What's the Use?

On the Uses of Use

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This book is for my queer family,
Sarah and Poppy.

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Queer Use

What better way to bring out the queerness of use than by attending to uses of queer? Queer: a word with a history. Queer: a word that has been flung like a stone, picked up and hurled at us; a word we can claim for us. Queer: odd, strange, unseemly, disturbed, disturbing. Queer: a feeling, a sick feeling; feeling queer as feeling nauseous.

In older uses of queer—queer to describe anything that is noticeable because it is odd—queer and fragility were often companions. In one of George Eliot's essays, "Three Months in Weimar," the narrator describes the sound of an old piano thus: "its tones, now so queer and feeble, like those of an invalided old woman whose voice could once make a heart beat with fond passion" (1884, 91–92). Feeble, frail, invalid, incapacitate, falter, weak, tearful, worn; tear; wear; queer too, queer is there, too. These proximities tell a story. A queer life might be how we get in touch with things at the very point at which they, or we, are worn or worn down—those moments when we break or break down, when we shatter under the weight of history. The sounds of an old piano evoking the sound of an invalided old woman: could this evocation vibrate with affection? Could a queer heart beat with passion for what is wavering and quavering?

That some of us can live our lives by assuming that word *queer*, by even saying "yes" to that word, shows how a past use is not exhaustive

of a word or a thing however exhausted a word or thing. As Judith Butler notes in *Excitable Speech*, "An aesthetic enactment of an injurious word may both *use* the word and *mention* it, that is, make use of it to produce certain effects but also at the same time make reference to that very use, calling attention to it as a citation, situating that use within a citational legacy, making that use into an explicit discursive item to be reflected on rather than a taken for granted operation of ordinary language" (1997, 99). We can disrupt the meaning of an insult by making its usage audible as a history that does not decide, once and for all, what a word can do. To queer use is to make use audible, to listen to use, to bring to the front what ordinarily recedes into the background. If queer use has been a point I have made, providing me with a conclusion, queer use also describes my method: to queer use as to front up to use; to make use strange.

Queer use as reuse. Sometimes words are reused as if they can be cut off from their history—when an insult is thrown out, for instance, and reaches its target but is defended as just banter, as something you can, should, make light of. I discussed such uses of banter in chapter 4. If we reuse the word *queer*, we hold onto the weight, the baggage. A queer bag, even: I think of my own queer bag discussed in chapter 1, a bag that is worn from being worn (figure C.1).

You hold onto something because of how you have been shaped by something. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that what makes queer a "politically potent term" is how it cleaves to "the childhood scene of shame" (1993, 4). Queer acquires force and vitality precisely because we refuse to use the word to make light of a history. To recycle or reuse a word is to reorient one's relation to a scene that holds its place, as memory, as container, however leaky. In concluding this book, my aim is to bring out the implications of the queerness of use. Considering the queerness of use is an opportunity to reflect on the ethical and political lessons I have learned from attending to the uses of use. There are risks in taking up "queer use" in the way I am doing. I know I could be asking "queer use" to do too much work; that I could be sliding over too many histories. A risk is also a potential: queer use provides me with a way of making connections between histories that might otherwise be assumed to be apart. This is how I understand it: queer use is just a start.

C.1. Worn from being worn.

Refusing Instructions

I have been using *queer use* to refer to how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended. I did not realize when I first used queer use in this way that it had been used like this before: queer use as reused. In fact you can find many newspaper articles from the late nineteenth century that use queer use in exactly this way—articles that refer to the queer uses of cups, bicycles, cigars, and cloisters. One article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* on August 28, 1899, is titled "Queer Use for Cloisters." It stated: "The cloisters of the Church of St. Ethelreda, Ely palace, Holborn, London, are now being used for a purpose very different from that for which they were originally intended. Father Jarvis . . . has placed them at the disposal of any cyclist who may wish to store his machine while attending divine services."[1] One wonders whether cloisters could be used to store more than "his machines." Queer use is used here in a similar way to how I have been using it: queer use as when you use something for a purpose that is "very different" from that which was "originally intended." This use of queer use to describe how cloisters can become a shelter for bicycles returns us to Stephen Gould and Richard Lewontin's reflection on spandrels discussed in chapter 2. They borrow the term from architecture

