg 2000; Sassen 2001). While I will discuss the movements of goods in the following section “Sites of Leaks,” my intent here is to account for how the shift to capital, ultimately leads to increasing cases of leakages.

*Leakages* are considered an integral aspect of Keynesian economics. The term, since Paul A. Samuelson’s 1948 interpretation of John Maynard Keynes’s (1986) *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, has been used to refer to the removal of money from circular flows of capital by way of “saving”. In spite of major divergences from Marxist thought in other aspects of Keynes’s work, Peter Kenway argues that the premise of *leakage* is ultimately consistent with both Marxist and Keynesian theories of capital. Both theorists operate on the basis that “[t]wo things are always required for commodity circulation: commodities have to be cast into circulation, and so has money” (Marx 1992, 489). *Leakage*, in this sense, is particular to

capitalist economies in that it represents surplus value extracted from the market. In Keynes's (1986) paradigm, *leakages* threaten the efficient functioning of the capitalist system. And while the removal of capital from circulation would also presents a "possibility of crisis" for capitalism in Marxist economic theory, this crisis presents the opportunity for social accumulation.

*Leakage*, as an economic concept, can also refer to the tendency for capital that enters tourist-based economies to be withdrawn by foreign exchange (Lejárraga and Walkenhorst 2010; Mill and Morrison 2002; Opperman 1993). In this case, *leakage* poses a continual threat in that the majority of money flowing into a tourism dependent region is ultimately withdrawn. This creates reliance on a singular industry without providing the capital required for local development or investment in industry diversification. In the theories explored here, *leakages* signal the movement of capital outside of certain flows. For Keynes, this extraction is seen as possibly devastating for the capitalist system, *leakages* represent the removal of money from the "natural" flow of capital. However, in spite of their threatening qualities, I argue that in each of these senses, *leakages* are built into global flows of capital.

Though we can see the *effects* of economic leakages—deepening inequality, the enduring precarity of labor, uneven development, amongst other indicators—the absence of capital from supposedly circulatory flows is not always apparent as such. Here, I pose the question of how can we "make sense" of economic leakage.<sup>85</sup> But it is not leakage alone that is difficult to glimpse—visualizing the *presence* of capital is as difficult a task as any because capital, *itself*, is not a visible entity. We can surmise the existence of capital through certain material conditions

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85. Here, I use "make sense" not simply to connote "make sensical" in terms of logic, but also to imply "make sensible". My question here is not solely how do we make leakage observable and coherent, but through what means is leakage visible, perceptible, palpable and affective. This idea will be discussed further in chapter 5.

(e.g., skyscrapers, luxury cars, shopping centres), but it remains a force in which “not one atom of matter enters” (Marx 1982, 138). To these ends, I pose the question of how visualizing capital can be made possible through leaks. The trouble of visualizing capital arises from the fact that capital is an abstraction. Alberto Toscano (2014) frames this as “materiality without matter”, and questions “how is one to represent, or indicate, the social powers of intangible forms, of real abstractions?” (1225). He frames this problem as an aesthetic one. Following Louis Althusser’s rumination on the paintings of Leonardo Cremonini, Toscano states “figuration as a modality of representation, is here *conditio sine qua non*, for ‘alluding’ to or ‘indicating’, relations which are intangible (1232). I argue here, that the relations that underlie capital are what mobilize it, and through these relations and movements, capital can be rendered (at least partially) discernible. This assertion follows David Harvey’s (2018) framing of capital as *value in motion* and Terry Eagleton’s (1990) argument that capital is “inanimate yet active” (1990, 200)—it is through the ways it moves through systems that can allow for traceability. In his lecture “Visualizing Capital”, Harvey (2017) employs an image of the hydrological cycle to allude to the ways that water, like capital, changes forms and moves through systems—he states:

[Water starts] as a liquid in the ocean, condensation becomes a vapor in the atmosphere...it then starts to condense and form clouds... and eventually it forms precipitation... precipitation falls on the land... it takes on various paths back towards the oceans. Some of the paths are fairly fast, some go very slowly, some of them hardly go at all. Some of it gets locked up in icecaps, and others gets lost underground in aquifers that don’t move at all for many, many centuries until we come along and pump them out for our own particular uses. These transformations of form are what Marx calls metamorphoses.

It is here that I want to explore how leaked financial documentation can help us comprehend capital. Though lacking the artistic qualities of a Cremonini painting, the financial document operates similarly in its ability to render relations. Althusser (2001, 158) argues:

Cremonini ‘paints’ the *relations* which bind the objects, places and times. Cremonini is a *painter of abstraction*. Not an abstract painter, ‘painting’ an absent, pure possibility in a

new form and matter, but a painter of the real *abstract*, ‘painting’ in a sense we have to define, real relations (as relations they are necessarily *abstract*) between ‘men’ and their ‘things’, or rather, to give the term its stronger sense, between ‘things’ and their ‘men’.  
(158)

To these ends, I ask how financial documents can serve as representation of “the relations which bind the objects, places and times,” in a way that allows for a perceptibility of capital (158).

Moreover, what is the revelatory possibility of these documents when circulated beyond the very institutions that protect capital and benefit from its typical incomprehensibility? I will explore this question through the 2017 release of the Paradise Papers, and attempt to trace out one of its estuarine leaks.

The Paradise Papers refers to a set of more than thirteen million documents leaked to Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer, reporters for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Obermaier and Obermayer worked with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to investigate, report on, and “leak” the information within the documents. The Paradise Papers were revealed on November 5, 2017 by the ICIJ in coordination with their respective journalists’ media outlets. The Papers were composed of confidential documents from offshore legal services provider Appleby and several of its subsidiaries, the ICIJ (2017) describe them as illustrating “how deeply the offshore financial system is entangled with the overlapping worlds of political players, private wealth and corporate giants, including Apple, Nike, Uber and other global companies that avoid taxes through increasingly imaginative bookkeeping maneuvers”. In questioning the revelatory functions of leaks, I will explore the information released by the ICIJ pertaining to assets held by Wilbur L. Ross, Head of the United States Secretary of Commerce. My intent here, is to not to make a determination of illegal activity or conflict of interest, but rather to demonstrate the revelatory possibility of leaks in making sense of global networks of capital.



During the first reporting around the leak of the Paradise Papers, American news outlets were especially interested in the possible connections between offshore banking and the Trump Administration. The leaked documentation was reported as evidencing affiliations between a number of Trump associates and offshore entities—the clearest connections being those between Wilbur Ross and fifty three offshore holdings managed through Appleby. More concerning, were the documents that drew a through line between American elites, Ross included, and Russian oligarchs. The trove of information, according to the ICIJ, demonstrated that Ross “has a stake in a shipping firm that receives millions of dollars a year in revenue from a company whose key owners include Russian President Vladimir Putin’s son-in-law and a Russian tycoon sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department as a member of Putin’s inner circle” (Chavkin and Hamilton 2017). Here, we are given the impression is that an invisible network of influence materializes before our very eyes. While I argue that leaks hold a particular potential to make visible elusive flows, this is not always the case, and unfortunately is not the case here.

The ICIJ, in addition to the art departments of many news networks, did their best to render capital visible by translating the leaked documents into network diagrams illustrating the power, influence, and collusion of global capital. The day after the release of the documents, HBO aired an episode of *VICE News Tonight*: “The Truth Behind the Secret Nine-Month Paradise Papers Investigation”. What becomes evident through the footage is that the leak does not always perform as an *immediate* revelation. In this sense, the documents possessed secretly for nine months during a self-imposed publication ban as the consortium of journalists trawled through the information. Jesse Drucker of the *New York Times* describes his encounter with the documents noting “I’m still kind of at a loss of how to deal with some of those really gigantic search results”—he continues “there’s no question that at a certain point some of this stuff will

cohere and you'll come up with a storyline that makes sense, but that hasn't happened so far. Hopefully in a couple weeks there will be more meat on the bone". Similarly, *New York Times* reporter Mike Forsythe describes the cache of leaked information as "pretty humdrum legal documents.... It just seems mind numbing... Even if you get a hit, this stuff is so prosaic". Luke Harding of *The Guardian* joked "you think about Woodward and Bernstein, you think about meeting Deep Throat in the car park at two o'clock in the morning smoking a cigarette. I think we've gone from Woodward and Bernstein to geeks looking at vast data sets searching away until the early hours. It's the age of the leak" ("The True Story Behind the Secret 9-Month Paradise Papers Investigation" 2017). In the previous chapter I spoke of the difficulties posed by the sheer amount of data in contemporary instances of leaking—not only does this function as layer of further obfuscation requiring "weeks of work that go into getting everything out of the files, getting data out of the files, getting text out of the files....", as noted by one of the reporters in the *VICE News Tonight* story, but in the case of financial documentation, especially for the purposes of tax evasion, the leak can remain completely incomprehensible long after its initial release.

I argue that the Paradise Papers represent the hopes we have of leaking. However, this is not to suggest that those hopes were fulfilled through the 2017 ICIJ investigation. In the case of financial information, the leak often only peels away one layer of abstraction—rarely what is revealed is a complete picture. In the *VICE News Tonight* feature, Matthew Caruana Galizia, a web applications developer for the ICIJ, states that the complex process of "getting everything out of the files" is necessitated "because somewhere in those files there might be the smoking gun". I argue, that in late capitalism—the global economic system underwritten by "materiality without matter"(Toscano 2014, 1225)—there is no gun, just smoke. In attempting to corroborate

the ICIJ's reports of Wilbur Ross's ties to offshore holdings and his possible links to Russia, I accessed the Offshore Leaks database and downloaded the Paradise Papers as a .zip file. Upon opening the folders, I realized that the only data from the Paradise Papers being made publicly available were offshore entity names and addresses. Unlike other releases, such as the data dumps hosted on WikiLeaks, the "[Offshore Leaks] database doesn't divulge raw documents or personal information en masse"<sup>86</sup> (ICIJ n.d.). While the documents from the Paradise Papers tying Ross's business to the Russian state are not accessible, I was still able to verify the information through other means. Upon nomination to the position of Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross was required to report his holdings and positions held outside of the United States Government to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE).<sup>87</sup> In his Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report from December 19, 2016, he noted the names of all fifty-three entities reported by ICIJ reporters nearly ten months later. WLR Recovery Associates<sup>88</sup> status as the primary shareholder of Navigator Holdings Ltd., was accounted for in Navigator's annual reports (publicly available on their website), and Ross notes his previous position as Chairman on his disclosure. Navigator's dealings with SIBUR, the Russian petrochemicals company, are noted plainly on Navigator's website.<sup>89</sup> Ross declared his

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86. The "Offshore Leaks database" refers to the database that hosts the ICIJ's publicly released data from the "Offshore Leaks" (<https://offshoreleaks.icij.org/>) it includes the information that underlies what have come to be known as the "China Leaks" (2014), "Panama Papers" (2016), and "Paradise Papers" (2017)

87. See Ross (2019) for full Disclosure Report and see "WL Ross, ICIJ Offshore Leaks Database" (International Consortium of Investigative Journalists).

88. I am using "WLR Recovery Associates" to refer specially to: WLR Recovery Associates IV DSS AIV, L.P.; WLR Recovery Associates IV DSS AIV GP, Ltd.; WLR Recovery Associates V DSS AIV, L.P.; and WLR Recovery Associates V DSS AIV GP, Ltd., as outlined in Ross's Ethics Agreement letter dated January 15, 2017.

89. See, for example, Navigator Gas's case study of SIBUR (accesses January 17, 2019): <https://www.navigatorgas.com/case-studies/case-study-4/>

intentions to retain holdings in WLR Recovery Associates, an action that was not deemed to be in violation of ethics requirements as laid out by the OGE. In accounting for these declarations I am not attempting to provide an argument that it is appropriate for the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to retain these holdings—rather, my point is that, in the case of Wilbur Ross, the Paradise Papers revealed very little that was not already in the public domain.

I want to spend a moment with my assertion regarding the potentiality of leaks. We cannot disregard that a *possibility* only connotes a chance, not a guarantee. Leaks are not necessarily stimulating, and rather can be sites of impotence. The investigative efforts surrounding the Paradise Papers, and the work of the ICIJ, more generally, demonstrates an important shift towards data journalism.<sup>90</sup> My assertion that, in some sense, the leaking of the Paradise Papers failed, is by no means a condemnation of the work and commitment of the consortium. My argument is that we cannot simply hold out for overturns of information, or overturns of power—rather, overturn needs to be actively sought out. What underlies the spectacle surrounding certain leaks is the imaginary that they *always* represent something that cannot otherwise be known, but the Paradise Papers, rather, illustrate business as usual. This is not to say that nothing came from these releases,<sup>91</sup> but that (at least so far) they have not

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90. Data journalism is a term that refers the increasing role of data mining and information analysis in journalistic reporting. It also refers to the translation of information into charts, graphics, and interactive content for the purpose of reporting.

91. The ICIJ issued a “one year on” story following the release of the Paradise Papers contending that “the broader impact has not been so immediate or straightforward (and is extremely hard to measure)... If reading millions of emails by the world’s richest 1 percent, their lawyers, accountants and wealth managers has taught us anything, there are always new ways to skirt tax laws and new “hot” tax havens ready to step up and fill the void when others are taken down”. And while they state investigations by local tax authorities are ongoing, they also note: “We’ve had some anecdotal reports after the Paradise Papers that offshore industry professionals are re-thinking how to avoid a major leak. Sometimes that vigilance is in the form of more IT security,” (Fitzgibbon et al. 2018) indicating that the release could lead to increasingly surreptitious offshore practices.

threatened the institutions some hoped they would have. On September 1, 2017, sixty-five days before the first published reports on the Paradise Papers, *VICE News Tonight* interviewed journalists partnered with the ICIJ from Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. While the Ross story seemingly represented the biggest opportunity for Western outlets like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, reporter Roman Anin remarks, “that the son in law of Vladimir Putin is doing business with Ross who is now the secretary of whatever in the U.S. means nothing”. In the same interview we hear Roman Shleynov, investigations editor, ask the team “do we have any candidates for anchor stories?”—reporter Olesya Shmagun replies, “Fuck. We don’t have any anchor stories”, to which Anin concludes, “honestly I am sorry I have to fucking waste my time with this”. This interaction represents the reality of the situation for those particularly aware of the ever-presentness of corruption, possible ties between a Russian oligarch and U.S. politician—“it’s nothing”. Mike McIntire, investigation editor for the *New York Times*, notes that the investigative journalists working on the Ross story for Western audiences knew that “he disclosed the fact that he has an underlining investment in Navigator”—the Paradise Papers (in the case of Ross) did not reveal anything new, but posed the opportunity to address the fact “a couple of lines on a fifty-seven page document.... apparently, went overlooked”. Just days after the release of the Paradise Papers, the concern of the press shifted to reports that Wilbur Ross had been lying about his net worth to remain on Forbes’ list of billionaires since he first appeared on it in 2004—after Ross declared his assets at \$700 million as part of his appointment to Trump’s Cabinet, Dan Alexander (2017) reported that it “seems clear that Ross lied to us, the latest in an apparent sequence of fibs, exaggerations, omissions, fabrications and whoppers...”. Self-evident here is that the larger character flaw in business is embellishing one’s reported wealth, as opposed to failing to report one’s wealth offshore.

## **Situating Leaks**

One of the central aims of this project is the reassertion of the simultaneously figurative and material implications of leakiness. From the previous chapter's emphasis on information leaks to the previous subsection on the metaphorical fluidity of capital, it feels necessary to return to some of the more explicitly tangible factors of leaking. In the interest of clarity, I refrained from discussing Trump's ceaseless campaign to fortify the U.S.-Mexico border in the context of his broader fear of leaks. This subsection considers the leak *in situ* and whether the leak can stand as a foil to borders. Firstly, I touch the surface of border discourses to address how the leak functions as a threat to borders, but also how the border itself constitutes the leak. Looking at Trump's position on the United States' southern border, I will intimate the tensions between the incontinence and sovereignty. Secondly, I look at the site of the port city to consider the challenges and opportunities of (literally) fluid spaces. Using the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong (HKSAR) as an example, I argue that port cities at once challenge and reify leaking dynamics. Through these examples, I want to consider the ways that the movement of people, goods and capital are imbricated—in spite of their entanglement however, the ways in which power gets operationalized against these actors differ incredibly. Particularly important in this section are the ways that borders are selectively permeable. Here, I pose the question of how borders are simultaneously *re-* and *deterritorialized*, and how the material and immaterial are deeply interconnected through jurisdiction, capital and information.

### ***Leaky Borders***

In the previous chapter, I referred to Walter Benjamin's (2008) assertion that "writing gains in breadth what it loses in depth" (360)—and while Benjamin was speaking specifically of

the newspaper, this is also true of the interdisciplinary project. I contend that there is academic value in exploring the interconnectedness of particular phenomena when taken to their broadest limit. However, where this method disappoints, is in the impossibility to account for a wide array of instantiations while substantively addressing subject matters' actual depth—a good scholar should not deny that this is always a type of violence. This subsection on the state border is where this limitation of scope is especially regrettable. The real and continual violence inflicted on peoples in the securing, policing, and fortifying of state borders is not accounted for to the degree that it deserves.<sup>92</sup> Here, I ask the reader to take particular regard towards the signposting of works throughout this section that address these concerns more concretely. For my purposes here, I account, not for the factuality of state narratives on leakiness, but rather states' fears, and state-sponsored fear of leakiness.

When Donald Trump announced his bid for President of the United States on June 16, 2015, his frustration over the southern border was one of the first problems he cited as underlying his run.<sup>93</sup> For Trump, the U.S.-Mexico border is the site of multiple threats, which have been boisterously referenced throughout his candidacy and into his position as Head of State: influxes of illegal aliens, drugs, terrorists, cartels, human traffickers, and undocumented workers. Trump's rhetoric around the southern border is overtly xenophobic, but it is also continuous with, and indicative of, a generalizable disposition towards borders that is literally

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92. The International Organization for Migration (2017) has estimated that “more than 46,000 migrants have died during migration journeys since 2000” (171).

93. “When do we beat Mexico at the border? They're laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they're killing us economically. The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems” (Trump Jun. 16, 2015). Moreover, Trump's public demand to “SECURE THE BORDER! BUILD A WALL” (@realDonaldTrump Aug. 5, 2014) begins around the time he begins entertaining rumors about a possible 2016 presidential run.

built-in to our conceptions of the nation-state. That is to say, that Trump's near obsession with the state of the U.S.-Mexico border is simply business as usual. What I wish to emphasize through this example are two things: firstly, borders and boundaries are always already instantiations of a particular dynamic between insides and outsides irrespective of explicit narratives of specific fears, threats and anxieties about their failure; and secondly, that borders, are rarely sites of absolute containment.

The beginning of this chapter referred to the dominant idea that globalization is changing the role of the nation-state in late modernity. While globalization certainly affects border dynamics, Reece Jones (2016) argues "the global scale of border violence demonstrates that the state remains the dominant container of political power in the world" (67). The United States as a "container of political power" has at least two facets: the U.S. is a sovereign *container* of itself as political actor, and on the other hand, in its positioning of itself as a facilitator of containment (a *container*) through its foreign policy mission of "building a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community" (U.S. Department of State 2006, 2).<sup>94</sup> In either interpretation, to contain political power, implies continence. Concerning the States' border with Mexico, Francisco Lara-Valencia and Margaret

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94. Though beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to consider the shift in foreign policy mission statements over the course of different administrations. I argue that all of these statements connote a degree of "world building" thus control/containment, however a formal discourse analysis of the differences between Department of State mission statements over the years would be fascinating. For example, "Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system" (2010, 5); to "shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere" (2015, 7); and "The U.S. Department of State leads America's foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety and economic prosperity" (2018,7).



Wilder (2018) assert “the wall proposed by Donald Trump, in contrast with the George Bush, Bill Clinton, and even Barack Obama walls, congeals a process of rebordering that has its origin in a policy of securitization that is unique for its ignorance of the border reality and its overtly xenophobic impulse”. While I agree that there are particularities to Trump’s treatment of the issue of the southern border,<sup>95</sup> I contend that the underlying ignorance of border realities and xenophobic impulse of the current administration is incredibly ordinary. The built-in dilemma for the neoliberal capitalist nation-state is always how to maintain access to labor and capital while securing power through the exclusion of certain populations—or rather, as stated in Michel Foucault’s (2007) reading of Alexandre La Maître, “the problem of how to ensure maximum economic development through commerce within a rigid system of sovereignty”(15). While this dilemma is faced by most nation-states, only a minority of them erect material border barriers akin to the one being sought by Trump.<sup>96</sup> As implied in the above quotation from Lara-Valencia and Wilder, this is far from the first time that a fortified wall has been considered along the U.S.-Mexico border. While each administration sites pragmatic reasons for such proposals, what underlies proposed plans for action is a waning sense of power and efficaciousness (real or imagined). In the first Cabinet meeting of 2019, Trump remarked “our southern border is like a sieve”—however, despite the President’s perceived notions and claims throughout his campaign, illegal crossings into the United States from Mexico have declined in recent years.<sup>97</sup>

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95. I am thinking particularly of Trump’s declaration of the State of Emergency.

96. Sabine Lavorel (2016) notes a figure of approximately 15,000 miles of fortified borders (159), meaning that of the ~315,000 miles of international land borders (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016), less than 5% have fortified border barriers.

97. The 2017 U.S. Customs and Border Protection Border Security Report noted “CBP recorded 310,531 apprehensions by U.S. Border Patrol agents and 216,370 inadmissible cases by CBP officers in FY17, a 23.7 percent decline over the previous year. Illegal migration along the Southwest border declined sharply from Jan. 21 through April, which was the month with the lowest border enforcement activity on record” (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2017, 1).

In conversation with the theories of late modernity referenced earlier, Ulrich Beck (1992) asserts that we are increasingly confronted by the notion of risk. In accounting for the contemporary dynamic, he contends that “the movement set in motion by the risk society... is expressed in the statement: I am afraid!” (51). Though many theorists contend we are living in a moment of particular anxiety (Giddens 2013), blame (Douglas 1992), and fear (Simon 2001), Hien (2003) notes that these sentiments’ entanglement with discourses of “risk represents a discursive technique which implies faith in the *controllability* of social phenomena” (14). Faith in controllability, at least on the national scale, ultimately concerns the question of sovereignty. Trump’s campaign for president was based on a hypernationalist platform premised on the idea that “Americans had to restore their sovereignty—by regaining control of their borders and adopting economic protectionism, withdrawing from global bodies, and reconsidering multilateral conventions” (Patrick 2018, 10). Trump’s proposal for a “great, great wall”<sup>98</sup> separating the U.S. from its southern neighbor was by no means unpopular<sup>99</sup>—Stewart Patrick notes, “not only was the concept of a wall easy to communicate, it also resonated with commonsense concepts of national sovereignty” (196).

On February 15, 2019, Donald Trump stated his intention to declare a state of emergency in order to address “an invasion of drugs, an invasion of gangs, and an invasion of people” via the U.S.-Mexico border. After more than two years in office, Trump has been unable to fulfil his

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Further, data collected from the U.S. CBP and analyzed by FactCheck.org, shows a decline in Southwest border apprehensions since 2001 (2018).

98. Trump campaigned around the wall beginning with the announcement of his run for president where he declared: “I will build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I’ll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words” (2015a).

99. Stewart Patrick (2018) notes: “By October 2015, some 73 percent of Republicans surveyed, as well as 43 percent of independents (and 29 percent of Democrats), endorsed Trump’s proposal” (196).

vision for the wall. While the declaration gave the impression of an unique level of desperation, the United States has been in a constant state of emergency since the implementation of President Jimmy Carter's sanctions against Iran in 1979, but Trump's declaration—explicitly operationalized as a means to bypass Congress's refusal to fully fund his border wall—marks the first use of emergency powers to simply “thwart the will of Congress” (Goitein quoted in Savage 2019). Trump's disposition towards declaring a national emergency is alarming. In his formal announcement, the President represented the declaration as no big deal—“There has rarely been a problem. They sign it. Nobody cares”, “It's not like it is complicated. It's very simple”, “I didn't need to do this, but I'd rather do it much faster” (2019). However, the authority to extend executive power, is the precise condition of sovereignty that I outlined earlier through Carl Schmitt (2005). I argue that Trump's declaration represents a “strategy for invulnerability” (Venn 2010, 127). While Couze Venn speaks specifically of President Bush's War of Terrorism, I argue that we are continuing to witness a “performative relation between sovereignty and the right to decide the exception” that seeks to combat any appearances of vulnerability (127). Venn argues, “invulnerability can become the signifier of its sovereign status amongst the nations of the world” (127)—here, I want to return to the leak as a signifier of vulnerability.

Considering the forty-year-long official national emergency in the United States, it feels particularly relevant to consider Walter Benjamin's (1986) contention against the Schmittian conception of sovereignty that “the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule” (257). While the question has been raised whether the permeability of the U.S.-Mexico border constitutes a real national

security emergency,<sup>100</sup> Trump’s inability to achieve his campaign promise to “build that wall” is certainly a threat—in this, I am not referring to the perceived threat of the leaky border, but rather the threat of impotence faced by the sovereign. John Armitage (2003) notes that it is “the atmosphere of emergency that characterizes hypermodernity” (206)—I argue that in the late modern moment, emergency is both permanent and atmospheric. The permanence of the state of emergency is where Benjamin’s reading of sovereignty challenges the operation of sovereignty in Schmitt—the sovereign, despite holding the power to decide on the state of emergency is incapable of making the decision (71). As a result, “the sovereign reacts by seeking to gather all power and thus becomes a tyrant; and yet the more power he has, the more he demonstrates his incapacity to arrive at an effective decision” (Weber 2003, 15). Here, leaks signify incontinence in two senses: firstly, the mere existence of leaks index the faultiness of the border-boundary; and secondly, they demonstrate shifting dynamics of sovereignty in late modernity.

### **The Port City**

The port city is a saturated site of relations. Not only does it face the complex boundary dynamics of any other bound space—security, exchange, movement—but ports also represent unique sites for flows and leaks. In accounting for their history, Karl Polanyi (1963) notes that the port of trade was “a universal institution of overseas trade preceding the establishment of overseas markets” (31). While ports play a significant role in history long before the

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100. On May 19, 2019, the first case against Trump’s declaration was heard before a federal judge. The “State of California et al. v. Trump et al.” stipulates that “the Executive Actions directing the diversion of federal funds and other resources for border wall construction are unlawful and unconstitutional” (Xavier 2019, 6). Several other cases across the country are awaiting trial with a total of twenty plaintiff states and a variety of environmental and justice-based organization seeking injunctions against the construction of the wall.

development of the capitalist global market,<sup>101</sup> they have also been a foundational technology for globalization and the exacerbation of the late modern moment. The port, and the city that evolves around it, represents an intensely political site. This section explores the distinctive characteristics of port cities and their role in political, social, and economic realities of postmodernity. To these ends, I assert the port city embodies certain tensions that arise with states of leakiness. Here, I consider existing works on port cities in order to assert the port as an intensely interdisciplinary object. To situate my claims about leaking, I demonstrate how the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) exists as “in-between” space in the Western imaginary. Here, I examine how port cities, like Hong Kong, are often utilized as “leaky nodes” in global circulations and pose the question of how the “place” of Hong Kong is imagined through, and undone by, its leakiness. This question will be addressed through the case of Hong Kong as the site from which Edward Snowden passed off thousands of confidential NSA documents in 2013.