to suggest that some biological structures may not have been brought into existence because there was a use for them (I have called this *for is before*). Indeed, queer use has arguably become a design principle in architecture in the concern to create more flexible spaces. Jonathan Hill cites the work of Adrian Forty: "Against the presumption that all parts of a building should be destined for specific uses, a recognition that not all uses could be foreseen at the moment of design made 'flexibility' a desirable architectural property" (2003, 29). Buildings can be built with queer uses in mind, which is to say, with a commitment to a principle that not all uses could or even should be foreseen.[2] However buildings are built, a use for something can become possible *given* what has been built: queer use as coming after.

We can pick up the connection between what is queer and what is given. Queer uses would be about releasing a potentiality that already resides in things *given* how they have taken shape. Queer use could be what we are doing when we release that potential. Queer use has also been used to refer to how those who identify as queer make use of spaces. George Chauncey argues that there is "no queer space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use. . . . Nothing illustrates this general principle more clearly than the tactics developed by gay men and lesbians to put the spaces of the dominant culture to queer uses" (1996, 224). The implication here is that uses are queer because spaces are not: queerness as what is injected into spaces by queer users. Perhaps queerness becomes catchy; queer users might leave traces of ourselves behind. When queers use spaces, spaces might become queer.

That becoming can happen; queerness can be infectious. But it does not always happen. I think back to the postbox that became a nest. We could think of those birds as queer guests, taking up residence in a room that is not built for them. To be a guest is to be welcomed. You can be welcomed without being able to take up residence. We are back to the sign *birds welcome* (figure C.2).

Maybe the door of the family too can appear open. Perhaps you are the queer aunties; come in, come in! You enter only to realize that the space is already occupied. Heterosexuality can indeed become an occupation, filling the room, water in a cup, full, fuller still, no room, no room; greetings, statements, heterosexuality given casually for children as projections of the future: he will be one for the girls, she will be one for the boys, and even my dog, Poppy, has been given such an assignment (if only Poppy could meet Tommy; they could be boyfriend and girlfriend).

C.2. Come in, come in!

When you inhabit such a world, you can feel like you are watching yourself disappear: watching your own life unravel, thread by thread. No one has willed or intended your disappearance. They are kind; they are welcoming. But just slowly, just slowly, as talk of family, of heterosexuality as the future, of lives that you do not live, just slowly, just slowly, you disappear. As soon as you leave, you might have to get yourself quickly to the local gay bar so you can breathe! Sometimes to survive a restriction, we refuse an instruction. Creating our own dwellings becomes necessary given how queerness can be squeezed out of spaces.

Perhaps the potential to queer use might reside somewhere between our bodies and our worlds. Queer use might require a certain willingness to be perverse, to deviate from the straight path, the right path. The word *perversion* can refer not only to deviations from what is true or right but to *the improper use of something*. Perhaps the child who turns the key into a toy is not a pervert; the child is expected to play with things, although the child in being given freedom from intention can also become a container of freedom. But a boy who plays with the wrong toy—a toy vacuum, for

C.3. The same door.

instance, that is intended for a girl—might be understood as perverted or at least as on the way to perversion. Correcting the boy's use of the toy is about correcting more than behavior in relation to a toy; it is about correcting how the boy is boy. In chapter 1, I discussed how gender can tell you not only what to do but what facilities to use. We are familiar with the signs on the door—man, woman—that function as use instructions: you are to use one door or the other door. And we are constantly being reassigned gender through doors as well as other technological methods for directing human traffic, that is, for telling us which way to go when we have to go. And we are supposed to be as constant as that assignment. And so: if you are assigned girl, if girl is your original assignment, you are supposed to follow that path, which means using *the same door* that you used before (figure C.3).

A transfeminist project shows how original assignments are themselves constructions. As Emi Koyama notes, "While the concept of gender as a social construct has proven to be a powerful tool in dismantling traditional attitudes toward women's capabilities, it left room for one to justify certain discriminatory policies or structures as having a biological basis" (2003, 249). Biology is used as a tool because biology is often assumed to be about what is fixed or immutable. The very idea of two

distinct sexes is transformed into an architectural principle by the use of doors.[3] If we think of biological sex as a door, we learn how biology can function as technology, to return to my discussion in chapter 2. This intimacy of biology and technology helps us to explore the queerness of biology and to consider what Sarah Franklin has called *transbiology*. Franklin introduces the cyborg embryo picking up on Donna Haraway's (1991) creative reuse of the figure of the cyborg as well as her use of the concept of "*trans-*" to describe how new hybrid entities "blast widely understood notions of natural limit" (Haraway, 1997, cited in Franklin 2006, 170). The cyborg embryo is born and made, biological and technological. The cyborg embryo is a product of what Franklin calls the IVF/Stem Cell interface: stem cell research is dependent upon "surplus" or "spare" embryos generated by assisted conception technologies. Interestingly, Franklin's discussion of transbiology refers a number of times to doors. She describes how human stem cell derivation laboratories are built adjacent to assisted conception units and how the laboratories and clinics make use of doors to allow the passing through of biological materials—eggs and embryos—between them: "Like the cyborg embryo, transbiology is a mix of control and rogue, or trickster, elements. The hoods are noisy breathers, the eggs are dirty, and *the door is queer*" (2006, 175, emphasis mine).[4] The door is there because it offers the most convenient way to pass materials through; if paths can be created as an effect of use, so too can doors. The door is queer because it is not meant to be there; the lab is supposed to be a clean, controlled, and sealed environment.

We can pick up on the significance of the queer door. An opening created for convenience can have a queer potential: it can mean lessening control of what or who can pass through. The biological would then be about the potential of transfers and transits of many queer kinds. It might seem that doors function to contain us; to be told to use the same door is to be told who we are and what we can be. Perhaps use instructions are only necessary because they can be refused. Indeed, one might think of how the postbox can become a nest only by creating a queer door: the birds turn an opening into a door, that is, a way of entering the box. A queer door can be the effect of unexpected arrivals: openings intended for some things to pass through can end up providing an access point for others.

By considering the uses of use, I have been able to show how the potential for movement can be eliminated or almost eliminated before that potential can be realized in this or that instance. In chapter 1, I suggest

that use can lessen the queerness of use; when things are used repeatedly in a certain way it becomes harder for things to be used in other ways. Those for whom use is harder are trying to use things in other ways. Timing matters. If use instructions are made because they can be refused, use instructions are made even more forcefully when they are refused. Some forms of use are corrected, punished; *do not use that* is saying, in truth, *do not be that*. Those who refuse the instructions know how they work.

Use instructions can be not only about how to use things properly, how to take care of things or yourself, but how you are directed along a path; that well-used path. An instruction can be a direction. A path can be a line on the ground, a line, a lead. A path can also be a route through life. Heterosexuality can function as a path, one that is kept clear not only by the frequency of use, and as I have shown a frequency can be an invitation, but also by an elaborate support system (figure C.4). A straight path is also the path you follow if you are living your life in the right way; you have to reach certain points in order for a life to count as a good life. The straightening of a path could also be understood as the elimination of hap: to be straight in a moral sense is to be upright and purposeful; it is not to be distracted by what happens or by what you encounter along the way. No wonder: to deviate from a straight path can be hard. *Deviation is made hard*: so much violence is abbreviated in this sentence.

To leave a straight path is to encounter things that are in the way; it is to be slowed down by what you need to progress. When you cannot pass *through*, you cannot pass *over* something. A perversion can be how we encounter things. The figure of the pervert comes up as the one whose misuse of things is a form of self-revelation. The pervert makes improper use of his or her own body. Intended functionality can also be how we relate to bodies: as if each organ had a purpose, shaped by what it was for. This idea of a proper use of organs was central to many of the educational books written for children during the nineteenth century. The ninth volume of *The American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*, for example, begins with a statement on happiness: "Happiness is the one constitutional function of human nature, *the only legitimate product of every organ of the body*" (Fowler 1847, 9, emphasis mine). This statement is then given as an instruction to a child: to use their organs properly. The author explains:

> Every organ and faculty which God has given to us, is good in itself, and was given us for a good and definite purpose; it is only the perversion, of an organ that produces bad effects in society. *By the perversion*

C.4. Heterosexuality: a path that is kept clear.