Plato’s (2016) *Republic* begins with Socrates’s narration: “I went down to Piraeus....”(3). In Alan Bloom’s translation (2016) he notes that situating the dialogue in the port city is significant in that “as the centre of Athenian commerce, it was the place to find all the diversity and disorder that comes from foreign lands. It was, therefore, the appropriate place in which to consider outlandish ways of life” (440). While distinctions can be made between the harbor, its activities, and the city that develops alongside it, I prefer to approach the topic along the lines of Carola Hein’s (2011) notion of *port cityscapes*. This perspective emphasizes that, rather than

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101. Accounting for the historical significance of port cities is beyond the scope of this work, however it must be noted that the port city is implicated histories of colonial expansion and slavery. The port as a technology of violence underlies this limited account (see, for example: Cowen 2014; Mah 2014; and Mirzoeff 2009)

strictly exemplifying particular locales, “maritime and associated networks create dynamic, multi-scaled, and interconnected cityscapes”. Hein argues that as “key nodes within trading networks”, port cities “render visible the multiple flows of people, goods and finances as they cross from and to their forelands... as well as their hinterlands”—they “shape the built environment in all the interconnected locations” (5). Allan Sekula (1995) similarly considers the hinterland as part of “maritime spaces” since “terrestrial space is defined in its spatial relation to the seaport” (43). While Sekula and Hein agree on the inclusion of the hinterland within the port assemblage, thinking of port cities as “nodes” would likely be a problematic construction for Sekula. Theory cannot resist thinking about the globalized world as a network of nodes, however in this imaginary composition “there is no longer ‘a city’ at the center of a system, but rather a fluctuating web of connections....”(48). To these ends, figuring the port city into an image of networked nodes risks overlooking the specificities of space and place.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the material reality of the world cannot be accounted for through network analogies—the port as “node” collapses the material movement of goods—the real conditions underlying logistics—between points.<sup>103</sup> In the previous chapter I referred to Anna Munster’s (2013) *An Aesthesis of Networks* asserting that network diagrams can provide us the means to grasp relations despite the fact “it is never going to be possible to “see” networking” as such (28). But we cannot overlook that diagrams (and in this case, analogies of diagrams) almost always oversimplify—collapsing

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102. Ackbar Abbas (1994) distinguishes between space and place in the following: “We think of a place in terms of definable physical characteristics and situatedness, at most as a symbolic structure. A space by contrast is a changing field of tensions and contradictions, where the physical is imbricated and competes with social, political and cultural dimensions” (442).

103. Here, I am imagining an “out for delivery notice” or some simplified infographic with a straight line representing the path of a good from production, warehouse, to delivery.

elements of “maritime spaces” (ports) into analogies of cyberspace (nodes) disembods us from a material reality that is as solid today as it was a century ago. Sekula notes:

My argument here runs against the commonly held view that the computer and telecommunications are the sole engines of the third industrial revolution. In effect, I am arguing for the continued importance of maritime space in order to counter the exaggerated importance attached to that largely metaphysical construct, “cyberspace”, and the corollary myth of “instantaneous” contact between distant spaces. I am often struck by the ignorance of intellectuals in this respect: the self-congratulating conceptual aggrandizement of “information” frequently is accompanied by peculiar erroneous beliefs: among these is the widely held quasi-anthropomorphic notion that most of the world’s cargo travels as people do, by air. This is an instance of the blinkered narcissism of the information specialist: a “materialism” that goes no farther than “the body”.... Large-scale material flows remain intractable. Acceleration is not absolute: the hydrodynamics of large-capacity hulls and the power output of diesel engines set a limit to the speed of cargo ship not far beyond the first quarter of [the twentieth] century. (50)

Here, following Sekula, I assert that the port city becomes a means through which we can recognize the material realities of the contemporary moment. In this sense, I argue that the port city is a unique lens through which the tension between the material underpinnings of liquidity and fluidity can be analyzed.

Port cities are defined as such by their common characteristics (geographic location and chief industry) that produce certain continuities within these spaces—but in spite of shared features, they are not the same. In asserting the port city as a site of leaks, I am not asserting that each of these sites leak in the same way. Rather, I assert that the common characteristics of port cities (that is, the central role of the port as part of a city’s substructure) reaffirm the tension between material goods and capital. The development of prosperous municipalities from small harbors, trading posts and fishing villages is not uncommon in maritime history. However, the port-city relationships that served many empires, dynasties, and kingdoms, has changed greatly since industrialization. The need for space to accommodate large ships, the warehousing of mass produced goods, the laborers required to load and unload ships, and then the equipment that

significantly replaced them, has increasingly pushed the port further outside of the city limits.

Though previously more integrated within the city, Alice Mah (2014) notes:

Even at their height of prosperity, most ports of empire and colonialism were deeply stratified: gentlemen merchants occupied luxurious grand houses, while the poor ordinary masses were crowded in slums in the inner cities and along the docks. The intense inequality of this former era has persisted within port cities, through different waves of capitalist development. (9) The “diversity and disorder” that underlies the port city is a material one.

Hong Kong, like many coastal settlements, was first and foremost, a port.<sup>104</sup>

While I argue that port cities share a particular relationship to leakiness, this section takes seriously Saskia Sassen’s (2005) charge that globalization discourses cannot neglect sites’ *place-boundedness*. Here, I take Hong Kong as a *particular* site of leakiness—this assertion is not a claim of some essence of the HKSAR (except in the sense of its estuarial position), but rather a statement of the way it gets utilized in global flows. Following Manuel Castells’s (2010) account of the spatiality of network societies, Elizabeth Sinn (2008) argues “Hong Kong has thrived as ‘a space of flows’” (14). The flows that Sinn ascribes to Hong Kong, however, long predate the ones accounted for by Castells—“flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols” (442). Rather, Hong Kong’s mastery of flows, according to Sinn (2008) began with an influx of emigration in the mid-nineteenth century “followed by the continuous movement of funds and goods, personal communications and commercial intelligence, ideas and cultural practices” (14). Hong Kong, though absolutely a space of flows, is also a *place* of flows—its situatedness as a port city cannot

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104. I cannot help but think of an incredible critique regarding the typical historical framing of Hong Kong by Laszlo Montgomery of the China History Podcast. Unlike most histories of the region that begin with the Opium War, Montgomery’s history of Hong Kong begins four hundred million years ago with the geological formation of the land. Though I cannot, due to scope, follow suit with such a deep history of Hong Kong, it is relevant to note that the Eurocentric historical framing of the place is crucial for the way representations of Hong Kong become embedded within global dynamics.



be neglected. Of the cities home to the top ten world container ports, only Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai, and Singapore are considered Alpha+ global cities.<sup>105</sup> While the literature on global cities (Brenner and Keil 2006; Eade 1997; Sassen 1991) emphasizes these sites' flows and connectedness, their relationships to material goods are barely considered.<sup>106</sup> Hong Kong is uniquely connected to both material and network flows, the two of which are inextricably connected, though often read as separate in globalization discourses. Not long after its cessation to the British, Sinn (2008) notes that another asset particular to Hong Kong "was the easy flow of information"—"all governmental, commercial, military and personal information at the time travelled by ship; Hong Kong's quick access to information, and the ease with which information could be circulated within and beyond, proved a valuable edge. Such free movement of information was further supported by an energetic press" (19). Here, Sinn, seemingly unintentionally, reasserts the historical material conditions of the SAR as an information city.

In accounting for the increasingly significant role of metropolitan areas in the forces of globalization, Saskia Sassen (1991) asserts the *global city* as a particularly significant actor for discourses interrogating international social, political, and economic dynamics. From the very beginning she warned "the term global city may be reductive and misleading if it suggests that

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105. See the "The World According to GaWC—Classification of cities 2018" list produced by the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) at Loughborough University: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018t.html>. See also, the World Shipping Council's list of "Top 50 World Container Ports): <http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports>

106. Paul Taylor of the GaWC notes "[t]he world city network is an interlocking network but, as indicated, it is not an exact analog of other such networks. In particular this relates to the cities being nodes but not being primary actors" (Taylor 2001, 192). In noting what qualifies a global city, the GaWC state: "cities are assessed in terms of their advanced producer services [accounting, advertising, finance, insurance, and law applied in transnational contexts] using the interlocking network model. Indirect measures of flows are derived to compute a city's network connectivity – this measures a city's integration into the world city network" (GaWC 2019).

cities are mere outcomes of a global economic machine” (4). I assert that Hong Kong has been especially victimized by this view. Ackbar Abbas (1998) argues that representations of Hong Kong have, in a sense, lead to its disappearance. Abbas contends that Hong Kong,

[D]efeats description not because it is illegible and none of the categories fit, but because it is hyperlegible and all the categories seem to fit—whether they are the categories of social sciences, cultural criticism, or fiction. Any description that tries to capture the features of the city will have to be, to some extent, stretched between fact and fiction. (447)

I cannot provide an account of the city that escapes this in-between, however I argue that reaffirming the material realities of the port city helps to reaffirm Hong Kong as a complex space.

Many theorists have demonstrated the material base that underlies colonial endeavors, arguing that the motivation for extending sovereignty is ultimately for the control of raw materials.<sup>107</sup> Hong Kong’s position as a British colony was somewhat different—the region’s lack of resources “meant that more could be gained all around by making the city work as a port city-by developing infrastructure, education, international networks” (Abbas 1998, 446). I argue that sovereignty over Hong Kong, has always been an exercise of leakiness. I have previously asserted that the sovereignty, following Agamben (1998), is the tracing of the threshold between insides and outsides (19). This drawing of thresholds, of determining insides and outsides, is particularity apt in thinking about Hong Kong—control over the region has always been operationalized similarly to Deleuze’s (1992) sieve-like modulation cited in first part of this chapter. Whether speaking of pre-handover Hong Kong or the HKSAR post-1997, the city, since inception, has been considered the gateway to China.<sup>108</sup> This position as a threshold at the

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107. See, for example: Callinicos 2009; Headrick 2017; Lenin 1939; Patnaik and Patnaik 2017.

108. While a complete history of the development of the port is beyond the scope of the paper, it is worth noting that the development of Hong Kong to facilitate British trading was

opening of the Pearl River Delta has always affected the way sovereignty over the region has been applied. Sinn (2008) notes of Hong Kong's beginnings that "at a time when ports in general were operated with many restrictions, Hong Kong must have been one of the most wide open places in the world" (19). The port operated as an entrepôt between China and the rest of world capitalizing on the flows from either direction.<sup>109</sup> At the end of the British lease of Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China (PRC) granted the city the status of Special Administrative Region—"exceptions to the centrally planned socialist system" with "powers and privileges" including "full-fledged capitalist activities" (Ong 2006, 109). Aihwa Ong refers to these variegated sovereignties as *zoning technologies*, allowing "for Hong Kong (and Macao) to return to Chinese sovereignty and yet maintain a legal exception—specifically, a democratic way of life—to the rest of centrally planned socialist China" (109–110). This literal exception creates a state of particular leakiness for the SAR. Abbas (1998) notes:

Hong Kong is the world's tenth largest trading nation, making it an international city that has come a long way from when it was described in Palmerston's famous words as "a barren island with hardly a house upon it." Yet for all the discontinuities this new role implies, Hong Kong continues to be a *port* in the literal sense of the word: a door, a threshold, a conduit through which goods, currencies, and information flow, a kind of nodal-point, an in-between state; therefore more of an inter-national city than an international one. Globalisation has not radically changed Hong Kong's port mentality. In contrast to international cities like New York, London, or Tokyo, which are central sites for the production of goods and culture, Hong Kong is primarily a space of facilitation. It is less a site than a para-site because its dominance in the region is due largely to its proximity to China and its accessibility to the rest of the world. The economic opportunities that stem from such a unique geo-political position are obvious. The para-site therefore connotes a position which, in some strange way, is simultaneously autonomous and dependent; a position in which autonomy is paradoxically a function of dependence." (447–448)

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sought because of the strictness of the Qing Empire's control over the port of Guangzhou. Moreover the islands in the Hong Kong harbor (prior to British occupation) were often used for the illicit Opium trade since the early 1800s. See, for example: Van Dyke (2002).

109. The port of Hong Kong operated consistently throughout the British lease of Hong Kong

As a para-site, Hong Kong gets utilized in a particular way within global flows. This subsection considers how the SAR was leveraged in Edward Snowden’s NSA surveillance leak.

Five days after *The Guardian* first reported details of the United States National Security Agency’s (NSA) domestic surveillance program (PRISM), Donald Trump (mere business magnate, not yet president) took to Twitter to pose the question: “A coincidence that the NSA leaker is living openly in Hong Kong?!” (@realDonaldTrump, June 10, 2013). He echoed this confusion again a few days later as a guest on *Piers Morgan Tonight*—when asked what his position was on the revelation of the U.S.’s spying program he replied: “let's start off with Snowden. I think he's bad news. I've watched him and he's having a good time. And of all places he goes to Hong Kong for protection. That is itself is a little bit interesting because that's not a place where actually he should get that kind of protection but it looks like they are going to protect him” (Trump 2013). Even Glenn Greenwald, who had met with Snowden in Hong Kong and was the first to report the NSA leak,<sup>110</sup> seemed confused by Snowden’s choice—in his *New York Times* bestseller recounting the events surrounding the leak, Greenwald (2015) recalls wondering “why had he chosen Hong Kong as his destination once he was ready to disclose the documents?” (109). In spite of the confusion surrounding his choice, Edward Snowden’s reasoning for travelling to Hong Kong was incredibly rational. In an interview with the *South China Morning Post*, conducted while Snowden was still in Hong Kong, he stated “people who think I made a mistake in picking HK as a location misunderstand my intentions. I am not here to hide from justice, I am here to reveal criminality” (Lam 2013). The tension between hiding and revealing signified in Snowden’s comment underlies the reason why he choose Hong Kong as

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110. As implied in chapter 2, we can ask here whether the first to report the leak should actually be considered the one who makes the leak, but this is not something I will explore again here.

the location to disclose the leak to Laura Poitras, Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill. The first consideration, for pragmatic purposes, was likely what countries an American could travel to freely without visa requirements. However, visa-free travel between two states can be indicative of strong diplomatic relations—a country without travel restrictions for Americans could pose a higher risk of possible extradition. Greenwald (2015), explaining the motives later revealed by Snowden in choosing the SAR, notes:

Hong Kong, though semi-independent, was part of Chinese territory... American agents would find it harder to operate against him there than in the other places he considered as candidates for seeking ultimate refuge, such as a small Latin American nation like Ecuador or Bolivia. Hong Kong would also be more willing and able to resist US pressure to turn him over than a small European nation, such as Iceland. (109)

Security, however, was not Snowden's only concern—he was not fleeing the U.S. for protection from prosecution for something he had *already* done, but rather, something he was *going* to do. Snowden's decision to leak the PRISM documents from Hong Kong was influenced by the city's history of liberal media and democratic practice. In an interview with reporters from *The Guardian*, Snowden noted “I think it is really tragic that an American has to move to a place that has a reputation for less freedom. Still, Hong Kong has a reputation for freedom in spite of the People's Republic of China. It has a strong tradition of free speech” (MacAskill 2013). However, as Greenwald (2015) describes, “there were other places he could have gone to, affording even greater protection from potential US action, including mainland China. And there were certainly countries that enjoyed more political freedom. But Hong Kong, he felt, provided him the best mix of physical security and political strength” (110).

Hong Kong's status as a global city often overshadows its standing as global hub port. Imaginaries of fluid capital and information networks in the discourses of late modernity often make the late modern moment feel effervescent. But liquidity is a material reality of the port city—it literally underlies the movement of goods, people, and information. I echo here, Ackbar

Abbas's (1998) frustration with certain tendencies of scholarship of late modernity, particularly in reference to Hong Kong:

To note the prevalence of a dematerialised space of information in major cities may well be to note something that is true but trivial, because overgeneralised, as true and trivial as saying that all contemporary cities change. Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Beijing, Taipei, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles—what city has not changed under the impact of information technologies? Be that as it may, what is still the case is that cities change at different rates, in response to different sets of circumstances, in different historically specific sites, acquiring in the end different urban physiognomies. (443)

The historically specific site of Hong Kong as a gateway is foundational to its relationship to flows, especially in the case of information. As Sinn (2008) argues “the physical fluidity that characterized Hong Kong's position as a space of flows was mirrored in the openness of its press, an openness that in turn helped readers transcend barriers, whether barriers with China or with the outside world” (42). The Pearl River Delta shapes Hong Kong—it is this material reality that underlies the ways in which sovereignty is exercised, the industries that flourish, and the movements of people—and it is the water that renders it “in-between”.

### *Assembling Leaks*

As I accounted for in the “Sites of Politics” section, late modernity is qualified by a certain liquidity. Liquid analogies become a means through which we can imagine the dissolution of boundaries that underlie globalization and the fluid movement of networks, capital, and the liberal imaginary. These processes tend to conjure the same images: melting ice, flowing water, airy clouds, the blue, iridescent fibre optic glow of networks. These images can incite feelings of comfort: floating, flying, weightlessness, connection. And while these semiotic codes are employed often in late modernity, they do not resonate with the material reality of the contemporary moment. It is here I want to reassemble the theories and the cases introduced in this chapter. In assembling them together, my argument is not that they share some common

element, but rather that leaking can be read as a through line between them all. Nor is it my intention to suggest that these ideas, events, and entities assemble together neatly. This project continues to assert that messy connections remain relevant for understanding phenomena. These complex entanglements trouble the images of late modernity as transparent and completely fluid. Though one can leverage a critique that if one tries hard enough, connections can be found between anything, I do not find this possible allegation concerning. Rather, what I find to be of greater concern are the ways that formal discipline historically commits an inversion of this—that when one tries hard enough, one can find division between anything. This is not to say that difference does not exist or that it is irrelevant. Alternatively, I assert that the structure of containment that constitutes similarity/difference, inside/outside, self/other, is leaky. The difficulty in conceiving of this chapter was not finding the connection between seemingly disparate things—it was having to neglect all other connections besides the ones I chose to focus on here. Below, I will trace the theme of *the political* through the cases already introduced: Trump, the U.S. Criminal Code, capital, the Paradise Papers, and Hong Kong—however I am forced to disregard innumerable connections that underlie them: Shenzhen, iPhone Girl, Moscow, Russian hackers, Singapore, shipping containers, Los Angeles, Jackie Chan, the Bank of Cyprus, Victor Dahdaleh (the man whose name adorns the building that houses the department of Communication and Culture), Mossack Fonesca, a Modigliani painting, London, the River Thames. All of these things are assembled together through the leak (amongst many other phenomena). In referring to the limited cases introduced earlier, I am going speak of their connections with a certain breadth as to not foreclose the other points between.

In part one of this chapter, I argued that the political is the dynamic that constitutes the relations between actors, and in doing so connects them within a particular assemblage. I also

asserted that this relational dynamic is in its first instance aesthetic and is undercut by power. This power, I argue, is exercised as the ability to determine the parameters between inside and outside, and the actor that possesses this absolute control is sovereign. While this notion of sovereignty largely follows that put forward by Carl Schmitt (2007), Walter Benjamin (2003) and Giorgio Agamben (1998) remind us that the Schmittian sovereign only exists in the realm of the theological. The sovereignty that I speak of here, is not absolute, nor is it theological, nor rooted solely in politics—rather, I speak of sovereignty as an exercise of drawing insides and outsides (Agamben 1998), a process that becomes troubled in late modernity. This sovereignty concerns any boundary space between actors, states, objects. Here, I argue that sovereignty, power, and affect/aesthetics coalesce as the political, and it is through this that I will trace the leak.

I did not begin this chapter, nor this project for that matter, intending to rely so heavily on Donald Trump—I simply followed the leaks. My argument here is not about a particular leakiness of the current President of the United States but rather, a particular historical materialist moment. In tracing leaks and the imbrication of the political, politics, state sovereignty, self-containment and capital, this chapter continuously, and accidentally, found its way back to the business mogul, celebrity, head of state. While explicitly within the realm of politics, I argue that Trump's relationship to leaking is political in the ontological sense as well. As I argued earlier, ontic and ontological conditions of politics need not be distinguished between if we take the political at its broadest limit. In this sense, I argue leaks are always political in that they can underlie the ways in which we make sense of being in the world. Through the case of the 2016 election and resulting Trump presidency, I demonstrate that leaks have the power to both disrupt or entrench one's relationship to the world. Throughout the period



in question, leaks served to legitimize Trump's relationship to his opponents. Through both visceral disgust of women's bodily fluid ("bleeding from her wherever") and resentment towards vulnerability (the DNC's server), leaks become a means through which Trump critiques opponents' abilities and efficacy. When leaks confirm his position, Trump relishes their existence ("I love WikiLeaks!")—they become part of his narrative, and an opportunity to critique the establishment (the "deep state"). When leaks undermine his position, they are dismissed (Spicer: "the report is not an intelligence report"), challenged (Trump's intent to sue NBC) and ignored (the "Pee Tape"). Leaks in this sense, no longer represent inherent vulnerabilities, but rather signal clandestine conspiracies to disrupt truth ("Leakin' James Comey"). They no longer represent an opportunity for critique, instead they represent a threat to order. Not only do leaks challenge Trump's sovereignty over the physical space of the White House,<sup>111</sup> but increasing suspicion arising from leaks could threaten his standing as President.<sup>112</sup> I do not believe this incontinence is entirely particular to Trump. Though there are attributes and behaviors that can make an entity more susceptible to leaks, I maintain that the particular leakiness of the late modern moment is ultimately a material concern. I argued in the previous chapter that increased information leads to increased leaks. As Christopher Carter (2019) argues of the leaked *Access Hollywood* tape, "as contexts change, communicative materials acquire unexpected purposes, converging and contending with human agency without being equivalent

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111. For example, the slightly "lower stake" leaking of the "Schedule of the President" indicating nearly 60% of Trump's day was blocked off for the vague purposes of "Executive Time" (McCammond and Swan 2019). After nearly all major news outlets ran stories poking fun at the President, Trump responded on Twitter claiming "The media was able to get my work schedule, something very easy to do, but it should have been reported as a positive, not negative. When the term Executive Time is used, I am generally working, not relaxing. In fact, I probably work more hours than almost any past President....." (@realDonaldTrump, Feb. 10, 2019).

112. Trump's ex-lawyer Michael Cohen's leaked bank records showing payment to Stormy Daniels for suspected "hush money", for example.

to it". Here, the tape, with a vibrancy of its own, lies waiting for the context to change (98–99)—the late modern moment is saturated with communicative materials “lying dormant” within spaces of flows. But we cannot neglect the ways that this “dormant” information intersects with human agency.

In introducing the U.S. Code, I attempt to account for how control is exercised over these flows. While the question of legality is not one I deal with extensively in this section, I gesture to the ways in which legislation can at once secure certain protections (e.g., freedom of the press), yet is also adaptable at responding to the increased threat of leaks. While the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act is implemented as an attempt to account for the dematerialization of information, the Espionage Act of 1917 has been reinvigorated as the principle legal deterrent to leak releases without many changes. Before his presidency, Trump’s concerns around leaking became part of his Anti-Obama narrative. He accused Obama of failing to investigate leaks, covering up leaks, and opportunistically utilizing leaks. In spite of Trump’s allegations, legal scholars considered the then-President’s prosecution of leaks as overzealous (Papandrea 2014). In his current Presidency, Trump is maintaining a harsh stance in the prosecution of leaks and has maintained his endeavor to build a wall along the U.S. Border. This chapter aimed to trace just some of the ways in which power is exercised through the fortification of insides and outsides. Here, I contend that leaks are always simultaneously threat and opportunity. I note that boundaries remain permeable to mechanisms that serve the interest of power (e.g., capital). It is in this sense that I assert that tracing *the political* requires particular attention to the ways that boundary spaces are constituted by the interactions of actors. In asserting that materiality underlies relationships I use the site of the port city to demonstrate how literally leaky spaces become integral for other flows. While the above cases represent complex and unique entanglements of

social, material, and political phenomena, I assert that *leaking* underlies them all. Here, I contend the free movement of capital, controlled migration, the transmission of information, and paper trails become implicated in the political in distinct but similar ways. Ultimately, my assertion of the material implications of these circulations will underlie the cases of the following chapter as well. In chapter 4, I will trace further how the leak resists the division of insides and outsides, and while I maintain that power operates in its ability to determine on what side of a threshold actors lie, I also assert that turning towards leakiness can be means for resistance.

## CHAPTER 4/ Materializing Leaks

This chapter, in some sense, is a synthesis of the ideas put forth in chapters 2 and 3. It demands, again, that we reject the divisions imposed between certain phenomena: in this case, the body and the broader ecologies in which it is situated. It asserts, again, that the material, the political, and the philosophical are so entangled, that they cannot be interrogated separately. Like the rest of this project, the themes, cases, and ideas already put forth, carry into this chapter on the material reality of the leak. Moreover, the subject of this chapter, the body and its total assemblage, were underlying subjects of the previous chapters on media and politics. Here, I want to reanimate the questions eluded (though alluded to) before: What does modernity do to the body? How does technology obliterate and extend the body? Is the body dematerialized through representation? How do borders and boundaries restrict bodies? How do bodies interact? And, finally, how does leaking trouble the body and entrench it within broader ecologies? Of course, these questions presuppose exactly *what* a body is. This chapter looks at the existing discourses of the body in order to assert bodies as a particular assemblage within an assemblage. Following feminist new materialist discourses I assert that bodies are co-constituted by their interactions, and thus the body cannot be entirely separated from the broader sets of relationships in which it is implicated. It is because of this that I account for bodies and ecologies within the same chapter.

Following the same form established in previous chapters, chapter 4 begins with an outline of the existing discourses that inform this work. Firstly, I look at the way classical conceptions of the body have been contested through feminist and poststructuralist theory. Here, I reject the idea that the body is the container of the mind, and question how “leakiness” gets

read into the body. This involves acknowledging the ways that feminist theories of embodiedness have excluded trans, queer, and crip experiences of the body. Following this, I will examine how feminist new materialist discourses figure the body as part of a broader constellation of actors. While I accept the premise of new materialist thought, I will also account for Indigenous discourses that critique the “newness” of these ways of understanding the body and the constellations they sit within. Finally, I will account for ecological discourses that discredit perspectives that take the human body to be the centre of political, social, and environmental assemblages. Here, I assert an ecological perspective that (in allegiance with new materialist discourses, and its indebtedness to Indigenous epistemologies) asserts the “ecological” as realm through which we recognize the interconnectedness of actors that together constitute the space of the contemporary moment and its entanglements with pasts and futures.