> *of an organ I mean the improper use of it*; for example, our hands were given to assist us in doing a great many things necessary for our support and happiness; our feet were given us to enable us to walk; but if we strike each other with our hands, or kick animals, or each other, with our feet, we pervert the use of these instruments given us for our own good. (165, emphasis mine)

The instruction to use organs properly assumes that organs have a proper use, a use that is associated with health and happiness.[5] Let me advance a speculative thesis: compulsory heterosexuality too can operate as a form of intended functionality; we are allowed to play with our organs, to roam over each other's bodies as well as our own, but eventually we must use them for what they are for. Compulsory heterosexuality can provide a series of assumptions of how bodies are *supposed to function*, as a thesis of what bodies are for (and who they are for). In the writings of sexologist Havelock Ellis, for instance, the bodies of each sex are presented as directed toward the other. For instance, he describes vaginal fluid as "facilitating the entrance of the male organ" (1940, 17). Heterosexuality becomes a built-in design, which is to say, as that which is facilitated by the

body. We might consider how reproduction quickly becomes the point, *repro-normativity*, a norm and an end: as what you are supposed to reach, the point of sex; the point, even, of life itself.

A pervert gets lost on the way. Or if you get lost, perhaps you are perverting the way. For Freud, there is perversion when there is a delay or departure from the point that is sexual union. For example, a perversion might involve lingering over intermediate relations to the sexual object, "which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim" (Freud 1977, 62). Insofar as a point deviates from this straight line toward heterosexual union, we are making a perverse point. This point makes the line itself rather perverse. For Freud, "every external or internal factor that hinders or postpones the attainment of the normal sexual aim . . . will evidently lend support to the tendency to linger over the preparatory activities" (1977, 68). Even to linger can be to go astray. A delay is when you take up time that could have been used to get to the point. Queer use: we linger; we do not get to the point.

Queer use can be about lingering over things, attending to their qualities. To use things properly often means to paper over them. Paper as papering over: one thinks of paper. In *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), I called into a question a fantasy of a "paperless philosophy" as part of a critique of how philosophy might be oriented toward a certain kind of body, one for whom materiality would be an unnecessary distraction, one who has time freed for contemplation by how others do the paperwork, the domestic work, care work, diversity work.

Paper matters. Paper can also be queer; paper can be used queerly. Maryanne Dever suggests that for those who work in archives, "it is the lure of paper that attracts us" (2015, 66). It can be paper that allows us to pick things up, to find traces of histories that would otherwise elude us. I am reminded of Homi K. Bhabha's discussion of the Bible in his classic essay "Signs Taken for Wonders." Bhabha cites the *Missionary Register*, which reads: "Still [every Indian] would gladly receive a Bible. And why? That he may store it up as a curiosity, sell it for a few pice, or use it for waste paper. Such it is well known has been the common fate of those Bibles distributed in this place. Some are seen laid up as curiosities, by those who cannot read them: some have been bartered in the markets; and others have been thrown into the snuff-shops, and used as wrapping paper" (Church Missionary Society 1817, 186). The Bible in not being properly read is willfully destroyed. The Bible becomes a curiosity, reused or usable for other purposes: wrapping paper, waste paper.

The missionaries narrate the fate of the Bible in the colonies as being a result of the inability of the natives to be able to digest it: "It is true, that such of the Natives as can read, have leisure enough to read the whole Bible; but they are so indolent, so fond of eating and sleeping, or so lost in their vicious pursuits, that unless something at once *brief*, *simple*, and *powerful* be presented, it will not be likely to be read by them, and, if read, it will not be likely to arrest their torpid and sensual minds" (Church Missionary Society 1817, 186). If racism is used as an explanation of the failure of digestion, rendering the racial other a queer subject ("vicious pursuits," "torpid and sensual minds"), racism is used because of the failure of the colonial mission to transform the minds of the colonized into willing vessels. If not being willing to receive the will of the colonizer is to queer use or even to become queer through misuse (perversion as self-revelation), to queer use is to live in proximity to violence.