In the second part of this chapter, I will move through two sections using a series of cases to demonstrate the relation between the leak, the body, and the more-than-body. Here, I argue that the leak performs as a connective entity between and beyond bodies. As is always already the case with the leak, this “connection” is at once threatening, and also a site of opportunity for redress and resistance. In the first case, “Ensuring Leaks”, I will figure the body back into the discourses concerning *revenge porn*. Here, I return to questions introduced earlier about materiality and the image, as well as the notion of agency and flows. Arguing that materiality continues to cut through these (most often) digital expositions, I question the dynamics of exchange underlying Facebook’s recent anti-revenge-porn initiatives. As part of this argument I also consider images of menstruation, and how leaking becomes captured in consumptive media flows. Further, in speaking of managing environmental disaster, I continue to assert modernity as a structure of containment and demonstrate how the enduring nature/culture divide prohibits

opportunities for redress. In this final section, “Pipeline Ecologies”, I speak to discourses addressing the intersection of colonial domination and infrastructure, especially in regards to pipeline projects. Here, I demonstrate the ways bodies, leaks, and capital, are imbricated in constellations of power. In closing with a statement from the Standing Rock Sioux (2014), this chapter affirms that the threat of leaking perpetuates colonial violence, but can also serve as a site of resistance.

While this chapter commences with a focus on the body (the site of the individual), it concludes by demonstrating the interconnectedness of actors, events, and material realities into a broader ecology (sites of becoming). From the very beginning of this work, I have asked the reader to consider the ways in which the material reality of leakiness intersects with conceptual, theoretical, and virtual sites of leaking. This final chapter further materializes the leak into its likely original instance as a *real, physical, threat* as a means of demonstrating how the leak, as analogy, information, capital, media remains a material concern. I argue that it is only through tracing the leak through all of its instantiations that we can begin to understand how it operates—and it is in recognition of the fact that a project of this length, form, and structure, can only address but a few of those forms, that I am only asserting this project as a mere glimpse.

This literature review begins with a brief overview of the theories that account for the body in modernity. These works, which are deeply entangled with the phenomenon of modernity more generally, become foundational for entrenching certain modern dichotomies, including the nature/culture divide and the mind/body split. While there are works that contemporaneously challenged early modern and modern thinking around the body, I focus principally on the shift in theorizing embodiment asserted by Second-Wave Feminists and the influence of poststructuralist thought. This section, “Contesting the Modern Body”, addresses how the framing of the *feminine*

*body* has motivated both emancipatory and oppressive figurations and theories of embodiment. Following this, “‘New’ Materialisms”, addresses the new materialist turn and accounts for posthuman and more-than-human accounts of being in the world. Here, the body becomes co-constituted through sets of relations. I will discuss how new materialist thought conceives of the body (as well as the agency of matter) that makes up the non-human. Here, I will also introduce Indigenous critiques that contest the novelty of these “new” materialisms, and shift towards ecological accounts in the final review section “Ecologies of Relations”. This section, though presented distinctly from the prior one, addresses the ecological currents and discourses that are concurrent with certain shifts in figuring the material site of the body. Here, I reassert the entanglement of actors and environments before addressing the cases presented in the second part of this chapter. As with my previous accounts of existing literatures in chapters 2 and 3, I want to emphasize that this my sectioning of this review is not to suggest these categorizations of thought are distinct from one another, but rather, reflect nuanced, intensely intertwined, lenses for addressing a complex discursive genealogy of materiality and embodiment.

### **Contesting the Modern Body**

This section is an extreme simplification of the way we have historically confronted our bodies, and how our bodies have historically confronted us. It is important to note here, that I am not accounting for the history of the *body itself*, but rather, the way the body has been historically conceived. For the purpose of my argument, this review emphasizes, firstly, the shift from premodern to modern constructs of the body. Moreover, my emphasis on the body serves to highlight, more generally, a particularly modern relationship (or aversion) to the idea of materiality. While René Descartes’s (1998) formulation of dualism becomes foundational for the

*modern body* as we have come to know it, the differentiation between the soul and the flesh does not originate as a modern construct. The tension between the physical and the ideal presupposes metaphysics itself. The idea that the mind (as form) is more valuable than matter underlies Plato's (1999) worldview and becomes the means through which he argues the body is the prison of the soul. And though philosophical thought after Plato shifted to more monistic approaches that integrated the body and the soul together (i.e. from Aristotle's hylomorphism through to Hellenism and Neoplatonic monism into Thomas Aquinas's theology), "man" was still thought to be more-than-*just-a-body*. The literature that accounts for the human relationship of body and mind inevitably becomes representative of the discourses on the *subject* and the *self*. This, however, is not the focus of this chapter. Rather, I argue that the discourse of the body is indicative of our relationship to the material world more generally. Though subjectivity and self are indispensable to the ways we conceive the body, my intent here, rather, is to question how the body in modernity becomes entangled with the idea of the material world, more generally, as separate from *ourselves*.

While early Christian theology moved between several different conceptions of the soul/body divide,<sup>113</sup> it was René Descartes's (1998) interpretation that designated a particular

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113. Porter (2005) notes that it was Aristotle's assertion of a rational and subrational soul that allowed, at once, for the materialization of thought in the body, and an immortal divine soul that "eased the assimilation of Aristotelian metaphysics into Christian theology" (73). The Hellenization of Christianity asserted a "metaphysics of a separate soul" that, like Plato, promoted a "radical body-soul dualism" (76). Unlike Platonists, Porter notes, "doctrines integral and singular to Christianity, specifically the Incarnation and Resurrection, precluded wholly negative views of the flesh" (77)—reanimation thus becomes a necessary part of immortal life. The rise of Gnosticism, and its complete relegation of the material world as the workings of evil forces, motivated some theologians such as Irenaeus and Tertullian to reassert the significance of the "God-created flesh" (77). Rival conceptions of the entanglement of *divine* and *material* worlds continued through the third century. It was Augustine's interpretation of Original Sin that somewhat solidified the matter in Christian theology—had it not been for the Fall of Adam, the soul and the body would have continued in immortal allegiance. While our mortal flesh becomes



shift in how we conceive of the material world. Cartesian dualism becomes a particular signifier of modernity in that it asserts human mastery over nature—that is, the rational over the material. For Descartes, the body is “made up of accidents” and the mind could simply exist without it—“Everything else, the entire animal kingdom included, is mere ‘extension’ (*res extensa*), that is, inert matter in motion governed by the iron laws of mechanics” (Porter 2005, 33). Roy Porter asserts that Descartes’s mind/body dualism was particular in that it “encouraged the naturalistic turn taken by the new rationalism, for this cogito stood on its own rational feet, independent of Bible or decretals” (59). Here, the mind/body divide shifted away from Platonic and theological assertions whereby the self is granted by an “eternal cosmic order”, towards the view that the properties of the “self” originate “entirely within us” (59). Cartesian thought thus marks a particular turn towards the rational, whereby the mind/body divide echoes a paradigmatic shift where reason becomes opposed to nature. Not only is the “self” separated from the body, but it is separated from the world in which the body is situated. Susan Bordo (1986; 1987) argues that Descartes’s *Meditations* represents the culmination of the self-interiorization indicative of the Renaissance—moreover, it is indicative of the anxiety that results from interrogating “whether any of the objects of which I have ideas *within me* exist *outside me*” (Descartes quoted in Bordo 1987, emphasis Bordo’s). It is this figuring of the mind/body divide as a tension between inner and outer life that I want to focus on here.

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“symptomatic of man’s lapsed condition...the flesh was not in itself base or even (despite the Christian Platonists) the cause of the Fall, for the first sin came from the soul” (78). Though Augustine’s interpretation endured (and was reinvigorated by Martin Luther), Porter notes that the rival readings of the “incurably discordant... earthly body and soul” continued to complicate the Christian position between the Aristotelian Scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas and the Christian Platonists. Porter’s account of the rhetoric around the body and the soul from the time of Europe’s Dark Ages into the early Enlightenment is summarized as a “tradition of earthy and sometimes droll body-soul dialogues” (81).

This binding of the modern self does not happen in isolation of other modern phenomena. In *Sovereignty: God, State and Self*, Jean Bethke Elshtain (2012) traces changing notions of sovereignty, distinguishing between “medieval incarnation” and “modern excarnation” (63). This excarnation of the “embodied king to—eventually—disembodied state” (63) is concurrent with the excarnation of ourselves from our body. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (1992) note that “the post-Cartesian modernist period is marked by a rejection of the body as an obstacle to pure rational thought” (2)—here, the mind/body divide becomes the schemata through which men are identified as rational actors, while women are rendered mere bodies. Theorists such as Evelyn Keller (1995) argue “the masculine here connotes....autonomy, separation and distance” (79), thus forwarding Karl Stern’s (1985) assertion that “Cartesian rationalism is the pure *masculinization of thought*” (104). This masculinization whereby the body is viewed as obstacle, becomes suffuse throughout modern thinking, not only in terms of rationality, but also in the modern notions of state sovereignty—for Foucault (1995) this is particularly traceable in the shift from corporeal punishment to disciplinary control. Foucault’s (1990) account of this shift asserts that this management of “the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution, and their submission” does not implicate the body as irrelevant, but rather establishes a new kind of *biopolitics* (25). Here, Foucauldian biopolitics represents an opportunity through which feminist theory recognizes the body as a leverage point—rather than simply appealing to “rationality” in an attempt at moving “woman” to the other side of the mind/body dichotomy, the material reality of being embodied became a specific site of feminist resistance (Hekman 1996, 4).

The modern project’s framing of man/reason/culture in opposition to woman/emotion/nature did not entirely preclude the development of feminism, however it did

structure the development of early feminist thought. Though many feminist theorists have accounted for the influence of Cartesian hierarchies of matter in the violence of the modern project,<sup>114</sup> we must recognize the ways the culture/nature dichotomy also influenced feminist thought. Particularly emblematic of the enduring influence of modern narratives on the ebb of Second-Wave Feminist thought is Simone de Beauvoir's (1970) allusions to woman as a viscous, stagnant swamp—Beauvoir demonstrates a particular disdain for the “often sullied” nature of women's bodies (362). Here, I cannot help but recall the central premise of Rod Giblett's (1996) *Postmodern Wetlands*, which asserts that the landscape of the drained swamp, “quintessentially characterises modernity and modernisation with all its cultural, corporeal and psychological conditions.....” (116). Feminist theorists such as Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (1999), Elizabeth Spelman (1982), and Vicki Kirby (1991; 1997) frame this modern fear of the body in terms of *somatophobia*—we cannot neglect the ways in which this fear extends from modernity's larger project to tame nature (e.g., through Hobbesian social contract or Kantian reason). So while some feminist assertions operated on the premise of aligning women with the modern tenants of rationality and reason equal to men, others embraced modernity's collapsing of *woman* with *body*, and *body* with *nature*, to reclaim the essential difference of the feminine—but none the less, the modern structure still prevailed. Here, I want to assert that modernity's organizing principle, whether it be applied to mind(/body), culture(/nature), or reason(/sensation), is one of containment.

Since much of the feminist work on embodiment serves to directly contest the figuring of the *modern body*, it is not surprising that a particular feminist discourse begins to evolve

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114. See, for example, Robyn Wiegman's (1995) *American Anatomies*, Anne McClintock's (1995) *Imperial Leather*; Carole Pateman's (1988) *The Sexual Contract*, and Londa Schiebinger's (2004) *Nature's Body*.

alongside poststructuralist and postmodern critiques of modernity. Particularly influential in this sense are Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2004, 2012) phenomenology,<sup>115</sup> which collapsed Cartesian dualism with the assertion of the body being in communion with consciousness and Gilles Deleuze's (2004) ontology of the virtual.<sup>116</sup> I also want to emphasize that a genealogy of feminist thought had begun evolving, from the onset of modernity, in opposition to Descartes's separation of mind/body, with the ideas asserted by Baruch Spinoza (1994). Or even earlier yet, as Christine Battersby (1999) suggests, with an *amodern* lineage of thinking about materiality that can be traced back to Heraclitus. It is beyond the scope of this project to account for these proto-feminist lines of thought in detail—however, I want to assert that while many feminisms decry the normative body entrenched within modernity and its institutions, present already was a history of thinking through the body *differently*, which feminist thought could further leverage to assert an experientially informed idea of embodiment.

At this point, I want to return to the leak and assert it as a potential site of resistance, not only in identifying feminist theories of radical embodiment (which will be my focus for the time being), but also in reasserting the material as a significant actor in social, political, and economic assemblages (which will be explored in later sections). In Margrit Shildrick's (1997) *Leaky Bodies*, she asserts that women's "putative leakiness" should form "the very ground for a postmodern feminist ethic".<sup>117</sup> Leakiness, she imagines, becomes a testament against that which strives to contain, that which attempts to account for anything as a totality. Here, the leaky body becomes a foil to our modern bodies—to the Cartesian body made of divisions, to the Vitruvian

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115. See, for example: Fielding (1996, 1999); Kirby (1991, 1997); Kruks (1997); Olkowski and Weiss (2006); Iris Marion Young (1980)

116. See, for example: Braidotti (2000, 2002, 2003, 2006b); Grosz (2004, 2005); Lorraine (1999); Olkowski (2000); Neimanis (2016)

117. This assertion is quoted from Shildrick's abstract to the book.

man contained within particular geometries. The leaky body excretes, projects, oozes, expels, drips, squirts, emits, contaminates, and infects and constantly contests its own limits. Leakiness is a contamination of bound space, a polluting force that destabilizes. This echoes Julia Kristeva's (2010) assertion that "defilement is what jettison[s] from the 'symbolic system'" (65). Filth, dirt, and grime represent that which escapes the "social rationality" and "the logical order" on which society is based. In some sense, leaks, like dirt, are always already radical, in that they, quite literally, operate outside of institutions of containment. Filth, Kristeva continues "is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a *boundary*" (69). Here, Kristeva calls on Mary Douglas's (2005) "marginal stuff of the most obvious kind...spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears"—that "by simply issuing forth, have traversed the boundary of the body" (150). In applying theory to practice, we must note that it would be a mistake, as Douglas argues (and Kristeva notes), "to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins" (150). This boundary behavior of leaking is particularly fertile in both its literal and figurative sense, however this chapter remains focused around the material leak and asserts bodies' tendencies for leakiness are not distinct from the broader material leakiness of the world.

While the leaky body in feminist discourse is riddled with theoretical potential, these earlier feminist world-views embodied a trans-exclusionary rigidity in which we must poke holes. The potential of the leaky body only stands inasmuch as it is not a body, as it had been conceived within the Western modernist project, at all. The leaky body, if it is to remain a relevant critique against the modern body, must be everything other than the epistemological frameworks (including certain feminist ones) that we have previously been embodied in—and therefore requires us to redress the absence of acknowledgment of queer, Indigenous, and disability discourses that the concept has obviously been influenced by. And beyond theoretical

contribution, Emma Pask (2017) notes that “while the cultural shame of leakiness impacts women and female-identifying people most often, the systematic disadvantages of leaking are felt by people of color, Indigenous, and trans people most intensely”. The opportunities and limitations of thinking *leakiness* in feminist thought is particularly palpable in the work of Luce Irigaray (1983). Irigaray’s work confronts the formless and inert constitution of the feminine contra masculine with an assertion of fluid mechanics amongst other liquid tendencies. Irigaray’s reading of fluidity privileges the material—its relational capacities, the movement of flows and generative potential—within the realm of the feminine.<sup>118</sup> And while her assertion of materiality, relationality and non-fixity are particularly influential for the feminist new materialisms I will discuss in the following section, they also form the basis of her rather essentialist theory of sexual difference between man and woman. While Irigaray’s framing of sexual difference has “been located at various points on the spectrum between heteronormative and homophobic” (Salamon 141-142), Gayle Salamon (2010) asserts that “[g]enders that find no easy home within the binary system are still animated by difference” (144), making possible “a queer reading of Irigaray in which bodies, boundaries, and relations of sexual difference need not exclude the sexually different or differently sexed” (131). Boundaries, as sites of relations, implicates the leak as both possibility and threat—the bounds through which embodiment has been, and continues to be conceived, even when interrogated critically, still bear these risks. Anticipating the incontinence of boundary logics opens opportunities for new modes of thought. For example, Elaine Graham (2002) harnesses the potential of leaky bodies into her thinking about the posthuman. She imagines that hybrid creatures are host to leakiness too—that in their

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118. Irigaray’s “Thinking with Matter, Rethinking Irigaray: A ‘Liquid Ground’ for a Planetary Feminism” (2016)

monstrosity, they expose the “instability of the [supposed] ontological hygiene of the human subject” (12). I argue that in spite of certain absences, the radical potential of the leaky body can be reasserted if we open it up to narratives of disability,<sup>119</sup> queer theory,<sup>120</sup> and new materialities.

The tension between subjectivity and embodiment is particularly complex when considering the violence of technologies of race. Modernity’s role in racing the body is a project so deeply intertwined with theories of embodiment, that it would be negligent not to acknowledge the ways that the raced body is simultaneously absent and exploited in this work. In the modelling of black (non)subjects, the modern project has entrenched a condition whereby any account of modernity’s *general* framing of a mind/body, man/woman dualism, is inevitably framing of white subjectivity. This is not to suggest that the cultivation of these dualities did not affect the modern construction of black-corporality—as Franz Fanon (2008) asserts, “for not

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119. There are many works within critical disability studies that assert alternative constellations of embodiment akin to my assertion of *leakiness*. For example, Kelly Fritsch (2010) contests the figuring of “autonomous selves” in thinking through the assemblage of labour and care between bodies. This follows similar assertions made by Barbara Gibson (2006), who argues that certain narratives of *dependency* should be reframed in terms of *connection*. Here, Gibson argues that the “myriad relationships between persons with disabilities and the machines, tools, persons or animals that assist them”, can be reasserted as “an extension of the body that resists and exceeds its closure” (187). To these ends, she asserts, our understanding of the body “requires a re-imagining of the contained and sovereign subject of Western discourse as fluid and becoming” (188). Margrit Shildrick’s later works, “Embodying the Monster” (2002) and “Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality” (2009), are also examples of the ways that modern narratives of the embodiment can be challenged through critical disability discourses.

120. For example, Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) framing of leakiness as a mode underlying orientation: “Sexual orientation involves bodies that leak into worlds; it involves a way of orientating the body towards and away from others, which affects how one can enter different kinds of social spaces (which presumes certain bodies, certain directions, certain ways of loving and living), even if it does not lead bodies to the same places. To make a simple but important point: orientations affect what it is that bodies can do. Hence, the failure to orient oneself ‘towards’ the ideal sexual object affects how we live in the world, an affect that is readable as the failure to reproduce, and as a threat to the social ordering of life itself” (145).

only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (82–83)—but rather that the dualism that blackness was inscribed into was a different one. To this point, Katherine McKittrick (2006) borrows from Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2002), noting that “particular kinds of bodies, one by one, are materially (if not always visibly) configured by racism into a hierarchy of human and inhuman persons...” (Gilmore, 16). Though (white) female subjectivity is constructed against (white) male subjectivity as an unruly body in the realm of nature rather than reason—this body is still a human body. Black subjecthood was ascribed a wild body too, but one in which humanity was absent. Speaking of the ways in which this hierarchy was instated spatially—through “ships and on plantations, in homes, communities, nations, islands, and regions”—McKittrick (2006) contends that “the impressions of transatlantic slavery leak into the future, in essence recycling the displacement of difference” (xvii). And while the continuity of these historical through-lines represent persistent violence, McKittrick asserts “practices and locations of racial domination (for example, slave ships, racial-sexual violences) and practices of resistance (for example, ship coups, escape routes, imaginary and real respatializations) also importantly locate what Saidiya Hartman calls ‘a striking contradiction,’ wherein objectification is coupled with black humanity/personhood” (xiv). My work asserts that the modern project, in its attempt to contain reason as a faculty distinct from the body, at once failed to recognize the leakiness of subjectivity in general, and denied the female subject a continent self. But while white men became the police of white women’s leaky bodies, black men were constructed as the threat to its containment. And even more complex, are the ways that subjecthood was ascribed onto black women, how it “disrupts normalized gender categories (male-aggressive, female-passive, male-public, female-private), which are predicated on whiteness” (McKittrick 47). Here, black femininity “moves ‘between’ white and nonwhite



patriarchal gender categories”—a femininity that is “not an innocent site of private passivity and respectability nor a wholly public and/or rational self, but rather a collection of ideological scripts that assert objecthood: useable, public, psychically empty, working-technology” (47). And while the violence of this subjecthood *leaks* into the future,<sup>121</sup> to borrow McKittrick’s words, it is also integral to emphasize the agency actively asserted against it by “black humanity”.<sup>122</sup> In generalizing the leakiness of the contemporary moment, I am asserting a failure of modern instantiations of containment—in hastily addressing the question of race, I want to emphasize two necessary inclusions: firstly, these projects of containment are predicated on white supremacy, and secondly, that the increasingly evident incontinence of these systems does not necessarily evacuate them of violence, but their failures to totally contain also signify active agentive resistance. While the specificities of black subjectivity and ascribed inhuman embodiment imposed through modern technologies of domination have been better accounted for than what I have attempted here in works like Saidiya Hartman’s (1997) *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*, a host of other works consider too, the reassertion of self-authored black agency. In this regard, I consider Audre Lorde’s “erotic” (2000), Fred Moten’s “freedom drive” (2003), Gina Dent’s “black joy” (1998), and Christina Sharpe’s (2016) “aspiration” (130), amongst other concepts, as examples of the enduring forces being asserted against the obliteration of black personhood. These forces

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121. Not to mention the explicit material violence of embodying this subjectivity.

122. Here, I am attempting to address McKittrick’s demand on Twitter: “stop saying black bodies are disciplined, managed, controlled, surveyed!!! Give me black humanity!!!!” (@demonicgrounds, April 8, 2016). While accounting for modernity’s explicit construction of “black bodies” relies on these discipline-narratives, McKittrick (2014) insists that “the documents and ledgers and logs that narrate the brutalities of this history give birth to new world blackness as they evacuate life from blackness” (16)—here then, we cannot just conclude accounts of this violence with the evacuation of life, but point towards the work being done by scholars, activists and community leaders that reassert “black humanity”.

must be read alongside the violences that white supremacy continuously exerts against black people. To neglect the specificity of the modern project's racial violence would have been a glaring absence in this work, however the degree to which I have accounted for its intensity here is not sufficient in terms of substantive address—while I shift now to the general relationship between materiality and embodiment, I ask the reader to hold with them the impeccable size of this gap for which I am failing to take full account.

Jane Bennett (2004) notes that since the early nineteen nineties “there has been an explosion of political-theoretical work on the (human) body as a materiality, indebted to, among others, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler”. She continues:

One hallmark of this “body materialism” (as I will call it) is its insistence upon locating the body inside a culture or bio-culture. It has examined the micro- and macro-political forces through which the (human) body is, among other things, gendered, sexed, pacified, and excited. Body materialism, in other words, reveals how cultural practices shape what is experienced as natural or real. Some of this genealogical work also insists upon the material recalcitrance of cultural products. Sexuality, for example, is shown to be a congealed bodily effect of historical norms and practices, but its status as a human artifact does not imply that it yields readily to human understanding or control. The point here is that cultural forms are themselves material assemblages that resist. (348)

While the body plays an integral part in thinking through certain material assemblages, Bennett's materialism, rather, seeks to give voice to “a *less specifically human* kind of materiality” (348).

Since the early 2000s, “thing-power”, as Bennett refers to it (2010), has become the means through which theorists assert a new mode of materialism that accounts for the agency of matter beyond human control. The following section will address this “new materialist” literature and go on to demonstrate how it, along with the literature accounted for in this past section, becomes entangled with ecological discourses.

## “New” Materialisms

Descartes’s distinction between the body and the mind is entangled amongst his assertions about matter and knowledge more generally. While the literature accounted for here is considered to be part of a *new materialist turn*, it remains indebted, at least in some sense, to modern notions of materiality (Coole and Frost 2010, 7). For Descartes, matter is passive and to be acted upon—it constitutes “solid, bounded objects that occupy space and whose movements or behaviors are predictable, controllable, and replicable because they obey fundamental and invariable laws of motion” (*ibid.*, 7–8). Here, the human subject who possesses reason, bears the ability to master nature through measuring and classifying matter according to natural law—it is in this sense we impose our agency *onto* matter. Cartesian idealism contends the world is knowable regardless of the extension of the body in space and the sensation, interaction, and connection between matter that comes with it. And while rationalism underlies a great deal of modern thought (Kantian transcendentalism and Newtonian physics for example) rigidifying the exclusion of agency from matter, there is (and always has been) an “underground current” of materialist philosophy. Louis Althusser (2001) traces this genealogy through Lucretius, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx and Heidegger—his assertion is that a “philosophy of the encounter” has been repressed by a logocentric philosophy that asserts “the priority of Meaning over all reality”. Significant here, is the reassertion that while Cartesian idealism was particularly representative of a modern disposition, other lines of thought can indeed be traced. However, Althusser’s attempt “to free the materialism of the encounter from this repression; to discover, if possible, its implications for both philosophy and materialism; and to ascertain its hidden effects wherever they are silently at work” (168), does not suffice for liberating past materialisms. The intersection of philosophy and materialism arising not long

after his death becomes particularly potent in the figuring of a possibly *new* materialism against the shortcomings of the linguistic turn in which Althusser was still relatively entrapped. Though he considers the “aleatory materiality” of non-human matter encountering each other, there is no room for thinking about the body *as* matter. The materialist discourse that I account for here, while not free from the influence of Althusser’s “underground current”, represents a trajectory that recognizes embodiment as being inextricably embedded in materialist theory.<sup>123</sup>

The discourses that make up feminist new materialist theory are intensely intertwined with the feminist discourses accounted for in the previous section. Noting the works of Rosi Braidotti (1991; 2002; 2013), Karan Barad (2003; 2007; 2013), Jane Bennett (2001; 2004; 2010), Myra Hird (2004), Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) (and others), here, as opposed to above, is relatively arbitrary. These theorists, like the feminist theorists cited previously, reject the impositions of the modern body—this feminist new materialist theory however, distinguishes itself in accounting for materiality as it extends beyond the feminine body to the non-, post- and more-than-human. Feminist new materialisms assert that matter itself bears a particular agency and that the anthropomorphic assumptions of the modern project require redress. This section demonstrates how feminist new materialist thinking becomes a potent method for contesting modern idealism. Firstly, I will argue that Donna Haraway’s (2004) cyborg materialism and the establishment of feminist technoscience marks a particular moment in the unfolding of feminist new materialist theory (as well as addressing some of the trans exclusionary figuring of women’s bodies). Secondly, I will trace some of the works that have come to represent the thread of the new materialisms, demonstrating how they align with, and contest, certain “turns” such as object

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123. Spinoza has been incredibly influential to the discourses that I am about to discuss, and while Althusser traces the Spinozist tradition to a degree, he does not trace it though the discourses of embodiment that inform contemporary feminist new materialist thought.

oriented ontology and posthumanism. Finally, I note Indigenous critiques of new materialist thinking and demonstrate the absence of Indigenous epistemologies from modern and contemporary discourses on materiality.

The significance of Donna Haraway's work within feminist discourses can be attributed to a particular amenability to addressing tension between modern and postmodern conceptions of the body, identity, and the deepening influence of technological interventions in living. Shildrick and Price (2010) assert that Haraway's work became indicative of a "feminist engagement with the body where difference could no longer be adequately construed according to the conventional binaries of gender, sexuality, race, class and similarly 'humanist' paradigms" (11). Haraway (2004) utilizes the figuration of the cyborg to demonstrate how embodiment is constituted by "both imagination and material reality" (352). And though other scholars have accounted for the difficulty of this simultaneously socially and biologically constructed existence, Haraway demonstrates through the cyborg, that this tension bears potential: "nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation of incorporation by the other" (2004, 9). Here she signals three crucial "boundary breakdowns": between human and animal; between animal-human and machine; and between physical and non-physical. These distinctions, for Haraway, have always been "leaky" (10). Unlike earlier feminisms which remained bound by modernist dualisms—forcing either a claim for woman's equal stake in rationality, or woman's biological allegiance to nature (as noted in the previous section)—Haraway's cyborg world is "not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (13). This assertion however is not simply a postmodern imagining of a dissolution of all boundaries without a trace. In spite of feminisms' participation in the "logics, languages, and practices of white humanism" (the bounded space of modernity), Haraway asserts

that we must navigate the risk “of lapsing into boundless difference and giving up on the confusing task of making partial, real connection” (20). For Haraway, power, in the late modern moment, operates not unlike what Deleuze will eventually theorize as the logic of control: “one should expect control strategies to concentrate on boundary conditions and interfaces, on rates of flow across boundaries—and not on the integrity of natural objects” (22). Thus politics, for Haraway, becomes a practice of navigating boundaries; these practices can be undertaken for the purposes of dissent and policing (if we are to return to Rancière’s terms). These boundary behaviors are a continuation of modern conditions, and precisely why some theorists reject the premise of a “post” modern moment—what does shift however, is the visibility and porousness of these barriers, but they are no less the sites of control, or in Deleuzian terms, *modulation*.

Haraway (2004) stresses:

To recapitulate, certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals—in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self. Chief among these troubling dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man. The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other; the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self. To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many. High-tech culture challenges these dualisms in intriguing ways. (39)

Haraway’s cyborg politics is not about redefining categories, but rather a questioning of:

Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin? From the seventeenth century till now, machines could be animated—given ghostly souls to make them speak or move or to account for their orderly development and mental capacities. Or organisms could be mechanized—reduced to body understood as resource of mind. (39)

The opportunity posed is that “cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (39). Though this account has thus far

emphasized the significance of Haraway's cyborg politics, what becomes of particular influence to new materialist thinking is Haraway's extension of this line of thought into what she later terms *natureculture(s)*. Astrida Neimanis (2008) asserts that Haraway's natureculture accepts matter as "neither purely natural nor purely cultural, nor an undifferentiated muddle that eliminates the meaningfulness of either term" (9)—rather, as Haraway contends of natureculture, "there is no border where evolution ends and history begins, where genes stop and environment takes up, where culture rules and nature submits, or vice versa. Instead, there are turtles upon turtles of naturecultures all the way down" (2004, 2). Collapsing dualisms requires a particular attention to the marginalized space-between the containing structures of modernity. Here we can think of the ways this space-between co-constitutes actors and thus constitutes interaction.

It is this notion of interaction that holds a privileged space in the discourse of feminist new materialisms; not only in its concern for the interactions between human and non-human actors, but in the methodological premise that the *discursive* and the *material* are intimately intertwined. While Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (2008) acknowledge the influence of poststructuralist thought on feminist discourse,<sup>124</sup> they attribute the materialist turn in feminist theory to an exasperation over the "tendency to focus on the discursive at the expense of the material... particularly evident in feminist versions of postmodernism" (3). Here, they assert that feminist new materialist theory "accomplishes what the postmoderns failed to do: a deconstruction of the material/discursive dichotomy that retains both elements without privileging either" (3). When Karan Barad (2003) stated "language has been granted too much power", she poses the question "how does one even go about inquiring after the material

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124. And indeed there are many examples of poststructuralist feminist theory whereby poststructural influence cannot be read separated from feminist influence. See for example, Butler (2011), Kristeva (2010), Irigaray (1993).

conditions that have led us to such a brute reversal of naturalist beliefs when materiality itself is always already figured within a linguistic domain as its condition of possibility?” (801). To these ends Barad’s project becomes one of making matter matter in the postmodern moment (2003, 2007). While the discourse of feminist new materialisms, by name, considers the existence of many possible materialities, Coole and Frost (2010) outline three particular features of the literature: a reorientation towards the ontological, a posthumanist disposition that conceives of matter as agential, and a reengagement with political economy (7). The new materialist (not unlike the historical materialist) reads the capitalist system, not simply in a “narrowly economic way” but rather sees it “as a detotalized totality that includes a multitude of interconnected phenomena and processes that sustain its unpredictable proliferation and unexpected crises, as well as its productivity and reproduction” (29). This tracing of the through-elements of a new materialist theory is only possible because of the proliferation of theorists, in the last twenty years especially, that have sought to reanimate matter.

In *Nomadic Subjects*, Rosi Braidotti (1991) asserts that the transformation of the structure of subjectivity requires a “radical rereading of materialism” (264). Though noting the influence of poststructuralism on feminist theories of embodiment (particularly in accounting for the violence of modernity’s dualisms), Braidotti asserts that it is “the neo-materialism of Foucault” and the “new materiality of Deleuze” that together mark “a point of non-return for feminist theory” (265–266)—rather than indebting the future of feminist thought to the deconstructivist tendencies of the linguistic turn, she argues that it is the reworking of the material, and not just the text, that holds particular possibilities for feminist theory. Moreover, in asserting the body as a “a metaphysical surface of integrated material and symbolic elements that defy separation” (282), Braidotti’s text is rather prescient of the shifting tides in theorizing materiality. This idea



is further promoted by Karan Barad's (2007) framework of "agential realism" through which "the role of human *and* nonhuman, material *and* discursive, and natural *and* cultural factors" are considered as part of social-material practices. In demonstrating how nonhuman actors perform as agents, Barad asserts that "the primary ontological unit is not independent objects with independently determinate boundaries and properties" but rather, *phenomena*, as a constellation of intra-action—"the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (26).

Though I have framed this section in specific reference to feminist new materialisms, the literature cited above is strewn throughout varying disciplines, departments, library sections, and parallel oeuvres. It would be problematic to outright ignore new materialist discourses' intersection with actor-network theory (Latour 2003; 2007), object-oriented ontology (Harman 2018; Morton 2013), speculative realism (Harman 2010; Meillassoux 2009), and posthumanist discourses (Braidotti 2013; Hayles 1999), amongst others. However, the site of this project is not this discourse itself, but rather how the material nature of the leak constitutes, and is constituted by, its relations with other actors. It is in this sense that I argue feminist new materialisms provides a particularly potent lens through which we can interrogate intra-actions that constitute leaking. And while it is regrettable that scope prohibits any deep engagement with the complete multitude of discourses in which feminist new materialist theories are a part, of particular importance to this project is the ecological reality in which the leak is implicated. In the following section, I will explore the intersection of new materialist theory and ecology-based discourses as a means to further elucidate both the threats and possibilities that crystallize through leaking. However, before shifting focus, I want to engage with some important critiques of feminist new materialist discourses.

While new materialisms acknowledge a deeper lineage in its revival and reinterpretation of materialist thinking, there is a particular absence of recognition for certain modes of thought that have long supposed material relations akin to those espoused by so-called “new materialists”. Samantha Frost (2011) asserts that “of course, in many respects, a scholarly and theoretical focus on the body’s materiality is nothing new: for several decades, feminists have denaturalized both embodiment and material objects, analyzing and specifying the manifold discursive practices through which bodies and matter are constituted as intelligible” (70). And while feminist new materialist thought is indeed indebted to earlier feminist thought, it also follows premises that align with certain Indigenous ways of being/knowing. While the structuring of modern thought, and its material implications, is complicit in—if not entirely responsible for—the violence and marginalization of women, more work needs to be done to acknowledge the ways that Western modern thought seeks to absolutely obliterate Indigenous life (both in the literal and cultural sense). In asserting modes of thought that counter the dualisms entrenched within the Western modern project, feminist new materialisms, posthumanism, material-vitalism, or any other attempt towards material-redress, must acknowledge the modes of thought oppressed and nearly annihilated by modern conceptions of progress. In speaking of the ways non-Indigenous thinkers address divisions between life and non-life, Kim Tallbear (2017) asserts:

The new materialists may take the intellectual intervention that grounds the vital-materialist creed as something that is new in the world. But the fundamental insights are not new for everyone. They are ideas that, not so roughly translated, undergird what we can call an indigenous metaphysic: that matter is lively. (198–99)

The moral premise of new materialist thought is to recognize a multitude of agencies that, once acknowledged, require an ethical *tending to* that has been neglected throughout modernity—this includes non-living matter, broad ecologies, human and non-human actors. However, Tallbear

highlights the limitations of these intentions when the discourse tends to be “silent regarding indigenous life and presence and intellectual work on this planet” (197). To these ends, we must question the ways in which new materialisms asserts the vital agency of minerals, toxins, and bacteria, without explicitly acknowledging the absence of Indigenous peoples in the constitution of their assemblages. As new materialist theories are often enacted as a means to address the structures and epistemologies that have led to the Anthropocenic moment, Zoe Todd (2015) asserts that any good intentions that underlie this movement are not, alone, sufficient in attempts for decolonization. Todd contends:

The Anthropocene, like any theoretical category at play in Euro-Western contexts, is not innocent of such violence. Exploitative patterns, when they manifest, in turn concentrate the voice of Indigenous issues in white hands... In order to engage in global conversations about the state of the world, such as the current discourse of the Anthropocene, there must be a concomitant examination of where such discourses are situated, who is defining the problems, and who decides the players involved. (251–252)

My project is unfortunately situated within what remains a “white public space” in Todd’s terms. As a white settler scholar, this fact is not undone with the inclusion of Indigenous critiques. Kim Tallbear (2017) asserts that “if this theoretical turn is to seriously attend to addressing some of the world’s most pressing problems it needs to learn to see indigenous peoples in our full vitality, not as the de-animated vanished or less evolved” (198). In part two of this chapter, I want to insert an account of Indigenous resistance that not only troubles representations of the “de-animated vanished or less evolved”, but makes evident that certain Indigenous movements have been some of the only means through which “new materialist” ethics have been put into action against modern structures. This inclusion does not undo my positionality as a settler scholar, but in terms of Todd’s question of who is defining the problems and who decides the players involved, I assert that the Standing Rock Sioux made the problem of pipelines, leaking, and constellations of power known, as well as made clear the stakes and stakeholders of the

petrostate in particularly productive ways. Before addressing these cases, the next section of this literature review explicitly concerns ecology discourses—here, I ask the reader to consider how the Indigenous critiques of new materialist discourse explored here, extend to the discourse of ecology below.

### **Ecologies of Relations**

Ecological discourses, with their particular focus on the implications of human interaction with more-than-human networks, have served, in some sense, as a proto-discourse for new materialist modes of thought. Works including Jane Bennett's (2010) *Vibrant Matter*, and Sarah Whatmore's (2016) *Hybrid Geographies*, take what previously may have been concerns exclusive to the physical sciences (minerals in Bennett and seeds in Whatmore) and affirm them within the discourses of feminist theory, geography, political science, and legal frameworks, amongst others. While foundational works to ecological thought have asserted similar methodologies to more-contemporary new materialist thinking—for example, the intersection of actors in the cultivation of spaces, environments, and habitats—disciplinary divides have (until recently) isolated these works within their original discipline of ecology. There are, of course, exceptions to this, however, the inclusion of ecological thought into other disciplines has only been normalized through the rise of intersectional and interdisciplinary commitments arising from the cultural turn. In some sense, ecological thought was made popular before it was ever considered transdisciplinary.<sup>125</sup> This section considers the contribution of ecology literature on the development of feminist new materialist thinking. Moreover, this section emphasizes how the

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125. Here I am thinking of the popularity of such works as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962).

subject of leaking necessarily concerns this literature, particularly through the ecological assertion that phenomena are influenced by, implicated in, and constituted by networks of the actors that together establish a particular environment.

The potential that underlies the ecological method in connecting phenomena previously considered distinct is exemplified in the rise of discourses appropriating the premise of ecologies. From the development of media ecologies in the 1960s in the work of Marshall McLuhan (1994), the idea that environments are constituted through the interrelation of *natural* and *cultural* phenomena becomes influential in the contestation of disciplinary boundaries. As evidenced in the previous section of this chapter, these assertions of the relation between the *natural* and the *cultural* become further entangled through discourses that contest the condition of any separations at all, thus exacerbating arguments, rather, for the recognition of *natureculture* (Haraway 2004). However, in this section I argue that evidence of natureculture has been present within ecological discourses all along. I mean this in two senses: firstly, that the distinction between the two was an artificial assertion of the modernist project (as argued above) and is a worldview that represents a very short duration within the history of human thought, and secondly: in that natureculture was the very premise of ecological thought since the assertion of the concept by Ernst Haeckel in 1866.<sup>126</sup> What I wish to illustrate here, is that these modern

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126. Haeckle defines ecology as follows: “By ecology, we mean the whole science of the relations of the organism to the environment including, in the broad sense, all the ‘conditions of existence.’ These are partly organic, partly inorganic in nature; both, as we have shown, are of the greatest significance for the form of organisms, for they force them to become adapted. Among the inorganic conditions of existence to which every organism must adapt itself belong, first of all, the physical and chemical properties of its habitat, the climate (light, warmth, atmospheric conditions of humidity and electricity), the inorganic nutrients, nature of the water and of the soil.... [evolution] show us how all the infinitely complicated relations in which each organism occurs in relation to the environment, how the steady reciprocal action between it and all the organic and inorganic conditions of existence are not the premeditated arrangements of a Creator fashioning nature according to a plan but are the necessary effects of existing matter with

separations were always known (at least by some) to be largely problematic, and that ecological discourses have played a particular role in the collapsing of disciplinary divides.<sup>127</sup>

This lineage through ecological thinking is acknowledged by many engaging with new materialist thought. Elizabeth Grosz (2008), in her reading of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution notes that "Darwin provides feminist theory with a way of reconceptualizing the relations between the natural and the social, between the biological and the cultural, outside the dichotomous structure in which these terms are currently enmeshed" (43). However, a more common ecological influence on contemporary materialist thought can be traced through a lineage from Spinoza. From here we begin to see the contours of the cleavages between Spinozist and Cartesian thought, and the ways through which the Spinozist lineage continues to resonate in contemporary interdisciplinary work. From the knotted center of the modern intellectual tradition we can pull many threads, but it is these two threads that are particularly relevant for framing the literature I use throughout this chapter. Near the base of one is the Cartesian dualism I described in the previous section: it extends into the modern (liberal) subject, reason, Westphalian sovereignty, Newtonian physics, and scientific realism. The other begins with Spinozist monism: it unravels into dialectics, passions, Marxism and into critical new materialisms. This is not to suggest that these threads do not cross each other's paths, or that they

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its inalienable properties and their continual motion in time and space." (qtd. in Stauffer, 140-141).

127. Though I maintain, and will continue to argue (especially as it concerns new materialist thought), that ecology has played a role in asserting interdisciplinarity, I must stress that this is not to suggest it did not also play a role in maintaining (and entrenching) the modernist perspective. Ecology (along with other disciplines like biology) asserted particular classification systems, system hierarchies, and a rigid view of nature. However, my assertion of disciplinary flexibility is based on the fact that ecology cannot reject the imbrication of cultural factors within these environments. Moreover, the discipline acknowledges the vulnerabilities of competing systems, and does not regard environments as completely static, but rather made up of a set of complex, often shifting, relationships between actors.

are not, themselves, entangled in certain ways within the histories of each other. An exemplary entanglement between these lineages is apparent in the rise of structuralism, a period in which existentialist poets become Nazis, (white) feminists erect hierarchies, and the scientific method infiltrates culture through the social sciences. It is with the rise of poststructuralism that the Spinozist trajectory reemerges as distinct from the Cartesian lineage. I argue, that it is also from here that we can trace the development of ecological discourses which follow certain deconstructivist premises on which feminist new materialisms and certain ecological approaches arise: the decentering of the human, rejection of certain dialectical relations, the emphasis on assemblages as opposed to easily defined structures. However, not all ecological discourses follow this strand—liberal environmental conservation and green economics are much more deeply knotted within the Cartesian modernist tradition. In accounting for an ecology that will later inform leaking, this review section considers (hastily) the development of a strand of a neo-Spinozist ecological thought divergent from a modernist (Cartesian, neo-Kantian) thread.

While I insisted above that ecology, from its onset as a discipline, was relatively dynamic in addressing the intersections of *nature* and *culture*, its origins within a time of generally positivist and instrumental worldviews anchored the discipline to modernist logics. It was with an unfolding of a “New Ecology” initiated by Arthur Tansley’s notion of the “ecosystem” in 1939 (Callicott 1986) along with the insertion of environmental concerns into popular culture beginning in the late 1950s that ensured a widening reach of ecological thought and the recognition that the imbrication of human, non-human, and more-than-human environments necessitated certain ethical action. I argue that we can trace new materialist sentiments back into mid-twentieth century new ecologies—the culmination of which, if we are to force them into an imperfect, but still rather linear genealogy, can be traced to a Spinozist tradition emanating from

the rejection of Cartesian dualism. And while it is not within the scope of this project to account, generally, for all of Spinoza's thought, I will proceed here to address the elements which become particularly influential to contemporary conceptions of ecology which in turn underlie feminist new materialist thought.

There are two particular concepts within Spinoza's work that inform ecological thinking. Spinoza's (1994) assertion that everything is derived from a single substance resisted modern dualities and rather avowed a worldview of *Deus sive Natura* (God as Nature). In refuting the existence of a higher order above the natural, and asserting divinity *as* nature, Spinozist monism is often figured as means for undoing the troubling hierarchies that asserted man as master of nature. Here, Spinozist thought has been particularly influential in ecological assertions of the inherent value of nature as both a whole and through its constituent parts. Secondly, though not unrelated to the first, is the assertion that this single substance, and its different modes, have particular agencies. This perspective has been adopted by ecological thinkers as a means of speaking to the varying capacities of ecological actors without having to negotiate these actors' value. George Sessions (1995) notes that while "Spinoza's pantheistic vision did not derail the dominant Western philosophic and religious anthropocentrism and the dream of the conquest of Nature in the seventeenth century", his thought "influenced many who questioned and resisted this trend" (163). This Spinozist influence on environmental thought has been documented by a number of scholars (Jonge 2004; Le Grange 2018; Merçon 2011; Sessions 1995) many of whom note its particular influence on Arne Naess's formulation of "deep ecology". The premise of deep ecology, a concern for the "flourishing of human and non-human life," which "have value in themselves" (Naess 1998, 29), instigated a retroactive canonization of ecological philosophy. It is this line of thinking that I argue forms a distinct thread in influencing new materialisms.



In arguing that ecological thinking ushered in a fundamental restructuring of the “self”, J. Baird Callicott (1986) asserts an inextricable link between “New Ecology” and metaphysics. Accounting for the historical development of ecological thought in the late nineteenth century, Callicott notes:

...The endemic Western picture of living nature prior to its transformation by ecology might be characterized (or caricatured) as follows. The terrestrial natural environment consists of a collection of bodies composed of molecular aggregates of atoms. A living natural body is in principle a very elaborate machine. That is, its generation, gestation, development, decay, and death can be exhaustively explained reductively and mechanically. Some of these natural machines are mysteriously inhabited by a conscious monad, a "ghost-in-the-machine." Living natural bodies come in a wide variety of types or species, which are determined by a logico-conceptual order, and have, otherwise, no essential connection to one another. They are, as it were, loosed upon the landscape, each outfitted with its (literally God-given) Platonic or Aristotelian essence, to interact catch-as-catch-can. (305)

This pre-ecological view of nature, derived from the Cartesian thread I gestured to earlier, imagines the world as “a mechanical Leviathan, a vast machine which is itself composed of machines” (306). This view was especially influential in inaugurating what is considered to be an imperial tradition of ecology, which aimed to establish, “through the exercise of reason and hard work, man’s dominion over nature” (Worster 1977, 2). In traditional ecological literature,<sup>128</sup> the countercurrent to the imperial view is the Arcadian tradition, which aligns with Romanticism and pastoral accounts of nature.<sup>129</sup> However, this Arcadian view, regarded perhaps more accurately as a proto-ecology of sorts by Callicott (1986), was rather an artistic or literary tradition more so than operative ideology as was the case with the imperial view. These delineations of ecological

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128. By traditional, I am referring to the work that situates ecology within natural history specifically, as opposed to considering it more broadly within the discourses of philosophy and philosophy of science.

129. For works accounting for the intersection of pastoral idealism and ecology see, for example: Raymond Williams (1975) “The Country and the City”, Gregg Garrard (2004) “Ecocriticism”, and Danna Phillips (2003) “The Truth of Ecology”.

traditions are a reading backwards of ecology—as a discipline, a concept, a word, ecology did not yet exist.

Ecology, understood narrowly as the study of the interrelations between nonhuman organisms and their environments, may not force a fundamental change in our image of nature. However, when this image is applied self-referentially, it does require a fundamentally new image of nature. (McLaughlin qtd. in Howe 1993)

While Spinoza has greatly influenced the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Guattari's (1989) *Three Ecologies* does not explicitly consider Spinoza's contribution.<sup>130</sup> Guattari's notion of ecology does however, contrast itself explicitly from the Cartesian tradition in declaring “the human subject is not a straightforward matter; Descartes was wrong to suggest it was sufficient merely to think in order to be” (132). In spite the interconnectedness of the world made sensible through the ecological works noted above, Guattari contends that:

The generalized ecology I am arguing for here has in my view barely begun to be prefigured by environmental ecology in its contemporary form. The ecology I envisage will aim radically to decentre social struggles and assumptions about the psyche... Ecology should abandon its connotative links with images of a small minority of nature lovers or accredited experts; for the ecology I propose here questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalist power formations—formations which, moreover, can by no means be assured of continuing their successes of the last decade. (140)

To these ends Guattari frames ecological struggle as a fight against the structures of containment entrenched within the modernist project. Here, Guattari asserts environmental ecology as a realm inseparable from any other, especially in regards to redress of resistance. In situating his call as one against modern subjectivity (contra Descartes), Guattari demands “there is an urgent need for us to free ourselves of scientific references and metaphors: to forge new paradigms which are instead ethico-aesthetic in inspiration” (132).<sup>131</sup> The future that faces us, he argues, demands

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130. Rather, the work takes Gregory Bateson's (2000) *Steps to and Ecology of Mind* as its explicit starting point

131. This notion of the “ethico-aesthetic” paradigm will be returned to in the conclusion section of this dissertation.

a reorientation between the human and the non-human, a new kind of subjectivity. He contends: “With the acceleration of the technological and data-processing revolutions, we will witness the deployment or, if you will, the unfolding of animal, vegetable, cosmic, and machinic becomings which are already prefigured by the prodigious expansion of computer-aided subjectivity” (133). I do not see Guattari’s assertion to be entirely different than others accounted for in this literature review (say, for example Haraway 2004). My intention in calling on *Three Ecologies*, is to demonstrate the explicit entanglement of subjectivity, bodies, and ecology that we must work through. I argue that through an ecology of leaking, these entanglements are particularly sensible. The below conclusion will account for the ecology of the leak as a means of rematerializing the assemblages of actors imbricated in relationships of leaking.

The review of the literature outlined above is by no means an exhaustive account of the discourses of embodiment, materiality, and ecology. There are numerous specificities, nuances, and details, within and between these works, that because of scope, I cannot account for in this project. However, now tasked with concluding this review, my aim is not to gesture towards the many details that I have certainly missed—rather, I will argue that this review, perhaps, has not been simple enough. My intention here is to recount, through the works referenced above, how the respective disciplines amongst which they are scattered, are of little service to us. This is not to suggest that there is no use for feminism, new materialisms, nor ecological thought as potentially effective lenses of analysis, but rather I am arguing that distinguishing between them requires a reterritorialization of the very structures they progressively oppose. Adhering to disciplinary divides (and the broader structures that enforce those divides) precludes the possibility for ethics—something that will be discussed in the conclusion of this work. Here, I am not calling for a crude monism (though Spinoza has been a clear thread through each of the

above sections)—rather, in the sections that follow I will attempt to consolidate these theories by demonstrating how leaking refuses confinement. In concluding this review section I am calling on an ecology of the leak to demonstrate the futility of disciplinary distinction if we are to make sense of phenomena in more substantive ways than what we have previously. While I argue that ecological thinking opened up possibilities in retheorizing our relationship to materiality, it is also worth noting “historians thought ecology was the rock upon which they could build environmental history; it turned out to be a swamp” (White 1990, 1115). Modernity’s aversion to swamps has perhaps been the problem that underlies our inabilities to accept certain complexities—in turning towards the relations between things, rather than continuing to perpetuate logics of containment, perhaps new possibilities can be unearthed.

Underlying each of the sections in this review is the question of how we relate to the world. In attending to the questions of how embodiment has been imagined in modernity and how feminist thought has reified or challenged these imaginings, I am ultimately posing the question of what relations underlie our entanglements with the world? I assert that this question is a material one and thus bears ecological consequences—it presupposes an assemblage of *what* and *who* constitutes our *worlds*, as well as *how* and *if* those worlds will (or should) continue to exist. The first part of this chapter has sought to demonstrate that the divisions imposed on the body and the subject in modernity are the same as the ones imposed, more generally, on the world. Feminist conceptions of embodiment have played a significant role in challenging Cartesian dualism—an integral part of this has been reinvigorating materialisms as a means of asserting the agency of human, more-than-human and non-human actors. However, creating a foil to the modern body has, in earlier feminist instantiations, reified certain exclusionary essentialisms and normative imaginings. Feminist new materialist thought, in its assertion that

actors are co-constituted through relations, offers the possibility for recognizing agency differently than the Western ontologies built into modern structures. However, the current state of new materialist discourse has rightly been criticized in its neglect of the ways alternative materialisms have (historically and contemporarily) been conceived outside of the bounds of the modern intellectual project. Here, we are reminded, of the ways in which disciplines, in spite of their efforts to redress the violence of modern containment, continue to enact boundaries that necessitate exclusions.

An ecology of the leak requires the collapsing of Guattari's three ecologies into a singular ecology—this space is not one of indifference, but rather, one where the social, mental, and environmental are considered together. I am not asserting this ecology as one particular to the leak. Rather, I am contending that this notion of ecology can be made particularly evident in tracing the ways that leaking cuts through material, immaterial, human and non-human entanglements. An ecology of leaking decenters of the human, in order to take seriously relationships between agents. This ecology is informed by the work of many theorists—like Bennett (2010) who asks us to imagine an ontological field “in lieu of an environment that surrounds human culture, or even a cosmos that cleaves into three ecologies” (116). In the second part of this chapter, I account for the ways modernity's project of containment endures, but leaks—here, I interrogate the possibilities for bodies to contest limits and assert that bodies are never contained nor are they singular agents. While this assertion may appear to trouble notions of agency, I will use the leak as a means through which we frame agentic opportunities to contest space.