The demand to use something properly is a demand to revere what has been given by the colonizer. Empire-as-gift comes with use instructions. In chapter 3, I explore such a use of use: becoming a monitor as a commitment to memory, learning to use words in the right way, obedience as sympathy. Disobedience can be a matter of not being affected in the right way. The word *disobedience* brings to mind certain kinds of political action: the conscious and willed refusal to obey an instruction. Perhaps disobedience can be willful, *not being willing to receive an influence*, whether or not it is willed. Disobedience can start small, with not being impressed, or even not being *that* impressed: not finding the objects endowed with value to be impressive.

A failure to use something properly can be a refusal to use something properly. By speaking of the refusal to use something properly, I am not simply speaking of use in the present tense; recall that the settler colonial project was to empty the minds of the colonized as well as to empty the lands. A refusal to use something properly, to be impressed by the colonizer's words and things, depends on other prior refusals: a refusal to empty oneself of a history, a refusal to forget one's language and family, a refusal to give up land or an attachment to land, a refusal to exercise the terms that lead to one's own erasure or, to use Audra Simpson's (2014) powerful words, "a refusal to disappear." A refusal can be an inheritance.

You might have to refuse to ingest what would lead to your disappearance: the words, the ways; the worlds. Queer use can also be about not ingesting something; spitting it out; putting it about. If queer use is not ingesting something, not taking it in, queer use can also be about

how you attend to something. To queer use can be to linger on the material qualities of that which you are supposed to pass over; it is to *recover* a potential from materials that have been left behind, all the things you can do with paper if you do not follow the instructions.

All the things you can do: when use becomes proper, queer use becomes misuse. Perhaps queer use is always a potential because use cannot be properly proper. A queer archive might come into existence because of a gap between what is and what is in use. I have noted throughout this book how use is assumed as necessary for being, to use something as to keep something alive, which is how use also becomes a moral duty, as if by not using something you would stop it from being. I have also pointed to a gap between what is and what is in use: a part of a body that is no longer useful may still exist; a policy might exist but not be in use; and, even, something might come into use without having existed (that phantom arm that keeps coming up). Perhaps use instructions are so insistent because of this gap, because you can use it *and* lose it, because the possibility of losing it cannot be eliminated. We might have to *mind the gap*, as diversity workers, so we do not end up exhausting ourselves by bringing things into existence that do not come into use. But we can also *queer the gap*: by finding in the paths assumed to lead to cessation a chance of being in another way.

Queer Vandalism

When we recover a potential from materials, when we refuse to use things properly, we are often understood not only as causing damage but as *intending what we cause*. Queer use could thus also be interpreted as vandalism: the willful destruction of the venerable and beautiful.[6]

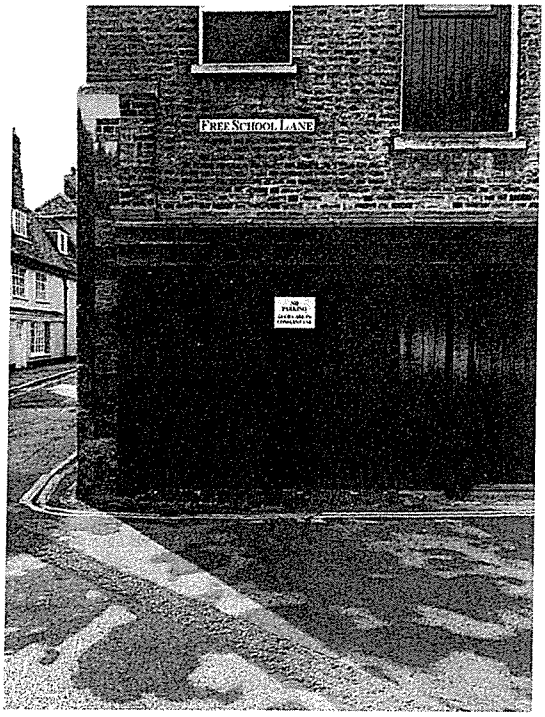
Sometimes the nuclear family is held up as the source of the venerable and beautiful. In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), I explored how the image of family is maintained by polishing its reflection: a labor of keeping up appearances, smiling as a way of covering over what does not correspond to happiness. We can think of this polishing as straightening; the removal of damage, the stains, and the scratches can mean the removal of traces of a queer existence. When queer desires are deemed damaging, it can be assumed we desire to cause damage as if we are trying to ruin a picture or as if we are demeaning something by not elevating it. Not following a family line is understood as breaking that line: queer as snap, snap, as if you are cutting up the family with a pair of scissors by

arranging your life in a different way. *Not following something as destroying something*: no wonder they find us to be destructive. We can turn a finding into a will; we might be willing to destroy the nuclear family and marriage if that is what it takes to live our lives in queer ways.

For some, extending marriage to gays and lesbians would be enough to destroy marriage; gay marriage as queer vandalism. I think this position is far too optimistic: queers need to do more than marry each other to destroy the institution of marriage. In aiming for more, queer politics might recover the militancy of second wave feminist approaches to the nuclear family as an institution we should aim to destroy. One thinks especially here of Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex* (1970), with its organizing assumption that institutions such as the family, which promise happiness by narrowing down what counts as a good life, should be dismantled. Given how the family is occupied, we might need to become squatters: to squat the family, to enter the building and do something else, to loiter, to linger, to go astray.

We might use the word *family* to describe our queer gatherings: queer use as reuse. I think of Susan Stryker's description of what was opened up for the "queer family we were building," when her partner gave birth to their child. She describes: "We joke about pioneering on a reverse frontier: venturing into the heart of civilization itself to reclaim biological reproduction from heterosexism and free it for our own uses." She adds: "We're fierce; in a world of 'traditional family values,' we need to be" (1994, 247). When things are used by those for whom they were not intended, the effect can be queer. We can laugh at the effect. Joking about queer effects is not unrelated to rage against the machinery of the family, which as Stryker shows renders some offspring into deviants and monsters. And that rage itself can be transformative: "through the operation of rage, the stigma itself becomes the source of transformative power" (1994, 249). It takes work to reclaim biological reproduction "for our own uses" just as it takes work to reoccupy the family, to make the familiar strange. And it takes work to rearrange our bodies, to rearrange ourselves. Stryker offers her own rearrangement by refiguring transgender embodiment as an affinity to monsters, to those who have been deemed monstrous, speaking back to Frankenstein in words sharpened by rage. Queer use: when we aim to shatter what has provided a container.

To open institutions up that have functioned as containers you have to throw usage into a crisis; you have to stop what usually happens from happening; and a "what" can be a "who," to stop "who" from happening.



C.5. Willing to cause an obstruction.

We might occupy a building or a street with the intent to disrupt ordinary usage, to get in the way of how that space is usually used (for what and by whom). Political protest often requires becoming an inconvenience. We might have to park our bodies in front of that door (figure C.5). In protesting, we are willing to cause an obstruction. Of course, sometimes you can cause an obstruction by virtue of existing or by questioning the virtue of an existence. But we learn from how much of our political work requires disrupting usage. Usage can be how something recedes, an injustice, violence. To make violence seeable, sometimes you have to create a scene: to stop business as usual, to stop the flow of traffic, to make it impossible to open or close that door, to pass through or pass by.

Sometimes we need to disrupt usage to bring attention to a cause. At other times, that you disrupt usage teaches us about a cause. When you make use of an unoccupied building, for instance, you become a squatter. You might not necessarily aim to cause disruption; you might squat because you need to have access to shelter. But in doing what is neces-

sary, you are refusing an instruction, a use instruction, which tells you not to enter unless you have legitimate access. To occupy an empty house without permission from an owner is to make an assertion: that ownership of a house does not justify the house being vacant. Ownership is not only the right to use something but the right not to use it. The future is owner occupied. It causes disruption not to render vacancy right or a right.

A squat can be part of a political protest. You might enter a building that is unoccupied in order to bring attention to a cause. In 2017 the feminist direct action group Sisters Uncut occupied Holloway Prison "to demand that the empty space be used to support local domestic violence survivors."[7] You have to occupy a building to demand that a building is used to support those who are not supported. We can learn from how survival and protest can be part of the same project. If you have to occupy a building in order to survive, in order to have somewhere to go to escape from violence that usually happens at home, domestic violence, that occupation is a political project; you counter the violence of a system by revealing the violence of a system.