## Rematerializing Leaks

In asserting the leak as material actor, I am asserting that it can be physically traced. In tracing the leak through its forms, we can begin to imagine the ecology that unfurls through leaking. In previous chapters, I argued that the leak is particularly at home within media and communications studies and that leaks are always political agents in that they constitute connections between actors. As I gestured to in reviewing the literature above, media studies as well as politically-focused disciplines have taken up the language of ecologies as a means of speaking to the complex systems and spaces that their subject matter occupy. In explaining why they refer to their work as media ecology, Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey (2012) assert that *ecology* is perhaps the “most expressive” frame to “indicate the massive and dynamic interrelation of processes and objects, beings and things, patterns and matter” (2). Here, ecologies become a means of thinking through the entanglements of actors—they not only describe their *home* (as implied in the prefix *eco*), tracing the ecology of an actor can also allude to their form. While environmental policy, green economics, and liberal conservation discourses can often call on ecological narratives, Gerry Canavan, Lisa Klarr, and Ryan Vu (2010) assert that “any consistent form of ecological critique is thus necessarily a systematic attack on capitalist civilization as it exists, including its most and least privileged forms of everyday life” (3). As ecologies require an understanding of the structures that distribute actors in particular assemblages, the question of ecology is always a materialist endeavor. In asserting a view aligned to the aims of new materialist practice, I contend that consideration of the entanglements between actors better allows for the recognition of the ways that matter is co-constituted through relationships with other matter—this assertion is materialist in both the philosophical and explicitly Marxist sense. In tracing particular ecologies of leaking, I maintain that the discourses

of subjecthood, embodiment, materiality, and ethics cannot be considered as separate—rather, it is the entanglement of these that constitute the ecological assemblage around phenomena.

The first case through which I trace the dynamic of leaking is in the circulation of revenge porn. The assemblage of these leaked media objects includes varying embodied, and disembodied subjects, communication networks, enmeshed affects, social bodies, mediums, legislation, and ethical entanglements. Here, I consider revenge porn ecologies and how they exist as part of broader structures of marginalization and how the changing nature of their environments affect the human and non-human actors within them. I will also briefly engage with images of menstrual blood to elucidate the modulation of logics of control between leak-images and leaked-images. Here, I interrogate how capitalist logic attempts to manage flows and how leaks and their potentials can be captured and exploited. This concern extends into the second part of my final cases which questions the role of pipeline infrastructures in facilitating domination. Here, I consider the capitalist production of pipeline ecologies in order to discuss the problematic nature of conventional approaches to ecologies. This questions requires particular tending to Indigenous accounts of the divergence between colonial worldviews and the ontologies that they oppress. Specifically, this case concerns Indigenous resistance to pipeline projects such as Dakota Access. While I assert throughout this work that the contemporary moment is particularly leaky, it is important to attend to the ways the colonial project endures through projects of containment. My sampling of cases strategically illustrates the complexities of materiality in the contemporary moment—the assumed ephemerality of the digital image, the permeability of boundaries to capital and ecological disaster, the material stakes of epistemological violence, the embodied experience of disembodiment. These are all instances of

leaking, and they concern at once, questions of bodies, matter, and the broader ecologies that entangle them together.

### **Ensuring Leaking**

This section is not an in-depth account of the phenomenon of revenge pornography,<sup>132</sup> which has been explored by a wide-range of scholars from varying discourses including women's and gender studies (Sebastian 2017;), media studies (Chun and Friedland 2015; Langlois and Slane 2016; Sebastian 2017), sociology (Patella-Rey 2017), and legal studies (Franks 2015, 2016; Larkin 2014; McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton 2017). Rather, I use the case of revenge porn here to trace the way that leaking is implicated in all of the disciplines cited above. I argue that leaking concerns the intersection of the material and non-material, the embodied and the disembodied, and the virtual and the actual, as these relate to questions of mental, social, and physical ecologies (Guattari 1989). Here, I consider particularly Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland's (2015) work on leaking, along with the constraints of legal approaches in addressing the circulation of these leaked media objects. This section seeks to account for the certain dynamics that tend to underlie the leaking of revenge porn and how these leaks are situated within structures of power.

This section questions how the material body and virtual image are intertwined in ecologies of leaking. In speaking specifically of bodily fluids, Sheila Cavanaugh (2013) asserts

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132. While the use of the term "revenge pornography" is sometimes contested (*see note 18*), Hall and Hearn (2018) note the definition cited by the US National Conference of State Legislatures (2014) as follows: "the posting of nude or sexually explicit photographs or videos of people online without their consent, even if the photograph itself was taken with consent. It can follow a spurned spouse, girlfriend, or boyfriend seeking to get revenge by uploading photographs to websites, many of which are set up specifically for these kinds of photos or videos" (14).



Bodies, like pipes and genitals, leak. Orifices obscure imaginary boundaries and physically invested fantasies about impermeability. Fluids are unfaithful and promiscuous. We question and get upset about their whereabouts because they give us away and reveal others to have been where we ourselves wish to be, or, conversely, where we do not want to be. Fluids escape the body and thus resist mapping. Abject and unruly fluids upset gender. Fluids, like odors, threaten to overtake the primacy of sight in the modern optical arena, thereby obscuring body coordinates that are consolidated by the eye's exacting dissections. The 'flows' confuse body boundaries, and the disorientations are met with disgust (and sometimes desire) (433)

I argue that we can extend these assertions of the body to *images* of the body in networked flows as well—they confuse, they disorient, and they carry affective potentials with them. In suggesting that we can extend Cavanaugh's thinking on the body itself, to include the circulation of its image, I am not calling for the body's dematerialization—rather, I am suggesting that images bear material and embodied realities that complicate the imagined divides between the studies of visual and material culture or representation and embodiment. While this section will eventually address conventionally material matter (by way of menstrual leaks), I want to first consider the perhaps more figurative media-leak. As I argued in chapter 1 "Leaky Mediation", the leak is always a material actor—following Don Ihde (1991), chapter 1 asserted that the materiality of technology is often underplayed, and that leaking presupposes somewhere to leak to. The case of revenge porn opens up, again, the questions of public and private space introduced in chapter 1 and reaffirms the material nature of media leaks when considered as part of broader ecologies. Another central assertion of the first chapter of this work was that with the rise in digital media technologies, comes mounting leakiness—this idea aligns with Chun and Friedland's (2015) assertion that new media forms are especially leaky. They contend:

New media are not simply about leaks: they are leak. New media work by breaching, and thus paradoxically sustaining, the boundary between private and public: from the Internet's technical protocols to its emergence as a privately owned mass medium, from social media's privatization of surveillance to its redefinition of "friends," new media compromise the boundary between revolutionary and conventional, public and private, work and leisure, fascinating and boring, hype and reality, amateur and professional, democracy and pornography. (4)

But this compromise of boundaries, as I have been arguing throughout this work, is not merely a characteristic of contemporary information communication technologies, but rather is representative of the broader material and ideological non-fixity as we move later into modernity. It is in this regard that I want to emphasize the ways that materialities intersect with ideological narratives concerning subjecthood. In the section above, I noted how Cartesian dualism entrenched the rational self-enclosed subject into modernity, therefore reducing the feminine to the “intrinsically unpredictable, leaky and disruptive,” to use Price and Shildrick’s (1999) terms (2). This institution of male/female subjectivity against one another translates into the figuration of women as always open and in need of regulation.<sup>133</sup> Here, virtue “positions ideal female sexuality as contained, private, and invisible” (Chun and Friedland 2015, 9). This simultaneously material and social inscribing of the body has been addressed by numerous scholars (Butler 2011; Grosz 2008; Haraway 2004). While contesting the idea of an essentially gendered core, Judith Butler (2011) notes that, even if fabricated, this social-political constitution

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133. Necessary here, is an elaboration of how the modern racialization of subjecthood undercuts this process. As noted in the review section of this chapter, the foiling of the continent, rational subject, with the leaky woman, is a construction of a white subjectivity. As quoted in Chun and Friedland (2015), Cherniavsky (2006) asserts “white women’s claim to a protected interiority receives the widest cultural sanction, insofar as white women are required to embody interiority for others” (xxv). Speaking of revenge porn, Chun and Friedland argue that “anxiety over the victims of online exposure reveals the raced construction of both virtue and victim”—they note that “the most publicized revenge porn victims have been young presumed to be heterosexual white women” (13). This privacy ideal, and its policing of white women’s interiority, is historically implicated in targeted violence against black men: as Estelle Freedman (2013) contends “by the end of the [nineteenth] century, southerners were justifying lynching as a means of protecting the sexual honor of white women and calling for the disenfranchisement of black men” (93). And while black men were constructed as threat to white women’s virtue, black women’s privacy was not something considered—as asserted by McKittrick (2006) “ownership of black women during transatlantic slavery was a spatialized, gendered, often public, violence; the black female body was viewed as a naturally submissive, sexually available, public, reproductive technology” (44). Moreover, Simone Browne’s (2015) framing of the hypervisible body demonstrates the continuity of these violences into the contemporary moment.

of interiority profoundly affects subjectivity. The interiority constituted by the policing of female subjectivity is one that demands enclosure. In the context of sexuality, Chun and Friedland (2015) argue:

Both the notion of a leaky opening (slut) and of a violently penetrated interior (rape victim/ruined virgin) depend upon the promise of closure, of being sealed. This desire to contain female sexuality, to uphold the virtue of virginity, now plays out both in our orifices and our interfaces. The very logic of virtuous containment and enclosure bears the destructive threat of the leak. (9)

Whether images, desires, or fluids, the expectations of containment presuppose the threat of leaking. Here, the female-sexed<sup>134</sup> body is policed to remain closed and fetishized for being open—this section considers the tension of this dynamic with regards to the release of personal images.

Ganaele Langlois and Andrea Slane (2017) describe the term *nonconsensual pornography* as “the public release online of photos of an identified person’s sexual activity that were originally meant for exclusive viewing by an intimate partner, for purposes of revenge of course, as in the case of revenge porn, but also for hacking exploits or entertainment” (121). While nonconsensual pornography is the preferred term by some (Franks 2015, for example), I use *revenge porn* to refer to either of these nonconsensual releases, regardless of the intent of the original distributor.<sup>135</sup> The discourses that surround revenge porn—whether academic analysis,

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134. Female-sexed, here, refers to the bodies policed by sexual expectations on the basis they are perceived to be female.

135. While it is beyond the scope of the paper to flesh out this claim, I feel inclined to suggest that vengeance can be argued as an underlying intention of nonconsensual pornographic releases *regardless* of whether the content is the product of hacking, or if it is released for entertainment purposes. In this sense, I do not feel it is important to distinguish between distributor-affirmed revenge porn, and other reasons for like-releases such as personal images released for amusement. It is also worth noting that the designation of these images as “revenge porn” is problematic for certain feminist theorists who site both “revenge” and “pornography” as troubling misnomers within the term—for the trouble around “revenge” see Sebastian (2017) and Franks (2015); regarding the problems with the designation of “pornography” see Franks (2016) and Hall and Hearn (2018).

reportage, or even the descriptions and commentary that caption these releases—concern questions of insides and outsides. Matthew Hall and Jeff Hearn (2019), in their analysis of “men’s electronic texts accompanying their posting of explicit images on arguably the most popular revenge porn specific website MyEx.com”, summarize their findings as follows:

Most men in our data-set claimed the women deserved being posted because they were reported to have controlled the relationship, committed infidelity, passed on an STD, stolen money or committed sexual acts in return for money and stolen ‘his’ children, thus constructing online pornography as, in their own terms, a legitimate form of interpersonal revenge. (167)

Similarly, Langlois and Slane (2017) note the common use of “cheating” and “promiscuity” as justifications for the release of images. In these senses the divulsion of sexually explicit images of the subject is considered justified by their distributors, because the subject is already open.

There are numerous recent works that address the circulation of revenge porn from a juridical perspective. Legal review articles untangling the complexities of revenge porn, like reviews concerning other questions of lawfulness, focus on relevant precedent. Previous applications of the law are explored in order to theorize how statutes might be applied to cases where explicit content is circulated without the permission of the subject. Even when articles seek to provide avenues for redress for victims of revenge porn, legal review is merely a process of tracing continuities between insides and outsides. From the legal perspective, questions of whether revenge porn incidents constitute free speech communication, violate implicit contracts, or represent illegal infringements of privacy, represent interrogations, not of principles of ethics or justice, but rather whether stable connections can be drawn between past rulings and indictments. Though these readings of precedent may serve to incriminate the distribution of revenge porn, legal review serves as a mere tracing—a means through which boundaries between publics/privates, the just/unjust, flows/stoppage are secured. While I will make the argument that legal means are an insufficient mode of address in their inability to account for the leakiness of

the contemporary moment, the legal approach is not even sufficient in accounting for the nuances of contemporary communication technologies. Numerous reviews note the difficulty posed when explicit images result from the self-photographing of the subject (Larkin 2014). Paul Larkin, Jr. explains that “selfies”, in the legal context, trouble the notion of consent in that they are always already determined, legally speaking, as consensual. In the original version of the State of California “revenge porn law”,<sup>136</sup> victims who had themselves authored the content eventually redistributed without permission, would not have been protected by the statute. This is not to suggest that the law, legal review, and jurisprudence do not have a role to play in addressing illegitimate leaks, but rather to assert that it alone cannot be the force through which we conceptualize our responsibilities to others. If legislation cannot navigate the complexities of new media technologies, in the ways that they are always already leaky (Chun and Friedland 2015; Fuller and Goffey 2012), then how is it to respond in a world increasingly constituted through leaks? In arguing that the law’s inherent concern with continuity makes it insufficient in addressing the dynamic conditions of leakiness, I do not mean to assert it as an always fixed and unchanging burden—one year after the implementation of its revenge porn law, the State of California adapted the legislation to protect victims whose sexually-explicit selfies are distributed without their consent.<sup>137</sup> However, even these amendments to the law, and shifts in its

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136. CAL. PENAL CODE §647(j)(4) is most commonly referred to as California’s “revenge porn law”.

137. Larkin (2014) notes: “On September 30, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed an amendment to the Revenge Porn statute that expanded it to penalize the distribution of an image, rather than the taking and subsequent distribution of the image.... The result is that “selfies” would now be included within the scope of the law” (96, n. 148). Because many instances of revenge porn occur through the leaking of images taken *by* the subject, and *not* by the leaker, codifying revenge porn in terms of “the taking and subsequent distribution of the image” as opposed to solely the “distribution” of an image meant that the law was not applicable to the non-consensual sharing of images taken by the subject or someone else.

interpretation, are as much about a requirement for internal coherence as they are about changing notions of justice and being in the world with others. Though common law traditions consider the law as something to be interpreted liberally and purposively, the liberal legal tradition is a modernist structure leaking at the seams.

In chapter 1, I argued that we can imagine the birth of the information leak, as we know it today, as being tied to the moment information could first be physically possessed. I argue that the notion of the information leak is inextricably tied to conceptions of private property. Legal reviews and commentary concerning revenge porn tend to suggest the most effective and potentially successful position for a plaintiff to take would be to assert violations against private property.<sup>138</sup> I want to turn here to Nicholas Blomley's (2003) reading of property, law, and violence in order to assert again, that legal frameworks cannot hold the answer for addressing questions of leakiness, and secondly, argue that law and leaks are tied together in very material ways. Blomley notes:

Liberal law, it has been said, is concerned with the drawing and policing of boundaries... While these are partly internal to law (for example, the boundary between public and private), law itself requires the construction of a constitutive outside with reference to, and against which, it sets itself apart. And violence is integral to this construction. (123).

The politics that undercut photography, even in the case of a photo taken of oneself, and its potential circulation in public, represent just one of the many ways that “the environment of the everyday is, of course, propertied, divided into both thine and mine and more generally into public and private domains, all of which depend upon and presuppose the internalization of

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138. See, for example, Margot Talbot's (2016) profile of the “The Attorney Fighting Revenge Porn”. Here, Talbot notes “until recently, getting images removed from the Web was most often accomplished by filing a notice of copyright infringement”—she continues “Using copyright law to combat revenge porn is a bit like using tax law to go after Al Capone, but copyright is one of the only restrictions that the Internet respects”.

subtle and diverse property rules that enjoin comportment, movement, and action” (131). I argue that the demand to figure the image of oneself as property, or possession, is an act of violence. Not only does it restrict the possibility of embodied subjectivity, but reinstates the body as something to be dominated by reason, and something to be possessed. In instituting property relations onto oneself, the law demands the subject’s rereading of the self as other-than-body. As Eva Cherniavsky (2006) argues “the body that rises to the status of inalienable property is an interiorizing figure of the human subject within a capitalist formation characterized by invasive market relations, by the compulsory objectification and circulation of the subject’s proper abilities—of physical and intellectual labor” (xvii)<sup>139</sup>. Freedom, in this sense is the freedom to be the owner of one’s own body, and this is the subject to which the law applies. This is also the nature of subjectivity underlying First-Wave Feminist thought—that women have the right to possess rationality in spite of their bodies. Second-Wave Feminism operates on a similarly capitalistically-informed premise in asserting that women’s embodied labour belongs to they-themselves. Third-Wave Feminist conceptions of freedom, have evolved, in some sense, into the freedom to exploit oneself,<sup>140</sup> and with the initiation of a fourth wave via new media technologies, the freedom to exploit oneself with the use of new, networked, tools.<sup>141</sup> Rather, I

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139. While I argue that asserting the embodied subject into the modern Western frame of the interiorized self is a violence of subjecthood and statecraft—we cannot neglect the ways that the denial of interiority is also a deeply violent act. Cherniavsky continues, “slavery constitutes an absolutely modern, because absolutely deracinated, labor force, without the most minimal protections or consolations of interiority” (xviii).

140. Of course there are other Third-Wave readings of freedom, especially from feminists informed by intersectional approaches, however here, I am referring to works such as Naomi Wolf’s (1993) *Fire with Fire* which contends “women should be free to exploit or save, give or take, destroy or build, to exactly the same extent that men are” (139).

141. Here, I am using the word “exploitation” in a Marxist sense. I envision the freedom to exploit oneself, in the contemporary moment, most clearly in the example of the ways we are encouraged to embody an entrepreneurial spirit. Fourth-wave (like third, second, first), is not entirely distinct from the former movements that inform it. Ultimately, my assertion here is from

assert that making sense of leakiness provides a better way to relate to the world—one that accepts the impossibility of internal coherence. In this sense, leakiness is a lens that aligns with intersectional approaches insisting “on a critical hermeneutics that registers the copresence of sexuality, race, class, gender, and other identity differentials as particular components that exist simultaneously with each other” (Muñoz 2013, 82). Moreover, leakiness aligns particularly with intersectional approaches that address directly, a certain inevitability of facing contradictions (Gill and Walker 1992). Here, as I implied when outlining the discourses contesting the modern body, a perspective of *embodied leakiness* asserts a recognition that bodies are constituted through their messy relations with others. Our notions of ourselves are leaky too. So what does this mean for the case of revenge pornography more specifically?

Chapter 2 suggested that the image is never *just* a representation. Images result from assemblages of relationships that cannot be fully accounted for in discourses of mediation. Using Chun and Friedland’s (2015) reading of “the right to loiter” (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011), I argue for a freedom to leak. Though freedom, for the modern capitalist subject, expresses itself as a freedom to own one’s body, I argue alternatively for a freedom to leak without fearing violence. Chun and Friedland (2015) argue that the revenge porn trend particularly frames a “need to fight for the right to be vulnerable—to be in public—and not be attacked” (17). They note that in the case of revenge porn, the typical social network literacy endeavor “blames the user—her habits of leaking—for systemic vulnerabilities, glossing over the ways in which our promiscuous machines routinely work through an alleged “leaking” that undermines the

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a critique of capital—that freedom within a capitalist system is the freedom to own oneself. While there are numerous examples of feminist critiques of capital, my argument here, in relation to menstruation, is that the imbrication of technology and capital, has undone much of the critical edge established as part of Third-Wave menstruation activism (see Bobel 2010).



separation of the personal and the networked” (3).<sup>142</sup> In spite of the inescapable leakiness of new media networks, humiliating disclosures are considered “inevitable transgressions and leakages at the feet of users, in particular, sluts”—Chun and Friedland argue that “through slut-shaming, machinic and social habits are rewritten as individual habits of leaking” (7). Chun and Friedland’s analysis of the revenge pornography phenomenon highlights two typical leak-reactions. One response is to classify the revenge porn subject as either victim or slut. “Real victims” they argue “are “good,” “enclosed,” or, more disturbingly, dead girls” (3)<sup>143</sup>—on the contrary, the “slut” is represented by the “female subject who has made a habit of being sexually active and therefore always and necessarily open” (11). Another common response—though rarely distinct from the former—is to demand greater security over, and protections within, the public networks that these images circulate within. On the one hand, this demand is made *of* potential victims—an individual responsibility to protect oneself against leaks—and on the other, is a demand made on *behalf of* potential victims for better securitized spaces. In the case of the call to secure oneself, Chun and Friedland note:

The call for young women to “clean up” their online profiles suggests a desire not only for the containment of female sexuality but also for the containment of that sexuality’s spilling out, leaking, online. Leaking often finds its form in the movement or circulation of images of real-life subjects. It seems that virginity is not merely the state of a woman prior to being sexually penetrated but also the state of her online subject prior to a leak—or exposure or publicity. (16)

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142. Chun and Friedland (2015) are speaking of school assemblies, parental concerns, and the general narratives that emphasize the users’ responsibility to protect themselves online.

143. Here, they are referring to Amanda Todd, who was ceaselessly bullied after leaked topless photos of her were circulated on social media. Todd committed suicide in 2012 as a result. Chun and Friedland argue that “With Web2.0, true victims are dead victims. The real-life suicides of subjects who have been the victims of online leaks evidence this logic. As such, the language of death that predominates online—killed, destroyed, pwned, raped, and so on—reflects the politics of memory of Web 2.0” (15–16).

The other strategy—to secure the perimeter of space—only makes space “safe” in that it reserves “the public for people who are already allegedly safe in it: it removes for the sake of women both women and lower-class men” (18). For Chun and Friedland, this notion of safety “curtails women’s access to pleasure within an online public” (18). Further, as Ann Burns (2015) notes the “notion of a lack of adequate self-protection, through carelessness or through ignorance, assumes that it is possible to either know another’s intentions in advance, or know the ways in which technology can be exploited” (103). Rather than the doubled-walled enclosure of self-securitization and site-securitization, I am calling for a relational reconstitution of space in which it safe to leak freely. I am suggesting this idea in allegiance with the calls made by Chun and Friedland (2015) in their interaction with Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade’s (2011) work on public space. Here, Phadke, Khan, and Ranade argue that “women are inevitably cast in the role of potential victims to be protected and the discourse becomes not about women’s right to the city, but about risk, fear and danger” (54). Rather than a fight for privacy, Chun and Friedland (2015) assert that “we need to fight for the right to loiter in order to displace the twinned logic of ruin and vengeance” (17). This assertion takes Phadke, Khan, and Ranade’s (2011) analysis of the public space of the city and rereads it into the social network. Instead of attending to the stopping of flows, they demand we turn our attention to denaturing the threat of the leak, that rather, we “claim the right to risk” (Phadke, Khan, and Ranade 2011, 60). For Chun and Friedland (2015), this “creates mixtures and possibilities that erode boundaries and establishes spaces that do not leak because boundaries are not compromised and thus buttressed; they are fundamentally changed” (18–19). This opening up is not an eradication of difference but rather a recognition of the way difference permeates boundaries—for Chun and Friedland this requires “building new forms of interaction that cannot “leak” because they do not seek to create

imaginary bubbles of privacy between users in the first place” (19). The right to risk leaking, as I am figuring it, is a call to stop policing boundary spaces. The case of revenge porn complicates this assertion because it could seem as if right to leak implies a permissibility in breaching others’ attempts to contain—this is not the case. Rather, I am asserting that if the futility of boundaries were made sensible, the power dynamics that underlie leaking would shift. I will flesh out this argument by engaging with material realities of revenge porn below.

In a 2016 profile for *The New Yorker* on Carrie Goldberg, “a pioneer in the field of sexual privacy”,<sup>144</sup> Margaret Talbot asked the attorney her thoughts on an argument posed by “younger feminists” and “internet utopians”, one that asserted “someday disgrace would be irrelevant... If everybody’s naked pictures were available on the Internet, nobody would need to feel ashamed”. Goldberg responded stating “Well, I totally disagree with that... I think that privacy is something that has to be respected, because otherwise where’s the boundary between you and me?”. While I understand that Goldberg is simply implying that she disagrees that this scenario will occur, her response seemingly suggests that she disagrees in a future where “nobody needs to feel ashamed” as well. The assumption underlying Goldberg’s response is that we are already contained individuals, and though she is not confused by the purpose of the law—to protect, reify, distribute boundaries of enclosure and exclusion—she, as is the case with most people, fails to recognize the leakiness that always already exists between actors. The boundaries that exist between her and I now, and the ones that would exist if we turn towards leakiness, are no different. I argue that the leaking of sexually explicit images are material in three senses: firstly,

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144. More specifically, Goldberg is a litigator in private practice. Her firm’s website notes: “We are done living in a world of abuse. So we sue the \*&%\$ out of schools, tech companies, employers who tolerate it. There are many ways to get justice for our clients: money, restraining orders, exposing a predator, getting the POS thrown in jail. We do it all!” (2019).

images (regardless of content) are always implicated in materiality; the subjectivity ascribed to women as being essentially leaky is rooted in modern anxieties about physical leakiness, and it is this materially-based subjectivity that supposedly justifies the leaking of images; finally, revenge porn has real, material, consequences for the victims involved. While many theorists and commenters account for the substantial costs that subjects of revenge porn face,<sup>145</sup> the material implications I am speaking of here, are akin to Susanna Paasonen's (2011) assertions on pornography more generally. Paasonen argues:

Porn is both material and semiotic: it involves fleshy intensities, conventions of representation, media technologies, and the circuits of money, labor, and affect. Pornography—whether visual, textual, or audiovisual—routinely involves elaborate and detailed depictions of body parts, bodily motions, and bodily fluids. Through minute anatomical realism, it tries to mediate the sensory and to attach the viewing body to its affective loop: in porn, bodies move and move the bodies of those watching. (2)

And while revenge porn certainly operates through exchanges that are different from the those that underlie other forms of pornography—particularly consensually produced and distributed pornography—I argue that the ethical dimensions of these violations cannot discount the fleshy intensities that put affects into constellations of relation. But beyond materiality, revenge porn's figurative entanglements with leakiness extend further too, especially when these relations are considered in the psychosocial sense. Hall and Hearn (2019) note that there are two predominant theories on revenge:

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145. For a more explicit discussion of the consequences of revenge pornography see Uhl et al. (2018) who note that “Victims of nonconsensual pornography have been blackmailed, lost educational opportunities, been fired from their jobs, changed schools, and have been stalked and harassed following the distribution of their photos (Citron & Franks, 2014; Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, 2014). Psychological damage from victimization may include the development of depression, anxiety, and/or eating disorders (Citron & Franks, 2014). Some victims have changed their names or altered their appearance following the distribution of their photos (Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, 2014; Goode, 2013; Kopf, 2013). The nonconsensual sharing of nude photographs has been considered by some to be on the continuum of sexual violence (Powell, 2010), and some have even gone so far as to call it ‘digital sexual assault’ (Wilson, 2015) or ‘cyber-rape’ (endrevengporn.org, 2016)” (52).