Occupying empty buildings can also be about trying to fill those vacant spaces in a different way. It can be about how space is thrown into relief by not being occupied by, say, a white bourgeois family: this is what the bedroom is for, this is what the kitchen is for, each room to be used for bodies doing things in the right combination with other bodies. To squat, to make use of a space without owning a space, is to throw open the question of what space is for, to be released from the obligation to fill all the rooms in a certain way. Maybe queers become squatters of the family; we might not have a key to the door, but we can force it open by how we combine our forces. Queer use: in reusing old words for how we assemble we widen their range of uses. As Erika Doucette and Marty Huber note, "The range of uses for squatted buildings is often much wider than simply providing a place to live. These projects link ideals with material realities and utopias, as a crucial point for many queer-feminist living projects is finding ways to combine affordable and politically responsible forms of living/housing" (2008). A widening of use is necessary given the restriction of use. Experimentation with living and housing is a project of queering use, changing how we occupy spaces: a "who" change as a "what" change.

Queer use offers us another way of talking about diversity work: the work you have to do to open institutions to those for whom they were

not intended. Even to try to open a container can be deemed damaging, ruining the value of something, given how often the value of things tends to depend on their restriction. I think of how when more of us become professors, we are used as evidence of the lessening of the worth of being professors. And opening up institutions is not a task that can be achieved by a singular action precisely *given* how institutions are closed—and often remain closed through the very appearance of being open. *What's the Use?* has provided an explanation of how it is through small acts of use that possibilities become restricted, how histories becomes concrete, hard as walls. My task has thus been to keep thickening my account of use, more and more, heavier and harder—to show how histories can occupy buildings, can stop spaces from being usable even after they have been declared vacant or open for business.

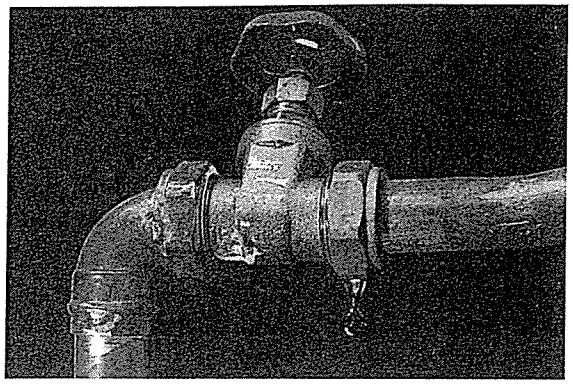
We know about closures from trying to open things. When you become a diversity worker, you learn how those who try to stop something from happening are themselves stopped. This is why I describe diversity workers as institutional plumbers; you have to work out how things are blocked because they are blocked. We might from this description assume that diversity workers are appointed to unblock the system. But blockages can be how the system is working. The system is working by stopping those who are trying to transform the system. This means that *to transform a system we have to stop it from working.* When you stop the machine from working, you have damaged the machine. Plumbers might need to become vandals, or we might have to pass as plumbers (fixing the leaks) to become vandals (making leaks bigger). We might have to throw a wrench in the works or become, to use Sarah Franklin's (2015) terms, "wenches in the works," to throw our bodies into the system, to try to stop the same old bodies, doing the same old things. The "wench in the works" has a queer kinship with the feminist killjoy—a kinship of figures can be a kinship of persons—as *nonreproductive agents*, as those who are trying to stop what usually happens from happening. A nonreproductive agent aims not to reproduce a line, not to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before.