First, revenge is often a ‘response to trauma and loss and is a fantasy of control’ and, second, revenge acts as a ‘safety-valve’ that protects a victim against self-destructive impulses that accompany the act of being injured or insulted’ (Berkowitz and Cornell 2005, 316). In other words, the externalisation of harm helps to provide an inner sense of restored injured pride and justice. (46)

Here, revenge itself can be thought of as a leak, a response to losing control so severe, one is compelled to release in order to restore the bounds of the self. Throughout this project I have argued that doing interdisciplinarity requires the recognition of the ways the material, ephemeral, and symbolic are co-constituted through relations. The figure of the modern, individualized, continent self is the only version of the enlightened subject society has taken seriously. This subject is tasked with shoring the boundaries of the self, and externalizing harm. In this moment, I hope the reader is recalling Molly Soda’s photo project “Should I Send This?” (2014) introduced in chapter 2—here, I cannot help but think of Soda’s images in the context of revenge pornography. In releasing the images herself, Soda externalized harm. If all that is contained is a virtual leak, if the material reality of communication technologies ensure that new media leak, if bound subjects—especially those ascribed female subjectivity<sup>146</sup>—are constantly holding themselves in, to let leak can become a radical act. But here I must clarify that to *let leak*, is not simply a dynamic whereby everyone’s naked pictures are made openly available—this is simply the imaginary asserted by Talbot’s “younger feminists” and “internet utopians” (2016). Nor is it the universalization or mass adoption of Soda’s artistic tactics. Rather, it is a call, following Chun and Friedland’s (2015) reading of Phadke, Khan, and Ranade (2011), to accommodate vulnerability. Therefore, to *let leak*, is not a demand on the subject, but an assertion that the policing of subjects’ leakiness is where the threatening nature of the leak is exacerbated. Policing leaks follows the logics outlined earlier in chapter 3, whereby control is operationalized over

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146. Here, I am using “those ascribed female subjectivity” to refer to people who have been forced into, ascribe to, or relish in female subjectivity.

boundary spaces often covertly, but also through narratives of protection. I want to briefly note here, yet another way these dynamics of privacy and safeguarding become strategies of control through a brief account of Facebook's attempts to combat the circulation of revenge porn on their platform.

In this brief account of Facebook's Non-Consensual Intimate Images (NCII) pilot program, I must note that I am not critiquing the efficacy of these tools in combatting the circulation of revenge porn.<sup>147</sup> Rather, I am highlighting how these, and like-initiatives, signify logics that underly our broader relationships to leaking. This account is materialist in two deeply imbricated senses. Firstly, it asserts technologies as the material agents of transformation (see the "Technology, Networks" section of chapter 2) that underlie, though are not fundamentally separate from, culture and society. And secondly, in the political economic sense, whereby Facebook as a corporation embodies the liberal spirit of capitalism (Weber 2003). I argue here, that Facebook's NCII pilot cannot be considered outside of a model of *digital enclosure* (Andrejevic 2007).

On April 5, 2017, Facebook announced a series of "new tools to help people when intimate images are shared on Facebook without their permission" (Davis). While the platform already had in place measures for users to report content that violated Facebook's Community Standards guidelines, the announcement noted that the platform would now "use photo-matching

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147. Facebook is working with several partner organizations to develop protocols for addressing the circulation of revenge porn on its platforms as part of its "Not Without My Consent" initiative. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to account substantively for the processes, methodologies, or implementation of these tools. As someone who has been at risk of this type of exposure, I can say some of the developed strategies feel as if they could be comforting backstops. Motivating my concerns of these initiatives here, however, are the broader relational dynamics that position tech companies, governments, and morality narratives at the boundaries between actors. For more information on the development and use of these tools see Facebook's "Safety Center" at: <https://www.facebook.com/safety/notwithoutmyconsent>

technologies to help thwart further attempts to share the image on Facebook, Messenger and Instagram” (*ibid.*). While many news outlets noted the measures as an improvement (considering tech platforms’ historically slow adoption of pragmatic solutions in addressing the spread of revenge porn over social media), what was somewhat overlooked were the implications of photo-matching technologies. In comparing newly uploaded content to users’ previously reported private images, removed content would have to be databased. This concern, became more intensely aroused on November 5, 2017, when Antigone Davis, Facebook’s Global Head of Safety, announced a pilot project where users could take the initiative of uploading their own sexually explicit photos to the site’s database of “images that depict incidents of sexual violence and intimate images shared without permission from the people pictured”.<sup>148</sup> Facebook’s database of content would not be made up of visually identical copies of the images uploaded by users. Rather, these images would be hashed, and their digital “fingerprints” (algorithmic identifiers) stored within a database analysed alongside any new content uploaded to Facebook and its affiliated platforms. Media matching prohibited material would be flagged, resulting in the possible banning of the user attempting to upload material already within the database.

While this technology could possibly help to combat the spread of certain content, I am cautious of the relation this dynamic entangles us within. Moreover, what does this pre-empting tell us about the threat of the leak? Does the same intimacy occur when we share nude images with the platform that facilitates our leakiness, as when we send them to a lover? These questions, which cannot be fleshed out fully here, are worth considering more deeply. On March

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148. This information is from Facebook’s “Community Standards” (section 8), “Sexual Exploitation of Adults: Policy Rationale”, which notes impermissible content. The full list of guidelines can be found at: [https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/sexual\\_exploitation\\_adults](https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/sexual_exploitation_adults)

15, 2019, Facebook announced they are continuing to take “a careful, research-based approach that concentrates on the victims—what they experience and how [it] can better protect them” (Iyengar and Nain). I want to explore here how this narrative of protection facilitates the platform’s *digital enclosure*. Mark Andrejevic’s (2007) assertion of *digital enclosure* refers to a “variety of strategies for privatizing, controlling, and commodifying information and intellectual property” (302). We could speculate as to whether a database of illicit-photo-fingerprints has commercial value, or how it may be utilized for “value added” purposes, but these questions are beyond the point I wish to make here. Rather, I assert that *enclosing*, in and of itself, is valuable to capital in the most general sense. This *enclosing* follows the same premise of capitalist accumulation whereby everything must be brought into the realm of the market control (Marx 1982, 2002; Marx and Engels 2010; Polanyi 2002), not to mention the strategies of containment described throughout the previous chapter. What I want to suggest here, is not that Facebook necessarily has ulterior motives, but that their strive to “to find this content more quickly and better support victims” (Davis 2019) is not contradictory to their commercial endeavors. In its attempt to combat the leak, Facebook does little to address the dynamics that underlie leaks’ existence—the NCII pilot program may restrict damage, but does not stop the leak. We are asked, as is the case with a great deal of social networks, to trust that the network is neutral and secure. However, especially in the case of Facebook, we know this is not the case—regardless, we are asked to feed new data into the network so in order for it to police itself. Facebook’s policing of itself, not to mention the policing of its users, lends itself easily to narratives of user protection. And while these endeavours may benefit users in some regards (i.e. limiting the spread of private photos), we cannot neglect the fact that capital always seeks to protect, first and foremost itself. Facebook asks its users to pre-empt their own leakiness, and insists users can



combat the threat of leaks by revealing their intimate photos with the site’s security tools. Here, our bodies are further datafied, our boundaries secured by constant algorithmic surveillance. Facebook’s anti-revenge-porn initiative may offer the possibility of shifting subject-shaming narratives, but not necessarily *away* from subjects. While previous narratives might have suggested users should “log off” to protect themselves, as Chun and Friedland note (2015), future interrogations may ask why users failed to upload their content to a photo-matching database.

I argued previously that the potential Paul Klee (1969) assigns to the act of “making visible” can, especially in a hypermediated society, be evacuated rather quickly. Though I still assert this to be the case, making visible retains its productive potential provided the limitations of visibility in the contemporary moment are acknowledged. It is here that I want to focus my thinking around “free bleeding” as both a visual and material practice, and consider the way it at once breaches certain dominant narratives while helping to maintain others. Simply, “free bleeding” describes a lack of intervention into menstrual flows. There are several historical accounts that address the material realities of menstruation prior to the mass production of feminine hygiene products and the growth of the FemCare industry.<sup>149</sup> In “Thy Righteousness is but a Menstrual Clout”, Sarah Read (2008) notes that, while well-off women in the seventeenth century used clouts of fabric or cut up rags, most women bled freely. My emphasis however is on the rather recent resurgence of free bleeding that I will account for briefly—here, I also want to consider certain images of menstruation that began to circulate around the same time. In 2012,

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149. As Bobel (2010) notes: “‘FemCare’ is the industry term for feminine care, the array of menstrual products including pads (sometimes called napkins, or, in the United Kingdom, towels), tampons, cups, and sponges” (193 n.2), this now also includes “period panties” (see note 158, below).

*VICE* magazine ran a photo series from artist Emma Arvida Byström titled “There Will Be Blood: And It Will Flow From Vaginas”. The series was shot similar to a fashion spread, and though the images sit in Byström’s fine art photography portfolio as part of collective “The Ardorous”, the *VICE* feature laid them out with captions noting the brands of clothing adorned by the models, as well as categorizing the post with the tag “fashion” (Byström, 2012).



Figure 10: Image from "There Will Be Blood" by Arvida Byström. Permission from artist.

Each image is marked by the presence of blood; absorbed into the crotch of panties, saturating a tampon, running down legs. The following year, artist Petra Collins, the founder and curator art collective “The Ardorous”, released a shirt in collaboration with, now bankrupt brand American Apparel, featuring an illustration of a masturbating hand and a bleeding vagina. Both Byström’s photo series and Collins’s shirt garnered a lot of attention and sparked numerous debates as to whether they were radical representations or simply provocative for the mere purpose of provocation.<sup>150</sup> Regardless, these works represent a marked shift in the representation of menstruation by capitalizing on an aesthetic experience usually confined to Second-Wave Feminist art by asserting it into the realm of the commercial.<sup>151</sup>

While the beginning of this decade saw to more commercial, widely spread representations of “free bleeding” in images, on shirts, and other media, the discussion of actually forgoing menstrual intervention grew into a popular conversation born, in some sense out of the /b/ boards of forum site 4chan (Alfonso 2014). Starting at the end of January 2014 a plot was crafted by a group of trolls to discredit feminism by convincing women not to utilize menstrual products. While the explicit push for free bleeding was connected back to 4chan’s “operation free bleeding” prank, and its most vocal advocates outed as straw feminists puppeted by trolls, the points in favor of free bleeding were not entirely discredited by those frustrated

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150. See, for example, articles from *Jezebel’s* “Designer of Menstruating Vagina Shirt ‘Trolled the Mainstream Media’” (Dries 2013), *Cosmopolitan’s* “Want a period t-shirt? American Apparel can sort you RIGHT out” (2013), and *The Daily Mail’s* “Has American Apparel gone too far? Shoppers attack ‘vile’ and ‘disturbing’ T-shirt showing menstruation” (Whitlocks 2013), which actually censors the illustration on Collins’s shirt by blurring out the graphic.

151. See, for example, Judy Chicago’s “Red Flag” (1971), a photolithograph of the artist removing a bloody tampon, or her work “Menstruation Bathroom” (1972) an installation part of “Womanhouse” (Chicago and Shapiro 1972). See also, “Menstruation I” (1979) and “Menstruation II” (1979), installation and performance pieces by British artist Catherine Elwes.

with the inconvenience and expense of “PAYING the patriarchy to oppress us”.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, there is particularly irony in that “operation free bleeding” was rather contiguous with the already long-existing platform of radical menstruation activism.<sup>153</sup> In 2015, Kiran Gandhi’s choice to run the London Marathon forgoing the “wad of cotton”<sup>154</sup> between her legs brought

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152. Alfonso’s (2014) article includes screenshots of the comments posted the /b/ board. Post No. 530062982 states the above as one of five reasons listed under the heading “Why should every womyn freebleed?”.

153. For an incredibly thorough account of menstruation activism see Chris Bobel’s (2010) *New Blood: Third-wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation*. While Bobel’s work provides a comprehensive account of menstruation activism up until 2010, there seems to be a shift in this activism after the mid-aughts. This separation between these movements—seemingly a pre-twenty-ten and post-twenty-ten activism—would be a fruitful site for future research, especially considering the separation’s temporal alignment with a designation of a fourth wave of feminism arising with increased social media saturation (see, for example, Munro 2013). Considering that both pre- and post-twenty-ten menstruation activism have sought to increase the visibility of menstruation, this genealogical break is particularly fascinating. Bobel’s account of Third-Wave menstruation activism pays particular attention to the significance of “zines” in the radical branch of the movement—while she does note “not all radical menstruation activists are Luddites. Some readily embrace technology and mount their own websites, in some cases as a platform to make activist materials widely available” (117), activist groups such as the Bloodsisters Project, though once present online, have disbanded since the rise of the Fourth-Wave. Though beyond the scope of this paper, future research into Fourth-Wave menstrual activism might consider the effects of media in the seeming divide between third and fourth waves of feminist practice. Moreover it might consider the seeming branching off between art-based activism and menstrual hygiene management interventions (Bobel 2018)—though both might trade, in some sense, on the notion of ‘spectacle’. Perhaps, as I might imply in this section, the break has to do with a “mainstreaming” of menstruation in recent years (Bobel 2018; Weiss Wolf 2017) that makes menstrual activism seemingly irrelevant (at least in radical sense, as was the case in with the Third-Wave). Considering Bobel’s (2010) account of the divisions between Second-Wave and Third-Wave activism arising in the late eighties and early nineteen-nineties, a media archeological account of these shifts would be fascinating. In 2006, Boble performed a content analysis on several menstrual activism zines and websites. Her conclusion posed the questions: “Are the contemporary activists self-aware of the legacies I see at work in their movement? Do they identify with the activists who preceded them? Do they know the history of their movement?” (342). It seems as if we are now at point where we can begin to find answers to those questions.

154. In an article recounting her decision, Gandhi states: “Running 26.2 miles with a wad of cotton material wedged between my legs just seemed so absurd.... You can’t tell a marathoner to clean themselves up, or to prioritise the comfort of others over theirs. On the marathon course, I could choose whether or not I wanted to participate in this status quo of shaming. I decided to just take some Midol, hope I wouldn’t cramp, bleed freely and just run” (2015).

free bleeding even further into discussions about menstruation in the mainstream media. Shayda Kafai (2016) frames Gandhi's decision as a "bold and necessarily loud way to start the conversation. She removed menstruation and blood from the discourse of sanitation and secrecy and demanded that we look, that we consider, that we talk" (3-4). The commotion surrounding Gandhi's choice called back to a controversy earlier that same year when poet Rupi Kaur posted an image of her blood-stained pants on Instagram<sup>155</sup>—the photo's subsequent removal by the platform for failing to comply with the community guidelines sparked a wide debate.<sup>156</sup>

Though arguable as to whether their use constitutes bleeding "freely", the use of period panties are often considered to be part of the free bleeding movement.<sup>157</sup> On the last day of Transgender Awareness week in 2014, popular period panty brand THINX, publicized that it was changing its slogan from "for women with periods" to "for people with periods". The company's announcement noted "we are here to say that bleeding does not make you female, it makes you human" (THINX 2014). On the following day the company launched a major campaign with trans model Sawyer DeVuyst to promote their 'boyshorts' underwear as "FTM period briefs". Several major news outlets ran CEO (or, self-referred SHE-E-O) Miki Agrawal's

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155. Kaur's personal website notes: "'period.' is a photo series developed by rupi for a visual rhetoric course in her final year at university. The goal was to challenge a taboo, tell a story without the use of words" (Kaur).

156. The removal notice, which Kaur posted to her account stated "@rupikaur\_ We removed your post because it doesn't follow our Community Guidelines. Please read our Community Guidelines to learn what kinds of posts are allowed and how you can help keep Instagram safe", Kaur captioned the post with the following: "Help keep @instagram safe from periods 🩸 Their patriarchy is leaking. Their misogyny is showing. We won't be censored. you can view the full photo set Instagram finds abusive and unsafe at rupikaur.com" (Kaur 2015b).

157. While period panties, in vernacular exchanges, have long connoted, simply, underwear worn while menstruating, the term now tends to refer to the recent surge in underwear marketed as an alternative to pads, tampons, and other "hygiene" products. These recently designed garments absorb blood allowing the wearer to forego other means of intervention. For articles noting the inclusion of period panties into the free bleeding movement, see Woods (2018) and Miller (2019).

mission statement to “reclaim the anxiety and shame surrounding your period, and to aim-fire at the patriarchy with our humorous, cheeky, and infectious feminist voice”.<sup>158</sup> THINX’s attempt for inclusion struck the interest of gender queer activist/model Tyler Ford, who not long after the brand’s slogan adaptation sought to become involved with the company. However, when Miki Agrawal stepped down from the company after a slate of accusations about its working environment,<sup>159</sup> Ford tweeted about their experience at THINX, which involved an interrogation of their menstruating status as a non-binary person and other trans-phobic encounters.<sup>160</sup> Ford’s response was linked (literally, as it was hyperlinked) to an article on *Vox* declaring “THINX promised a feminist utopia to everyone but its employees” (George-Parkin 2017). There are two questions I want to pose here around leak imagery and the imagery of corporate menstruation activism—Firstly, how radical is free bleeding when only certain bodies are recognized as leaky, and only safe for some to actually do so? And secondly what possibilities are foreclosed upon when the leak becomes integrated within flows of capital, and thus the power dynamic underlying the distribution of the sensible, in Rancièrian terms (2006)?

This is not to say that works that make menstruation more visible by way of imaging leaks are absent of potential, but rather to assert that they are not enough. Further, marketing and branding endeavors that trade in disrupting the stigma around periods are exemplary of the ways capitalism captures the leak. In the foreword to *New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and the*

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158. See, for example: *Adweek* (Monllos 2016); *Bustle* (Wiess 2016); and *Refinery29* (Truong 2016).

159. For details on the accusations made against Agarwal (and the company work environment more generally), see Malone (2017) and Merlan (2017).

160. For example, Ford recounts “they asked, “so, do you like, get your period?” (@tywrent Mar. 14, 2017, 4:56 PM), and later notes: “the script we were given for thinx’s intersectionality-themed NY fashion week show is literally 2 trans folks harassing each other on stage” (@tywrent Mar. 14 2017, 5:44 PM). Ford’s account of their experience with THINX spans dozens of tweets from 4:20 PM–6:52 PM (@tywrent Mar. 14, 2017).

*Politics of Menstruation*, Judith Lorber (2010) notes that “while it is true that Third-Wave Feminism is inclusive enough to make room for menstrual activism, this little-known movement has a lot of work to do before it becomes a formidable impetus for social change” (xiii). Here, I assert that Lorber’s worries should extend into, and perhaps would be further exacerbated by the social media momentum of a fourth “wave”. While free bleeding and imaging leaks provide an opportunity to disrupt what Sophie Laws (1990) calls menstrual etiquette—an important task in calling on a freedom of leakiness—it can reterritorialize the politics that underlie gender construction. I argue that the late modern moment is particularly difficult to grasp, and while media technologies certainly bear radical potentials, the speed and intensity through which they operate, demand for the smoothing out of complexities—hypermediated representations can risk reducing their subject to its most simple component parts. The complexities I am referring to here, perhaps unsurprisingly, are the tensions that arise between the self, embodiment, and gender in the late modern moment. While the spiritual menstruation activism of the second and third waves, reinscribed the natural and essentialist assertions of woman as mother, Third-Wave Feminist radical menstruation activism found the material reality of menarche as a means to mobilize difference. Chris Bobel (2010) asserts the radical menstruation activism built a platform where “‘woman’ is deessentialized but bodies are valorized. Radically, these bodies are neither necessarily female nor necessarily woman identified” (xiii). An example noted by Bobel was the shift towards framing “menstruators” as the stakeholders of menstruation activism—she notes:

Through a campaign of transinclusion, [radical menstruation activists] make gender trouble by “queering” menstruation when they refer not to women who menstruate but to “menstruators.” This strategic language serves a pedagogical function: it models a concrete dismantling of the gendered social order and demonstrates that when the body is detached from identity, feminism does not wither away; rather, we can mobilize around the experiential. (156)

In this sense, in spite of a “sexed dimension of menstruation,” through certain forms of praxis radical menstruation activists were able to assert menses as “a bodily process that exists not independently of, but in relationship to, the gendered body” without relying on the exclusionary language of certain constructions of gender identity. Through the invisibility of menstruation as a process that sits “uneasily” in both private and public spheres, Bobel notes that the forced detachment of the publicly permissible female-subject from her body, provided an experiential basis where certain discourses of the third wave could tend, more responsibly, to the notion that “detachment from one’s body” is simultaneously an ascribed and material experience “common to countless people” (27). Here, mensuration provided a means whereby feminist narratives could divorce themselves from essentialist and oppressive constructions, without neglecting the materiality of embodiment. However, I argue that the endeavor of figuring the complex assemblage of the materially leaky body against the structure of gender has been compromised by Fourth-Wave corporate menstruation activism. In authoring a piece for *Medium* after leaving THINX, Miki Agarwal (2017) notes that her brand was “at the forefront of the period feminism movement which truly is eliminating shame in the period space”. While intersectionality continues to be entrenched within, and challenged by, strands of feminist theory and practice into what is now being asserted as a media-savvy fourth wave—I assert radical theory and praxis need to continually attend to the intersection of the mental, social, and physical ecologies (Guattari 1989). When certain forms of mediation, in their deep entanglement with capital, become the inheritor-networks of critical discourse, we must refrain from collapsing complex conversations of embodiment, identity, and subjectivity into “the period space”.

In my account here, THINX becomes a particularly apt example of the ways that capitalism can capture the leak. Its marketing narratives operate on the radicalness of boundary



breaking but the Corporation (and the capitalist body, more generally) is self-sealing—breaches are rare, and when they happen, they can stream back into the same flows they departed from. The plasticity of capital to intern its threats into modes of accumulation<sup>161</sup> is a reterritorialization that drains the leak’s potential. In this sense, I argue that leak-images and free bleeding represent moments of possibility, but risk (as with anything) being reterritorialized in their circulation through media. In these moments of release—images of menstrual blood and works such as Molly Soda’s self-leaked nudes—are saturated with possibilities that can be quickly foreclosed upon. The enclosure of feminine subjectivity,<sup>162</sup> simultaneously contained and leaky, represents both opportunity and threat. There are real dangers in suggesting revenge porn and leaked nudes constitute opportunity—this is an assertion I make with restraint. Asserting possibility here however, is not to deny the violence of these releases faced by the subject in the contemporary moment, but rather to suggest there is a deep resonance between the examples of free bleeding and leaked nudes—living in a world of leaks calls for a letting go. And while my use of these examples here may seem to imply that I am calling for a “letting go” of *your* images and *your* body, I am rather calling for something broader—a wider letting go of representation paired with

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161. Here, I am thinking about how the modes of resistance against the FemCare industry utilized by Third-Wave radical menstruation activists end up becoming corporatized into certain marketing narratives, branding, and commodities. Washable, reusable menstrual pads (popular in the Third-Wave DIY and punk-activist circles), become THINX, a start-up company paying employees less than a living wage; the free bleeding tactics of the Red Brigade become fashion spreads; radical zines calling to AX-TAMPAX become websites like [axthepinktax.com](https://axthepinktax.com), a campaign by European Wax Centres to counter the 7% extra that women pay for basic goods and, therefore, raise awareness for women to “claim your worth” (<https://axthepinktax.com/>). Or moreover (as I recently became aware of through a targeted Instagram ad), Tampax became the first of the large FemCare brands to release a menstrual cup, stating “the Tampax Cup is our most recent innovation to enter a small, but fast-growing segment to reach, connect, and delight millennials” (Gonsalves 2018).

162. And I believe this can extend to any subjectivity enclosed and policed, which in reality is the premise of subjecthood in general.

a turn to the material. This argument against representation will be fleshed out in the conclusion of this work. To simplify my argument for the time being, I want to make the distinction between personal and private property. While the notion of the leak, in its contestation of insides and outsides, rejects the notion of the private, it does not compromise the personal. We should have agency over our images and our body—to release what we wish and retain ourselves as, and when, we desire. Because private property necessitates an impermeable boundary of space, the leak is always a threat. To recognize, and to make sense of a freedom to leak, is rather a call for personal space. We should not fear the loss of our lives—either, literally, or as we know them—if our images leak out. This is not to suggest that responsibility lies within the subject, nor is it a condemnation of continence (the choice to withhold). The continuous reification of liberal Enlightenment ideas of the private need to be reframed in terms of harm and the extraction of value. I am asserting that we are dealing with the conditions of overwhelming and unpredictable leakiness (whether through media, identity, failing institutions, and so on)—but this is not to take responsibility away from those coopting the leak as means of deepening power. These violations of personal space, or the unilateral opening of it to others, are always violent breeches—but when institutions stop policing our boundaries, there are greater possibilities for ethical encounters in that we can better navigate the sites where our frontiers come up alongside those of the other. If revenge is a leak itself, a safety-release of sorts (Hall and Hearn 2018, 46), through which one can maintain an integrity of self, what would dissipating that pressure by other means look like? Or moreover, would there even be pressure if boundaries were not rigid, if they expanded with, bounced off of, or diffused into the other? This is ultimately what underlies Chun and Friedland's (2015) call for the freedom to be vulnerable.

## **Pipeline Ecologies**

April 22, 2010 saw the culmination of many leaks into a seemingly singular catastrophe. The explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oilrig in the Gulf of Mexico resulted in an oil leak that flowed for eighty-seven days. The cause of the disaster, in the most general sense, was due to the failing of the well's blowout preventer (BOP), resulting in the leakage of nearly five million barrels of oil into the gulf before the line was capped. While citing a BOP malfunction is not an inaccurate cause of the Gulf disaster, it is an overly simplistic account. In the years following the incident, testimony, corporate reporting, government commissions, independent federal agency reports and leaked confidential documents demonstrated how the accident was the result of a complex assemblage of material and organizational failures. Through the Gulf oil spill we became witness to dynamics that can often elude us—the ecological toll of capitalism, the banality of disaster in hypermodernity, the unaccountability of private enterprise. Deepwater Horizon is just one catastrophe in a long line through which we can trace certain flows. While sprung leaks may evidence poorly functioning systems, they are often down played as externalities that are part of the necessary costs of doing business. However, they can also call into question entire networks of pipelines, flows, and currents. It is in this sense that I want us to consider the broader assemblage of the leak as a material actor, particularly sensible in times of environmental crises. Following Nancy Tuana's (2008) concept of "viscous porosity" in speaking of Hurricane Katrina and Mark Simpson's (2017) "lubricity"—the "mood requisite" of neoliberal petroculture—this section addresses how the ecological moment becomes a potent site for new materialist thinking especially as we face increasingly leaky times. However, in having called on Indigenous critiques of this mode of thought in the review section of this chapter, I want to turn to modes of pipeline resistance to assert possibilities beyond reliance on structures

of containment. Here, I look at the ongoing resistance against infrastructure projects like Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), as well as the maintained conditions of disrepair that affect marginalized peoples the most. Following Anne Spice's (2018) framing of "invasive infrastructures", I consider how infrastructural consequences can mobilize new modes of resistance. Speaking to these forms of resistance serves to place emphasis for the real stakes of materialist thinking.

Much of the literature referred to in this coming section operationalizes the language of 'the Anthropocene' to designate humanity's place within the contemporary moment. First theorized by Paul Crutzen in 2002, the concept of the Anthropocene is an assertion that humans have induced a distinct historical period in which the consequences of human-action have irreversibly affected the condition of the earth. Crutzen (2002) proposes that this period "could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane"—he notes that "this date also happens to coincide with James Watt's design of the steam engine in 1784" (23). This proposed chronology, as Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg (2014) note, has "stuck" with the theorists of the Anthropocene, who tend to assert the steam engine as having "unlocked the potentials of fossil energy and thereby catapulted the human species to full-spectrum dominance" (63). The adoption of the term into critical humanities scholarship tends to reflect the disposition that "now that humanity is recognized as a geological force, the story goes, we must reconceptualize not only the relations between natural and social sciences but also history, modernity and the very idea of the human" (63). And while I argued earlier that the ecological thinking of the 1960s set a particular interdisciplinarity in motion, the designation of the Anthropocene, with its emphasis on the relations between the human and the

non-human, has only furthered the influence of the ecological in framing new materialist thinking. Though the framework of the Anthropocene allows for reconceptualization of nature and culture that recognizes the deep imbrication of the two, Malm and Hornborg caution “that the physical mixing of nature and society does not warrant the abandonment of their *analytical* distinction” (62-63). This assertion echoes Zoe Todd’s (2015) concerns about collapsing human action and environmental devastation into a singular happenstance—Todd notes that current framing of the Anthropocene “erases the differential histories and relationships that have led to current environmental crises” (250). Here, Todd contends that decolonial perspectives necessitate the rejection of “the Anthropocene as a teleological fact implicating all humans as equally culpable for the current socio-economic, ecological, and political state of the world” (252). Rather, as Malm and Hornborg (2014) note, “capitalists in a small corner of the Western world invested in steam, laying the foundation stone for the fossil economy”—this “affluence of high-tech modernity cannot possibly be universalized” onto a generalized humankind as implied in some discourses utilizing the frame of the Anthropocene (64). While attending to the impact of social, political and economic consequences on nature—a welcomed contribution of the Anthropocene—the framing of it as a fixed historical period implies a certain inevitability of the current condition of climate change. Malm and Hornborg contend that in “following climate science out of nature, we should dare to probe the depths of social history: not relapse into the false certitude of another natural inevitability” (66). Moreover, framing our ecological reality as one caused by a generalized humankind, affecting uniformly that same humankind’s being-in-the-world, disregards the structural power imbalance of late capitalism.

In speaking of the way certain discourses tend to conceive of a humanity as a generalized stakeholder of climate change, Malm and Hornborg (2014) argue that Anthropocene-

catastrophizing “blatantly overlooks the realities of differentiated vulnerability on all scales of human society” (66). They explain:

Witness Katrina in black and white neighborhoods of New Orleans, or Sandy in Haiti and Manhattan, or sea level rise in Bangladesh and the Netherlands, or practically any other impact, direct or indirect, of climate change. For the foreseeable future—indeed, as long as there are human societies on Earth—there *will* be lifeboats for the rich and privileged. If climate change represents a form of apocalypse, it is not universal, but uneven and combined: the species is as much an abstraction at the end of the line as at the source. (66-67)

This difference is something Nancy Tuana (2008) attempts to attend to in her reading of Hurricane Katrina through what she frames as a “viscous porosity” between nature and culture. Rather than abandoning distinction between the two, as Malm and Hornborg (2014) discourage, Tuana (2008) proposes that the space between nature and culture is porous. In recognizing this, Tuana asserts that tending to environmental disaster must account for “biological aspects of phenomena without importing the mistaken notion that this biological component exists somehow independent of, or prior to, cultures and environments” (210). In recounting the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans, Tuana proclaims,

Look at Katrina. Katrina is a natural phenomenon that is what it is in part because of human social structures and practices. Seeing through the eye of Katrina reveals no hard-and-fast divide between natural and social; rather, they are seamlessly swept together in its counter-clockwise rotation. Katrina came into being because of a concatenation of phenomena—low pressure areas, warm ocean waters, and perhaps swirling in that classic cyclone pattern are the phenomena of deforestation and industrialization. (192)

She continues:

Does it make sense to say that the warmer water or Katrina’s power were socially produced, rendering Katrina a non-natural phenomenon? No, but the problem is with the question. We cannot sift through and separate what is “natural” from what is “human-induced,” and the problem here is not simply epistemic. (192)

In suggesting that the natural and social cannot be separated, Tuana is not asserting that we cannot make a distinction between the two—rather, her point is “there is no sharp ontological divide” between them (193). Following the sentiment echoed in Malm and Hornborg (2014),

Tuana (2008) recognizes that without the acknowledgment of human impacts, we would be foreclosing on possibilities for redress. Asserting the imbrication of the natural and social in contending with the effects of Katrina, Tuana argues, “does not mean that we cannot attempt to determine the extent to which human factors increased the intensity of a hurricane or some other weather-related phenomena”—she continues, “indeed, issues of distributive justice may require that such a distinction be made” (193). In this sense, Tuana asserts a framework of *viscous porosity* in thinking through the relationship between natural and social phenomena. As I have noted throughout this work, many scholars have found resonance in thinking through the late modern condition as one of fluidity, however Tuana asserts the *viscous* against this very notion—rather, “*viscosity* is neither fluid nor solid, but intermediate between them”. Framed alongside this viscosity, Tuana asserts:

Attention to the porosity of interactions helps to undermine the notion that distinctions, as important as they might be in particular contexts, signify a natural or unchanging boundary, a natural kind. At the same time, “viscosity” retains an emphasis on resistance to changing form, thereby a more helpful image than “fluidity,” which is too likely to promote a notion of open possibilities and to overlook sites of resistance and opposition or attention to the complex ways in which material agency is often involved in interactions, including, but not limited to, human agency. (194)

Tuana’s notion of *viscous porosity* is a recognition of the deep entanglements between the “natural” aspects of environmental disasters, and the human relations that ensure their uneven effects. In the case of Katrina this disparity was evident in the particularly disastrous effects of the hurricane on the lives of black and poor folks in New Orleans. Tuana frames this *viscous porosity* through several layers material-semiotic entanglements: the transformation of the marshland over thousands of years of habitation; the later settling of the site by Europeans; natural levees, technologically engineered levees, failed levees; superfund waste sites and petroleum plants; cancer rates and poverty; plastic and flesh. Through Katrina, Tuana reasserts the potential of an interactionist ontology that can “serve as witness to the materiality of the

social and the agency of the natural” (210). The question remains however, is what to do once we have stood witness? What does it mean to call for the urgent embracing of “an ontology that rematerializes the social and takes seriously the agency of the natural” for a moment that has already happened (188)? I argue here, that the assertion of necessity for new ontological networks of being (e.g., through new materialisms), must turn towards pragmatic questions of ethics and responsibility. This criticism will be addressed more directly in the final chapter, for now I want to explore how we may read Tuana’s *viscous porosity* along with Mark Simpson’s (2017) framing of the logic of *lubricity* in neoliberal petroculture.

In speaking of the imbrication of the material and the ideological, Timothy Mitchell (2011) asserts that the making of democracy was facilitated through certain societies’ shift towards fossil fuels. Mitchell’s premise is essentially a historical materialist one: as sources of energy underlie each productive mode, they form the material base for the ideological superstructure—he asserts:

Political possibilities were opened up or narrowed down by different ways of organising the flow and concentration of energy, and these possibilities were enhanced or limited by arrangements of people, finance, expertise and violence that were assembled in relationship to the distribution and control of energy. (8)

According to this account, the material characteristics of coal versus liquid and gas fossil fuels come to be significant factors in the ways capital, labour, and resources are managed and arranged together:

As the carbon occurs in liquid form, the work of transporting energy could be done with less human labour. Pumping stations and pipelines could replace railways as means of transporting energy from the site of production to the places where it was used or shipped abroad. These methods of transport did not require teams of humans to accompany the fuel on its journey, to load and unload it at each junction, or to continuously operate engines, switches and signals. In fact, oil pipelines were invented as a means of reducing the ability of humans to interrupt the flow of energy. (26)



In spite of the reduced requirement for sustained physical labour, the complex processes through which fossil fuels are extracted, transported, and refined tend to be rendered “smooth” (Simpson 2017). This smoothing of oil and gas exploration and extraction is a necessary means for protecting the political will to endure the consequences of fossil fuel reliance. Simpson notes that petrocultures install “smoothness as cultural common sense, promoting the fantasy of a frictionless world contingent on the continued, intensifying use of petrocarbons from underexploited reserves in North America” (289). This promotion of smoothness, Simpson argues, is a process of *lubricity*—here, the endeavor for oil gets represented through the qualities of the product itself: smooth, liquid, frictionless. *Lubricity* is the picture painted for us by industry, one of a “contemporary fantasy world we inhabit, one of smooth flows of people, resources, and capital that demands intensified use of petrocarbons to keep everything moving” (Wilson, Carlson, and Szeman 2017, 9). Simpson (2017) asserts that this narrative of *lubricity* however, can be challenged through the introduction of friction—the placing of emphasis on the ways these processes are not at all smooth, but rather the ways oil will always be a very dirty business. This task requires recognition of the affective appeal that smoothness has, and thus necessitates employing friction both literally and aesthetically—Simpson notes:

The force of such mapping is at once conceptual and affective, serving to render key points of material friction so as to mobilize key modes of affective friction. For the valence of friction in supplying the necessary texture and requisite mood of a system primed to thrive on the differentials between the smooth and the rough likewise entails that system’s vulnerability. Can picturing or performing friction begin to make friction’s political potential—its militant counter-mood—proliferate? (309)

Simpson asserts that “critical and activist aesthetics” can “orient us toward the political demands.... far more convincingly than ethical oil’s lubricating fantasies ever could” (309).<sup>163</sup>

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163. The concept of ethical oil, asserted most intently in Ezra Levant’s (2010) *Ethical Oil: the Case for Canada’s Oil Sands*, contends that oil extracted and refined in a Western liberal democracy is inherently less problematic than oil imported from countries like Saudi Arabia,

While I do not disagree that activist aesthetics can motivate dissent, Simpson himself employs a less than emancipatory reading of this mode—one that merely “orients us towards” political demands “more convincingly” than corporate smoothness does. In this sense, performing friction cannot be considered sufficient resistance. While the conclusion of this project will explore the aesthetic possibilities that leakiness affords, I want to pose the question here of how, in spite of attempts to stir friction, the quality of *lubricity* remains considerably effective in aiding capital and corporations to slip through the cracks in terms of accountability.

What are the limitations of friction in countering capitalist *lubricity*? While the material characteristics of certain agents might allow for them to move effortlessly through space, *lubricity* needs to be understood, not only in terms of the characteristics of a subject/substance, but as a relation between an actor and the systems in which it moves. It is not just that corporations are smooth, but that the structure of the system allows for their smooth movement in spite of friction. Following the arguments I made in chapter 1, my skepticism is that Simpson is essentially calling for better communication. Friction, as a mediating force, sits *between* actors and systems. This is not to diminish the role of art in activating certain publics, but if Simpson’s assertion is that *friction* has the potential to undo *lubricity*, we must bear in mind that this does not necessarily undo material conditions themselves. In this sense *lubricity* is merely what makes oil narratives easy to swallow, but “performing friction” does stop the system from force-feeding the material realities of petrocultures onto the world. While friction may provide for a more palpable experience, it does not undo the relation. Resistance requires particular attentions to the adaptive natures of invasive systems and logics. Amanda Boetzkes (2017) asserts it is the

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Libya, Nigeria and Venezuela. This premise also formed a series of marketing campaigns promoting oil from the Canadian tar sands.

*plasticity* of these systems and agents that perhaps makes them so enduring. Plasticity, she suggests, “is precisely the condition that ensures the robustness of the oil industry: what spurs its continual reinvention while pre-empting critical purchase. Plasticity is therefore not simply a material substance that indexes the structure of the industry. Rather, it is a mobile, responsive, and all-encompassing apparatus that orients perception” (222). Here, Boetzkes raises concerns about the opportunities afforded through visibility—“visibility,” she contends, “is a moot point, for there is nothing to hide”. Boetzkes’s criticism of the tactics of making visible are predicated on the concerns, raised more generally in chapter 1 regarding publics—she asserts that the issue “is not simply about the availability of information but, rather, the terms by which the public is capable of interpreting and responding to what it sees” (223). Here, we are cast back into the muddy waters of the supposed visual/material divide (Mitchell 1986, 1994; Mirzeoff 2009, 2011).

The adaptability of complex systems of power is greatly attributable to their infrastructures. The perversity of power dynamics is that they exist through diffuse operations that underlie the functioning of broader structures—here control is something that can be enacted both through, and upon, infrastructures. Attempts to objectively describe what constitutes infrastructure, nearly always result in positive impressions. Considering the deep imbrication of everyday life with infrastructural systems, they almost always impress *necessity*. Brian Larkin (2013) asserts,

Infrastructures are built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. As physical forms they shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown. They comprise the architecture for circulation, literally providing the undergirding of modern society and they generate the ambient environment of everyday life. (328)

And while this outlining of the role of infrastructures is true to their function, only deeper investigation makes evident the duplicitous nature of these systems. To these ends, Deborah Cowen (2017) notes “when they work, infrastructures bring us food, water, power, resources, consumer goods, information, security, and connections to loved ones. But the infrastructures that distribute the necessities of life are themselves unevenly distributed, and they can inhibit as well as enable connection”. In spite the possibilities for connections opened up by infrastructures, Cowen contends that they are also technologies of “disconnection, containment, and dispossession”. In asserting that the modern project is one of containment, it is necessary to consider the role that infrastructure plays in facilitating that goal. As a means for enabling inclusion and exclusion, infrastructure has been a convenient tool of nation building, colonial expansion, and warfare (Cowen 2014; Graham 2007; Gregory 2015). While the logistical and technological possibilities facilitated through infrastructure projects allow for these actions to take place beyond national limits, the violence of infrastructure projects are not always enacted abroad. Anne Spice (2018) asserts that “material infrastructures such as the buildings, roads, pipes, wires, and cables that make up cities are built alongside and on top of Indigenous sovereignties” (46). In this sense, Spice frames infrastructures as “invasive”—contending that:

In crucial ways, the concept of modern infrastructure elides the supposedly “nonmodern” assemblages of Indigenous peoples that were transformed into settler property and infrastructure. Settlers acquired their “modernity” as infrastructures facilitated dispossession while disavowing their roots in Indigenous organizations of space. If settler colonialism is a structure that “destroys to replace” (Wolfe 2006), then transportation infrastructures are themselves settler colonial technologies of invasion. (45)

While the rhetorical flourish framed through *viscous porosity* and *lubricity* can be theoretically potent, they are states against which material violence can be wielded. Spice asserts that “settler colonialism preys on [Indigenous] porosity and vulnerability to toxicity; it wears on our health and bodies while chemically altering our atmospheres (50). The slickness of corporate oil

narratives cannot be separated from the petroleum products that contaminate waterways—as Phyllis Young declared to Energy Transfer Partners, the company in charge of the Dakota Access Pipeline, at their first meeting with the Standing Rock Sioux (Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council 2014): “How do you separate it? How are you going to separate the oil from the water when it's contaminated? How are you going to do that? Only the creator can do that. Maybe in your high technology you think you can” (36). I want to move here to a discussion around the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the active resistance of the Standing Rock Sioux in order to emphasize the material realities of leakiness.

Four days after his inauguration as President of the United States of America, Donald Trump issued a Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of the Army to “review and approve in an expedited manner, to the extent permitted by law and as warranted, and with such conditions as are necessary or appropriate.... [the] approvals to construct and operate the DAPL”.<sup>164</sup> This Executive Action was signed in addition to an order “to streamline and expedite, in a manner consistent with law, environmental reviews and approvals for all infrastructure projects, especially projects that are a high priority for the Nation, such as improving the U.S. electric grid and telecommunications systems and repairing and upgrading critical port facilities, airports, pipelines, bridges, and highways”.<sup>165</sup> This section considers the pipeline in both a general and specific sense. Here, I consider the *lubricity* of pipeline politics from the standpoint of capital and the colonial violence of resource development. I take President Trump’s near-simultaneous “signing off” on both the Keystone XL and DAPL projects as an indication that, from the point of view of power, all pipelines are the same, or rather that it is indifferent to any

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164. Presidential Memorandum, 82 Fed. Reg. 8661 (January 24, 2017)

165. Exec. Order No. 13,766, 82 Fed. Reg. 8657 (January 24, 2017)

non-economic specificities that may exist—here, I illustrate how pipelines function in service of the state. And while I continue with the language of *lubricity* posed by Simpson (2017), I will argue that leaks represent both a continuation, and challenging of, the seemingly smooth, but inevitably striated space that power operates within (Deleuze 1992; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 2009). This section concludes with the resistance of the Standing Rock Sioux in order to demonstrate how leakiness can form a call to action.

The Great Sioux Nation has been the victim of numerous infrastructure projects on their treaty land since European settlement. The Pick-Sloan Dam project, approved in 1944, flooded the more than 200,000 acres of Sioux land for the purposes of navigation, power project development, and flood control.<sup>166</sup> The organization of skilled engineers in service of the project of confederation predates the United States itself—the official establishment of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, around the time of the Louisiana Purchase, was an integral part settling the Midwest. Here, I pose the question of how technological management of water flows becomes deeply implicated with exercises of power. With contemporary concerns around climate change, resource depletion, and environmental migration, the political nature of water is being increasingly emphasized across disciplines (Barlow and Clark 2002; Gonzalez and Yanes 2015; Hustrup and Rubow 2014; Shiva 2002)—however, my intent here, is to trace the ways water management has always been implicated in the modern (colonial) project and is always already political. While it is beyond the scope of my project to provide a full history of the Missouri watershed and the Bakken formation, I trace the way leakiness is at once exploited through

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166. It is important to note that purposes of navigation include commerce—the project facilitated the movement of “major commodities transported on the Missouri” including “agricultural products, chemicals, petroleum products, and manufactured goods” (10). See The Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation “Overview of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program” (n.d.) for more details.

resources and enacted upon Indigenous peoples. The literal cross-over between toxic resources and life-affirming waterways on native land, not only demonstrates the continuing violence against Indigenous peoples, but also implicates networks of connected vulnerabilities through which modes of resistance can propagate.

I introduced this section speaking of the Deepwater Horizon spill because of its visibility. Not only could the public watch the coverage of the fire burning for more than an entire day, the feed of the gushing well online, the oil accumulating on 1300 miles of the Gulf's shoreline, map projections of the plume's movement during the immediate days and months following the disaster, but Deepwater Horizon continues, nearly ten years later, to be a contemporarily mediated, multi-modal leak.<sup>167</sup> Mediation bears endless possibilities, but as I have been arguing throughout this work, mediated encounters are at greater risk for being reterritorialized. Here, I attend to the Standing Rock Sioux's focus on the inevitable future leak to postulate on modernity's incapacity to tend substantively to the question of materiality. From the first moment that the plan for DAPL was made public, the Standing Rock Sioux knew it would leak. While I have asserted a Virilian *accidentology* throughout this work (insisting that in constructing pipelines, we construct leaks), the colonial project's propensity for leakiness is not merely a by-product of its attempt to contain. The conditions of settler colonialism have been maintained through active violence, systematic disrepair, and technocratic delinquency—whether we look at history or the future, the leak is a guarantee.<sup>168</sup> On September 30, 2014,

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167. In 2016, Summit Pictures released a major motion picture, "Deep Water Horizon". For artworks addressing the BP Gulf Oil Spill see, for example: The Bernadette Corporation "The Earth's Tarry Dreams of Insurrection Against the Sun" (2010); Brenda Longfellow's "OFFSHORE" (2012).

168. A report completed for U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration notes that there "have been 201 major incidents (in an HCA or with volumes over 1,000 gallons) related to liquid leaks in the U.S. over the last ten years [2002–

representatives from the Dakota Access project met with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council. Here, I want to focus on the statement by Phyllis Young, Tribal Council member-at-large, representing the entire reservation (Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council 2014). Leading up to Young's statement, Avis Little Eagle provides important context noting,

They all leak. No matter what, every oil pipeline leaks.... We're really worried about it being contaminated for us here now, that use it now, and our future generations. It's a great fear that we have. They all leak, no matter what. It's going to happen, and it's going to ruin that water that we consume and that future generations are going to consume. (31-32)

Below is an excerpt from Young's statement:

In 15 Statutes, 635 we are also keepers of the Missouri River to the east bank. To the east bank. That's statutory. And the Army Corps of Engineers, in all of their underhandedness and their control they think they have of this river, is our territory. You mention nothing about the water. You don't want to infringe on native lands, but our water is our single last property that we have for our people. And water is life: Mni Wiconi.

You as a human being cannot drink oil. You need the water to survive. Seventy-five percent of our body is water. We believe in the natural systems that we have. We have fought for that. We have sacrificed for it. And we're still waiting for the compensation for the building of the dams. We are still owed, on the construction of those dams, \$339 million. That's probably a drop in the bucket for your oil company. We're still owed for the actual revenue that comes off of it.

We are owners of 13 percent of the hydropower on that river. How do you separate it? How are you going to separate the oil from the water when it's contaminated? How are you going to do that? Only the creator can do that. Maybe in your high technology you think you can. But this is our property. This is our homeland. And we are protected by statute. There is statutory law that has to be changed.

And let you know that we did go on record to sue Keystone XL Pipeline to stop it. And we are going before the Public Utilities Commission in South Dakota because they have to redo their licensing process. And we will do whatever we have to do to stop this pipeline, as we do 55 other pipelines proposed in North Dakota. Dakota. North Dakota. [Lakota language] Dakota. I'm Dakota. Dakota means "friend and ally." This is Dakota territory. This is treaty territory. This is where you agreed not to come into my territory.

We signed a treaty of peace that you would not come here. The state of North Dakota and South Dakota, they filed an enabling act to join the Union of the United States, that they would not interfere in the affairs of the people who lived here. And that was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1964. So we have put on our

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2012] that were reportable to [the Department of Transportation]. The "average" pipeline therefore has a 57% probability of experiencing a major leak, with consequences over the \$1 million range, in a ten-year period" (Shaw et al. 2012, 6-8).



best. We will put our best warriors in the front. We are the vanguard. We are Hunkpapa Lakota. That means the "horn of the buffalo." That's who we are. We are the protectors of our nation, of Oceti Sakowin, the Seven Council Fires. Know who we are.

We will put forward our young people, our young lawyers, who understand the weasel words now of the English language, who know that one word can mean seven things. We understand the forked tongue that our grandfathers talked about. We know about talking [about] both sides of your mouth, smiling with one side of your face. We know all the tricks of the Wasi'chu world. Our young people have mastered it.

I have mastered your language. I can speak eloquently in the English language my grandmother taught me. But I also know the genetic psyche. And I also have the collective memory of the damages that have occurred to my people. And I will never submit to any pipeline to go through my homeland. [Lakota language] (36-38)

This statement is not separate from the broader protests that took place two years later. The Standing Rock demonstrations, as they tend to be represented in media, started with a camp near Lake Oahe in the summer of 2016 and ended with President Trump's Executive Memorandum at the end of January 2017. Just months later, before the pipeline was even fully operational, it was leaking. My original intent in highlighting Standing Rock was the immediacy between the threat of leak and its inevitable materialization—a closed circuit, anticipation and event. However, Anne Spice (2018), in her reading of Patrick Wolfe's assertion "invasion is a structure not an event" (38), asserts "infrastructures, are not events, but they are eventful" (44). It is in this sense, that I assert that Phyllis Young's (SRSTC 2014) statement is not a single address to a single pipeline proposal, but rather the assertion of a reality we are inclined to see as disparate events.

Her statement opened as follows:

15 Statutes, 635 is ratified by the Congress of the United States. As a council member of this tribe, I am bound by my oath of office to uphold that statute. Article 11 says anything that comes through Indian country has to have an assessment and damages. In this case, it's subjective assessment. This tribe has adopted a Social Impact Assessment which is a methodology that is not recognized by the United States; it does no such measurement of the damages to communities at that level. The United States almost did it when Exxon Valdez happened to the Tlingit Village in Alaska. It almost adopted a methodology. It didn't happen. So we adopted our own. It's called the SIA. It is a methodology that every person, company, and the United States is bound to recognize. And that's the impacts.

You know we have survived incredible odds. You must know that we are Sitting Bull's people. You must know who we are. And we sit on a previous military fort, and we have survived that. And we have rebuilt on what was taken from us. We survived

Wounded Knee, a massacre. We are survivors. We are fighters. And we are protectors of our land. And if that Social Impact Assessment can protect this homeland for seven generations, then perhaps we could look at a proposal from any company.

But we realize we are in a national sacrifice area. We have always been. The Black Hills are part of our territory. National sacrifice so America could take the largest goldmine and take all the gold from our people. We have about \$5 billion in the Treasury that we did not take for payment of that gold. We're a national sacrifice area. We were the number one military zone. They nationalized our airspace to protect this country. And in my lifetime, a national sacrifice area to build the dams so that there could be hydropower and revenue in the national interest for this country; and taking my home, flooding it, in the middle of a cold winter. I know what it is to be homeless. I know what it is to be hungry in this great land of plenty, where we lived in the richest riverbed in the world.

So it's nothing for you to come and say we want to do this. We want to be friends with you. But Section 106, what the National Historic Preservation Office has addressed is ancestral territory. It was very astute for you to go around the northern boundary of Standing Rock as we see it in modern times. This is treaty territory. Those are ancestral lands. Fifty yards, a hundred miles north is treaty territory. So you are bound by Section 106, by the laws of this country, to adhere to those laws that are federal laws for the protection of our people. So it wasn't very, very cool to go just 50 feet north of our boundary.

You need to know also that there has been a \$5 million claim filed on the Bakken, \$5 million a day for what's going on in the Bakken in treaty territory. That's been filed in 2007. So we are not stupid people. We are not ignorant people. Do not underestimate the people of Standing Rock. We know what's going on, and we know what belongs to us, and we know what we have to keep for our children and our grandchildren. (34-36)

This document makes clear the dynamics that Western logics are confined to. The structure of modernity, its modes of containment, and the rational methods that it necessitates, cannot account for our relations in this world. Young's statement makes clear certain capitalistic assemblages—operating through networked series of nodes, as attested to in chapter 3—it contests the coherence on which they supposedly operate, but uses it against them. Young contends:

Article 11 says anything that comes through Indian country has to have an assessment and damages. In this case, it's subjective assessment. This tribe has adopted a Social Impact Assessment which is a methodology that is not recognized by the United States; it does no such measurement of the damages to communities at that level. (33)

The statement reasserts the particular violence that these structures enact on peoples who demand consideration for the broader entanglements of relationships that underlie our world.

Young makes clear the material facts of these containments: they are about infrastructures, dominance, control, yet they are also incredibly plastic and adaptable to opposition. Young notes, “It was very astute for you to go around the northern boundary of Standing Rock as we see it in modern times” (35). They set into place a rigid set of controls—legislation, permitting, environmental assessment, appeal, reporting—an illusion of self-coherence, but when called upon in the name of resistance, move and transform—they snake through space like the pipeline, just shy of certain boundaries. These documents and processes are not unlike the material modes of confinement by way of conventional infrastructures. While the reservation system is a violent mode of containment (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015; Tuck and Yang 2012), these borders have been the only means of “protection” we have granted for certain ways of life. What is evident in the statement delivered by Young is that the Standing Rock protest began alongside settler colonialism and that this resistance has been actively occurring the whole time.

There is a leakiness to the history noted in the above address to DAPL—it contests the periodicity that certain historiographies tend to attach to development endeavors.<sup>169</sup> As Spice (2018) contends, these structures are not simply events, “they are rooted in a settler future” (44)—Young is rather holding the past and the future in the same hand. Different timelines become embodied in collective histories, for which academics are continually struggling to account. But as Young (2014) asserts, “I also know the genetic psyche” (37). Not all Indigenous resistance operates within identical ontologies, but as Watts (2013) notes of Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee place-thinking, “given that the concept of time for us was never linear, we possess the ability to access the pre-colonial mind through the ability to travel in dreams, to

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169. The U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation’s “An Overview of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program” Report (n.d.) is an example of one of these “typical” historiographies.

shapeshift, to understand what might happen tomorrow” (32). What I want to note here is that these ecologies, are not those of the “crying Indian” that liberal environmental conservation endeavors attempt to operationalize.<sup>170</sup> There is a history here that runs counter to the Hegelian time that underlies liberal democracy, and that is perhaps more adept at recognizing threat. Young’s (2014) statement demonstrates active resistance against the modern project’s endeavour for containment: “And I will never submit to any pipeline to go through my homeland” (38). Both infrastructures (Cowen 2017) and threats (Massumi 2010) are oriented towards the future. However, the futurity of threat, according to Brian Massumi, “operates on an affective register and inhabits a nonlinear time” (56-57). In this sense, capitalist logics trade in the futurity of infrastructure potentials without the ability to comprehend real threat. To these ends it is no surprise that the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (SRST), with their knowledge of time since settlement, always knew the line would leak. As the tribe’s lawyer Jan Hasselman communicated to *The Guardian*, “pipelines leak and they spill. It’s just what happens” (Levin 2017). The unfortunate fact of the matter, as Chairman Dave Archambault noted to the *Associated Press*, “nobody wants to listen because they’re driven by money and greed” (Nicholson 2017).

Here, I argue that this resistance is imbricated with all other resistance—though this is not to say the SRST struggle is the same as any other. It is convenient for my argument that many of these struggles are literally connected—along the same pipeline, between connecting pipelines, pipelines owned by the same companies, through efforts to clean up the *same* oil, from the *same* oil reserves, when these pipelines inevitably leak. I assert that it is *the material* that

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170. Here, I am referring to the 1971 Keep America Beautiful Inc. campaign (print and television) that features a Native American-styled actor shedding a tear over litter and pollution. Keep America Beautiful Inc. is a non-profit organization founded by beverage and tobacco companies. For more information on industry influence over the narratives of environmentalism (particularly through advertising campaigns) in the 1970s see Hirsch (1975).

continues to pose a problem for capital, and it is *the material* that continues to leak—my argument here is that resistance is always connected across all materialities, because it is through these relations-between that we can oppose boundary-logics. Still, as emphasised through examples above, the possibilities opened up through breaches, leaks, and rupture, can be captured. Nick Estes (2019) asserts:

Each pipeline exists in relation to other pipelines, and while DAPL technically only extends from North Dakota to Illinois, it is fundamentally a transnational project, interlinking with other pipelines and infrastructure to ship oil to a global market, crossing the boundaries of settler states and trespassing through Indigenous territory. (483-484)

However, noting that these physical networks can still serve as sites of resistance, Estes contends “countering settler colonialism’s own physical infrastructure—trade routes, railroads, dams, and oil pipelines—is the infrastructure of Indigenous resistance, its ideas and practices of solidarity” (484). My intent in this section has not been to provide an exhaustive account of the events of the Standing Rock protest, but rather to account for the fact that active resistance to the structures of containment that I have noted throughout this work exist. Estes’s account (2019) in *Our History is the Future* notes:

Indigenous resistance draws from a long history, projecting itself backward and forward in time. While traditional historians merely interpret the past, radical Indigenous historians and Indigenous knowledge-keepers aim to change the colonial present, and to imagine a decolonial future by reconnecting to Indigenous places and histories. For this to occur, those suppressed practices must make a crack in history. (51)

What possibilities arise then, if rather than patching cracks, we let them leak?

Western logics have foreclosed upon the dense solidarity networks for which Estes and others account. Here, I argue that materialist thinking has offered particular opportunities for redress and resistance against structures of containment for those who are just now shedding the skin of the modern individual. New materialist theory allows for a conception of embodiment beyond the limits of skin, and thus implicate *new* bodies in constellation with one another. In this

section I implied the particular possibilities afforded through new materialist thinking, though we cannot neglect its entanglement with “white public space” (Todd 2015). This materialist thinking demands of itself what it thus far has failed to do. In blowing open the sets of the relations through which we may derive ethics, they can still fail to account for violent assemblages as they directly affect certain groups of people over others. It is to these ends that I assert, along with certain critiques, that a turn towards the material cannot be an absolution of difference. And while new materialist scholars acknowledge that differentiation is inevitable considering the unique entangling of actors in assemblages, there needs to be more acknowledgement of the ways these materialisms do not simply derive from a singular Spinozist substance, but rather from a way of living and being-in-the-world that we had attempted to obliterate through colonialism. I have argued that while feminist theories of embodiment have made great strides in contesting the modern body through its emphasis on leakiness, we need to remain attuned to the way leaking contests all boundaries. I must reiterate here that this is not an assertion of a homologous space without difference, but rather one where boundaries are porous and are not policed for continence. Here I assert a revisiting of our expectations of personal space, beyond the hard lines of private and public that ultimately only protect property. I imagine this being possible through continued discourse around the more-than-human, posthuman, agentic realism, and theories of the like, which have been percolating with the leakiness of modern structures. Here, I assert we can undo this world only by turning towards leakiness, not in order to render the world coherent but to make the complexity of dynamics that underlie relations more sensible.

CHAPTER 5/  
Conclusion

*Desire does not comprise any lack; neither is it a natural given; it is but one with an assemblage of heterogenous elements which function; it is process, in contrast with structure or genesis; it is affect, as opposed to feeling; it is "haecceity" (individuality of a day, a season, a life), as opposed to subjectivity; it is event, as opposed to thing or person.*

*And above all it implies the constitution of a field of immanence or a "body without organs", which is only defined by zones of intensity, thresholds, gradients, flux. This body is as biological as it is collective and political; it is on this body that assemblages make and unmake.*

Gilles Deleuze,  
"Desire & Pleasure"

In introducing this work, I noted that my subject was not the leak itself, but rather the assemblage that constitutes, and gets constituted by, leaking. Making *leakiness* my subject has been particularly difficult in two senses. Firstly, leaks are not subjects in any classical sense. The leak eludes specificity, containment, and continuity—its nature is to break through, seep out, or to escape, rather than to be brought under.<sup>171</sup> And while I insisted early on (in chapter 1), and throughout (again, in chapter 3), that it was not within this project's scope to account for all the ways in which "subjectivity" and leakiness could be *thought together*, these entanglements have nonetheless been an undercurrent in this work. Throughout this project, I have used leaking as a frame through which we can trace particular dynamics of the contemporary moment—I do this in order to assert (in allegiance with many others) that mediation, politics, and materiality cannot be accounted for, in any substantive sense, separate from one another. Secondly, I contend that I cannot call the leak *my* subject because it is an operative of nearly any encounter, and thus has

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171. Here, I am thinking of the literal meaning of "subject".

been an implicit actor in many others' works. In this section I will read the leak back into the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987, 2009), Rebekah Sheldon (2015), Karan Barad (2003, 2007, 2015), and others. I argue that because we face leaking everyday—whether through communications, infrastructure, embodiment—leaks offer a means through which we can make sense of seemingly *theoretical* concepts in material and tangible ways.

In introducing my methodology for this project in chapter 1, I noted Maggie MacLure's (2011) critique that theory does not spend enough time with its objects. Rebekah Sheldon follows a similar assertion in reference to the shift towards new materialisms contending that “matter has not yet been given full reign to generate new methodologies for critical theory” (204). Here, my intention has been to consider the ways in which leaking is both theoretically potent and materially significant. Opening actors, objects, and subjects up to critical theory can, sometimes, risk making them impossible to see from the ground—for example, in his theorization of *hyperobjects*, which I will discuss below, Timothy Morton (2013) notes that “thinking them is intrinsically tricky” (4). It is in this regard that I turn towards leaking: it is once material, phenomenological, metaphysical, and relational and it is *everyday*. Here, I argue that leaks have the potential to make particular relationships more perceptibly sensual. These relations have been the subject of much of philosophy: those works and theories that set out to think through the tensions of subject/object, mind/matter, body/self, nature/culture. Here my claim is that the leak can be a bridge to *make sensual* the relationships between the personal and the political, the human and the non-human, the present and the future. However, I do not contend that *this* leak, the one that signifies intense and complex relationships, is necessarily different than the one that we encounter regularly in our bodies, our lives, and our environments. It is in this sense, that I have sought to keep the *real, material*, leak at the front of this project.



What happens in the encounter between you and the slip of the tongue, when a water spot on the ceiling catches your eye, when you feel a wetness between your legs? These moments are saturated with tensions, dense assemblages of bodies whether immediately apparent or not. My intention in positioning this particularly theoretical section as the conclusion of this work, is to ensure that it is clear to the reader that I am not merely speaking of the leak in a figurative sense. Here, it is my hope that the Pentagon Papers, Cablegate, iPhone girl, the rumored Donald Trump pee tape, the container port, border walls, period panties, Molly Soda's sext images, and pipelines, are dredged up in the minds of readers as I account for the simultaneous threat and opportunity of the leak.

### **(Re)Theorizing the Leak**

Throughout this work I have asserted that we are experiencing a time of particular leakiness. The occurrence of leaks is compounded through dense networks and infrastructures that manage the movement of ideas, people, goods, and capital throughout the globalized world. While not necessarily asserted as *leakiness*—though Zygmunt Bauman's assertion of *liquid modernity* (2000) comes close—leak-like states feature prominently in many works concerning postmodernity (Baudrillard 1994; Jameson 1991; Lash 1990), late modernity (Beck 2006; Giddens 1997), reflexive modernity (Beck et al. 1994), second modernity and network society (Castells 2006). As noted in chapter 4, this era of technological development and resource management has impacted the ecological state of the world unlike any other historical period.<sup>172</sup> But it also is not separate from any of the *other ecologies* scholars identify: human ecology, media ecology, political ecology, etc.. Timothy Morton (2013) argues that the web of processes

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172. This is true whether we accept the periodization of the Anthropocene or not.

to coordinate such an impact are facilitated through nonlocal, time-stretched, gargantuan objects “almost impossible to hold in mind” (58). These *hyperobjects*,<sup>173</sup> according to Morton, “stick to us, like melting mirrors. They leak everywhere. They undulate back and forth, oozing spacetime all around them” (153). And while these “objects” may pose a problem for representation, something that Morton notes (104), it is absurd to suggest we do not *encounter* them in some sense,<sup>174</sup> and I contend that there is opportunity in these encounters. But the question remains, how do we encounter these oozing objects to which we cannot point, as they temporally undulate around us? I assert that leaking can offer glimpses into the form of *hyperobjects*, potentially allowing for recognition. Our encounter with the leak briefly exposes us to how objects, relations, events, may function. Like throwing a blanket over a ghost, the leak allows us to see a vague outline of the hyperobject’s potential form, though not always with great insight into its detail. As was the case with the layered leakage of Deepwater Horizon, the 2014 mass release of celebrity private nudes from iCloud, or the revelation that Bashar al-Assad found his way around American sanctions to download eBooks and iTunes tracks, a vague diagram of the *networked dispositif* flits by when we witness the leak. Anti-globalization discourse testifies that the seeming invincibility of these systems can often be attributed to the fact that they cannot be situated<sup>175</sup>—however, the leak *is* virtual—always simultaneously situated and free flowing. Here, it can become a point of access for what is typically exteriorized, and it is here we can begin to see the political possibility of the leak as an encounter.

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173. Morton notes the following as examples of *hyperobjects*: oil, planets, climate change, DNA, etc.

174. Here, Morton asserts “you can’t see or smell climate” (104), but I think this is contestable. The film “Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change” provides an account experiencing climate that feels counter to Morton’s assertion. See Kunuk and Mauro (2010).

175. This concern comes up frequently in anti-globalization discourses, see for example: *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000) and *To Our Friends* (The Invisible Committee 2015).

In the simplest sense, the encounter implies a temporally defined moment of contact with, or between, actors. But encounters are also eventful, they connote a break with homogenous time—they parallel the act of leaking, a rupture in the usual flow. There are instances, however, in which leaking is simply part of business as usual. Leaking can be used as strategy in the “reconfiguration of the visibility of the common” (Rancière 2009)—a means of asserting an image of accountability in the opaque spaces of existing power structures. But sometimes a mere reconfiguration (even within the limited realm of visibility<sup>176</sup>) can pose new opportunities. In commenting on the Cablegate release, Slavoj Žižek (2015) notes: “It’s not so much that people didn’t know about it, but the way those in power manipulate it. We all know dirty things are being done, but you are being informed about this obliquely, in such a way that basically you are able to ignore it” (quoted in Brevini, Hinz, and McCurdy, 256). Being forced to confront something we knew all along, however, is a chance to encounter it differently. Of course this dynamic can be manipulated—in drawing on such a diverse range of cases I have attempted to demonstrate that leaks do not necessarily run counter to the interests of dominant modes of power. To these ends, we must question what is at stake when leaking is known to be an integral part of these apparatuses? The fact that intentionally leaking information is a strategy of those in power, attests to leaks’ ability to call to truth—the ability to give the impression that truth always reveals itself, that accountability is inevitable. In evoking the concept of *truth*, I am not suggesting leakiness, boasts transcendental opportunities, but rather that material-semiotic conditions of leaking can make us feel that way. As much as I call on the revelatory, expository,

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176. It is important to note that radical reworkings of the visibility of the common would likely seek to destabilize the primacy of vision that underlies Enlightenment ideals of reason. For more detailed arguments visuality’s place in the dynamics of power see Crary (2007), Foucault (2002), Jay (1988), Kittler (2010) and Mirzoeff (2011).

divulging feature of leaking, I also assert leaks can also restore equilibriums, release building pressure and drain potential networks.

Morton's framing of phenomena as *hyperobjects* risks foreclosing on opportunities for redress. And though leaking can still operate along with Morton's framework, I find Rebekah Sheldon's (2015) lens of *chora* to be a more fruitful path for exploring how we might think of ethical encounters in terms of leaking. Sheldon asserts that "forms must be housed somewhere in something while it undergoes transformation... the chora or space of generation" (211). For Sheldon, *chora* is a receptacle—it "holds together and disrupts the movement from potentiality to actuality" (212). It is to these ends that I want to assert the political and aesthetic possibilities (including resistance) of all matter instilled into pipes, within containers, behind dams, inside bodies, in systems, and entangled within flows. Following Karan Barad (2002), Sheldon asserts "intra-actions instantiate boundaries anew"—this is apparent in the leak—it contests boundaries, pushes past them, reconstituting them as mere obstacles in its path. Through evoking *chora*, it becomes impossible to make a clean separation between the content of leakages (being), and the leak as agent (becoming). There are no essential qualities of the content of leaks. Here, following Sheldon and her conjuring of Barad (2002), we must consider the way that leakage is co-constituted through intra-action.

I have asserted throughout this work that the contemporary moment is particularly leaky—grand narratives, identity politics, and classification systems prove incontinent and disrupt our relationship to knowledge asserted since the Enlightenment. There have been many reactions to this: one, which will not be my concern here, is the reassertion of transcendental

truths as antidotes to chaos.<sup>177</sup> Other modes of thought, on the other hand, interrogate whether our relationship to knowledge, as we figured it in modernity, is worth reviving. This shift foregrounds an ontological turn. However, even amongst the theories that share interest in *the beings of things*, there is a certain discordance. In speaking about the divide between object oriented ontologies and feminist new materialisms, Rebekah Sheldon frames it as a restaging of “an old antinomy—the being/becoming problem in Plato and Aristotle” (196). I want to raise this here in order to make clear that my assertion of the leak as a material and agentic force, is not a focus on the leak as a singular object. The resurgence of *thinking things* that underlies the popularity of object oriented ontologies (OOO) in the work of theorists like Graham Harman, Timothy Morton, and Ian Bogost, is not how I think of the leak. The central premise of object oriented ontology is that every interaction between objects is a translation—that regardless of the ways things assemble together, each component part retains its own “molten inner core” (Harman 2007, 190). Here, all of the potential of the object is consolidated in its interior. This cannot be true of the leak. The leak has no “molten inner core”—it is constituted by a threshold. In the absence of something to traverse (a barrier, a container, a membrane), a substance does not have an essential disposition to leak. It is only in relation to something to breach that substance becomes leak.

In returning to Sheldon’s (2015) notion of *chora*, I argue that leaking contravenes OOO’s contention that objects are always contained within themselves. Sheldon’s assertion of a dynamized space *between* objects (209) forces us to question the infinite void between things, as theorists such as Graham Harman (2005, 2007) suppose. Sheldon (2015) describes this space, the

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177. Here, I am thinking of right-wing condemnation of postmodernism, and the Far Right’s efforts to reassert structural truths.

*chora*, as holding “the potential for uncontrolled generation, for dynamic change that is neither a product of the eternal form nor its diminution in the realm of becoming” (212). This further intensifies similar lines of thinking present in Barad’s work. For Sheldon and Barad the supposed voids that object oriented ontology inserts between actors are sites whereby matter can become radicalized. Leaks remind us that the contents of containers are the ultimate virtual entities—they exist simultaneously *within*, and possibly *outside of*. Barad (2015) asserts that “[e]xperiments in virtuality—explorations of possible trans\*formations—are integral to each and every (ongoing) be(com)ing” (410). Here, we see the potentiality of virtual states, in this case, of content possibly becoming leak. Brian Massumi (2002) similarly asserts, “it is the edge of virtual, where it leaks into actual, that counts”, and that it is at this seeping edge “where potential, actually, is found” (43). I have asserted throughout this work that leaks always symbolize opportunity. This claim is in line with Deleuze and Guattari’s (2008) idea of the “ligne de fuite”, most commonly translated to English as the *line of flight*.

In his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* (2008), Brian Massumi notes, “*fuite* covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance” (2008, xvii). Here then, we can think of a leak as a new connection—a previously indeterminate path that arouses new opportunities. I first introduced the leak in chapter 1 borrowing from Michelle Murphy’s (2006) reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s (2008, 1987) notion of multiplicity. From this point, I have asserted that the goal of this project was to trace just some of the *ands* made possible in thinking about the leak as an entanglement of actors. Rather than asserting a particular leak as singular, this project accounts for the ways in which sites become entangled when boundary spaces are contested. Asserting that the modern project is one of containment, I have argued that leaks mark sites where logics of continence have failed. Deleuze and Guattari’s

(1987) assertion that “assemblages are in constant variation”, and they “are themselves constantly subject to transformations” (1987, 82), is precisely why Murphy (2006) argues assemblages form a particularly useful means for inquiry (13). Assemblages have potential in that they draw out possibilities by way of making linkages, effects and relationships more perceptible, however, this mode also risks dematerializing phenomena. There is nothing in the work of Deleuze and Guattari that make it antithetical to matter—as I noted in chapter 4, their thought was particularly influential in reinvigorating a feminist material turn. However, assemblage thinking, as Murphy contends, risks making matter *too big*—assemblage thinking at once enlivens the connections between actors, but risks actors becoming subsumed in *rhizomes*, *bodies without organs*, and *multiplicity* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 2008). I am not dismissing this mode of thought, especially considering that it underwrites much of my own, not to mention this work in particular. What I am asserting here, rather, is that these forms become difficult to see from the ground.

Grounding, of course, comes with a host of problems—it is intensely imbricated in the modes of thought I have contested throughout this work—to *have ground to*, is often construed as a legitimacy rooted in reason. However, this is not necessarily the case. Barbara Bolt (2000) argues that the ground can reassert certain productive relations. Bolt notes Paul Carter’s (1996) assertion of the Enlightenment’s “jerking of the head upwards” (Carter, 51) towards the horizon as being particularly indicative of the shift to representation. In this sense, being on the ground with matter implies an entangling of actors in particular relations to one another. This is not to suggest an inverted hierarchy of matter on the ground and theory in the sky, but rather to insist that my project of theorizing leaks has attempted to at least keep them within reach. My assertion of leakiness is not simply my own observation, but rather a way that I learned to read the world

that is seemingly rebelling from containment. In these concluding thoughts I want to convey again, that it has not been my intention to provide exhaustive accounts of the events and phenomena that I have described, but rather to demonstrate how seemingly disparate, disciplinarily divided, sites can be read together if we turn towards leakiness. To these ends, the intent of this project has been to assert that interdisciplinary practice can provide substantive accounts of the spaces bleeding together at the edges of existing lines of inquiries. With nearly each case explored here, I had considered refocusing this project to simply draw out the details of a single given case. In each instance where I transition to a different site, I considered not doing so. However, I tried my best to take the leak's lead.

The leaky distinctions that I have drawn between the leak as media, as politics, and as materiality, attest to the impossibility of solid boundaries. Leaks are always already media, political, and material. They operate between spaces, they mediate the relations between actors in real and material ways. In chapter 1, I sought to frame the leak as an issue of media and communications. Here, I argued that leaks are at once media themselves, but are also incredibly mediated. Throughout this project I traced the way information leaks are used as both a means to contest and reify existing power dynamics. While leaking always marks a possibility, I asserted that capital and existing power dynamics can capture the leak. The political aspects of leaking are inherent in that leaks are always a negotiation of insides and outsides. I contend that this negotiation always imbricates material and immaterial actors. The exercise of sovereignty, from walled cities, forts, and chattel slavery to the networked global city, drone warfare, and stop and frisk, always concern the policing of insides and outsides. The leak serves as a means through which we trace phenomena between materialities, temporalities, and disciplines. The logic of containment that underlies modernity and the Western project, necessitates closed space and the



policing of boundaries. The increasingly diffuse, networked conditions of this enclosure provide the illusion of liquidation, natural flows, and fluidity. Here, I argue that leaking troubles this representation, and makes sensible the muddiness of in-between space. While leaks are not always sites of contestation and opportunity, I contend that turning towards leakiness provides a means through which we can renegotiate our relations with others.

While turning towards leakiness can allow for the reconsideration of boundaries, it is not a call for the eradication of difference. While leaks contest bound space, they are also constituted by these delineations. Sigmund Freud (2002) describes the collective unconscious as *oceanic*—what underlies desire is a primordial condition without separation, a oneness of the world. Only here, can we imagine the absolute absence of subjectivity, a world without leaks. In chapter 4, I suggest a radical potential if we were to *let leak*. I must clarify however, that this not a call for individual subjects to decimate the protective boundaries they have drawn for themselves—I am not suggesting that we set forth our nudes, live stream our lives, or forego bathrooms for the streets (only if you wish). Nor am I suggesting that communities must refrain from collectively determining rules of engagement. Rather, to *let leak*, is to suggest that the costs of policing boundary spaces are too high (materially, ethically, politically, financially). Turning towards leakiness and refusing to police boundary spaces is not a call for absolute boundlessness and consensus—rather, it is an assertion that leaks disrupt consensus, and that this disruption is valuable. Here, it is worthwhile to quickly return to the realm of the political that I outlined through Chantal Mouffe (2005) and Jacques Rancière (2005) in chapter 3.

Mouffe’s conception of politics asserts that “there are always other possibilities that have been repressed” (18)—to this I pose the question of whether politics still exist if these repressions were not policed. For Mouffe, perhaps not, but my assertion here is that what

underlies the political is not antagonism, but rather aesthetic and affective possibility. I argue that the political—the dynamic constituted in the interaction between actors in a particular assemblage—is predicated on differentiation and relation, but not necessarily antagonism. While differentiation necessitates boundaries of some sort, relation contests them. Unpoliced margins would not necessarily lead to an undifferentiated mass, the cessation of politics. Rather, it could provide broadening opportunities for affective relations. While Susan Buck-Morss's (1992) conception of aesthetics only appears twice (explicitly) within this work, it sits beneath many of my assertions. I introduced this project with her proclamation that underlying sensation is the reality that everything “leaks” (13). Moreover, chapter 3 follows Buck-Morss's situating of aesthetic experience at the “the mediating boundary between inner and outer” (6). To these ends I assert that leaking, as a movement that has the potential to undo inner and outer, is a political and aesthetic actor. Turning towards leakiness, or letting leak, is simply an echo of the wide-expanse of theories attesting to the potential of affect, sensation, and interrelation as particularly imperative to questions of ethics. It is at this point that I want to return my argument to the question of media and communications.

In chapter 2, “Mediating Leakiness”, I argued that media studies must return to its place within the in-between. While this chapter reiterated the limitations of mediation, I wish to reassert, here, the incredible potential that resides in this space. Chapter 2 also called for a recognition of communications as a phenomena predicated on inevitable failure. This is not simply a nihilistic reading of these disciplines, but rather an affirmation of a particular opportunity for thinking through the political and the material as integral aspects of media studies. Primary to my conception of media and communications studies is a recognition of the limitations of representation, which there is no absence of in certain philosophical corners of

media studies discourses.<sup>178</sup> However, these discourses themselves, cannot account substantively for the phenomena in which communications and mediations are implicated. It is to these ends that I have sought to produce an analysis of the leak that emphasizes the necessity of interdisciplinarity in media and communications studies. In spite of the information leak's relevance to the disciplines of media and communication studies, I assert that a substantive account for the dynamic of leaking cannot neglect the ways in which leaking underlies all phenomena. This has made for an unruly project, that even in this conclusion I will assert is nowhere near complete. I argue that the leak is always a material actor. While theories of globalization, the network society, and the anthropocene continue to point to expansive, nearly imperceptible phenomena as the forces underlying the contemporary moment, we must continue to emphasize the ways that materiality continues to foreground these processes. In *making sense* of the material realities that underly relations, we have a better chance at making connections palpable, tangible and accountable. In arguing that technology forms the material means through which new relations are made, I emphasized Paul Virilio's (2007) assertion that any invention guarantees a future accident. The increasing densities of movements of people, capital, goods and information through channels, networks, logistics systems, and other structures of containment ensure the virtual condition of leaks. The potential of leaks is always at once an

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178. Some of the examples listed below may be considered, by some, as entirely outside of media and communications discourses—however, I would argue against that assertion. For detailed arguments on the limitations of representation see, for example: Véronique Fóti's "Representation Represented: Foucault, Velázquez, Descartes" (1996); Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (2002); reneé c. hoogland's *A Violent Embrace: Art and Aesthetics After Representation* (2014); Ned Rossiter's "Processual Media Theory" (2003); Hito Steyerl's "Is a Museum a Factory?" (2009) and "The Spam of the Earth: Withdrawal from Representation" (2012); and Nigel Thrifts *Non-Representational Theory* (2007).

opportunity and threat. Understanding the material nature of leakiness is the only means through which we can prepare ourselves to make sense with leaking when these encounters arise.

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