So much is reproduced by the requirement to follow. In chapter 4, I describe how you are required to follow the well-trodden paths of citation, to cite properly as to cite those deemed to have already the most influence. In order to craft new knowledge, we might have to cite differently: citation as how we can refuse to be erased. We can consider the work of indigenous and black feminist scholars such as Zoe Todd (2016) and

Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2016), who have showed how we can craft different knowledges by not following old citational paths. In *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), I had a rather blunt citation policy, which was not to cite any white men. In this book, I have not been able to have such a policy: following use has meant engaging with the history of utilitarianism, which is a history of books written mainly by white men. Even if I have been critical of this history, use *as* reuse, I have kept it alive. A reuse is still a use, damn it! If I have used their names, I am not writing to them, or for them. I write to, for, those who are missing, whose names are not known, whose names cannot be used: those who are faint, becoming faint, fainter still.[8]

An occupation can be secured as a requirement to follow a line, to use the well-trodden path. To speak of whiteness in the academy or of colonialism as the context in which Enlightenment philosophy happened is to bring up the scandal of the vandal. Decolonizing the curriculum as a project has been framed as an act of vandalism, a willful destruction of our universals: knocking off the heads of statues, snapping at the thrones of the philosopher kings. In chapter 4, I refer to one way that eugenics is given an institutional home by the naming of buildings, lecture theaters, and professorships after eugenicists such as Francis Galton at UCL. I noted how the use of Galton's name was justified at a panel, "Why Isn't My Professor Black?," as an inheritance. There has since been a wider and meaningful discussion of the role of Galton's legacy at UCL. This questioning of a legacy was represented to the wider public as the Galton Must Fall Campaign.[9] While we might support such a campaign if it did indeed exist, there was no such campaign; it was in fact invented to discredit the questioning of a legacy as "cultural vandalism." When it was pointed out that such a campaign did not exist, the newspaper made some small amendments clarifying that such a campaign "has yet to materialise." What is clarifying is how discrediting works. To discredit the questioning of a legacy is to discredit the questioner. Even posing a question or making a history questionable is framed as vandalism.

A judgment can be turned into a project. If questioning what is received as inheritance is understood as damaging institutions, we might need to damage institutions. A complaint too is often treated as (potential) damage to the organization. In chapter 4, I introduced some data from my study of complaint. This study was inspired by my own experiences of working on multiple inquiries into sexual harassment and sexual misconduct, which is to say my project was inspired by students. After three years of trying to get through, of coming up against wall after wall,



C.6. Becoming a leak.

I eventually resigned. I resigned because I had had enough, and because I did not want to stay silent about what had been going on. Resignation is another way of saying *no* to the system; you withdraw your labor, your body, yourself. The word *resignation* can seem to suggest giving up, reconciling yourself to your fate, to resign yourself to something. I hear the word *resignation* and I hear a long, drawn-out sigh rather like saying, perhaps, *what's the use?* But resignation can also be how you refuse to resign yourself to a situation. Perhaps you are giving up on something, a belief that you can do the work *here*, but you are holding onto something, a belief in doing the work. What appears to be giving up can be a refusal to give in.

I resigned in part because of the silence about what was going on. To get information out, sometimes you need to get out. There is no point in being silent about resigning if you are resigning to protest silence. When I shared my reasons for resigning, I became the cause of damage. To speak out is to become a leaky pipe: drip, drip (figure C.6).

Organizations will try to contain that damage; public relations works as a form of damage limitation, repairing an injury to the organization's reputation. Indeed this is how diversity often takes institutional form: damage limitation. Happy shiny policies will be put in place, holes filled without reference to what went on before. Organizations often use paper to paper over the cracks, the leaks. Or they send out paper in order to create a trail, paper that can be used as evidence of what has been done. Creating evidence of doing something is not the same thing as doing something.

But there is hope here; they cannot mop up all of our mess. One spillage can lead to more coming out: can lead, does lead. Just loosen the

screw a little bit, a tiny little bit, and you might cause an explosion. We need more explosions.

Queer use might describe this potential for an explosion, how small deviations, a loosening of a requirement, the creation of an exit point, opening a door to allow something to escape, can lead to more and more coming out. Of course, this is why professional norms are so often about "keeping a lid on it." Institutional loyalty is performed as silence in case of institutional damage. In his 1993 Reith lecture, Edward Said argued that professionalism endangers the academic profession: "The danger comes from an attitude that I shall be calling professionalism; that is, thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and 'objective.'"[10]

Norms of conduct—being professional—are tied to protecting the organization from damage. Silence becomes a form of institutional loyalty. Being unprofessional, rocking that boat, not accepting the limits of what you can do, or what you can say, is risky; you risk your own chances of progressing. Rocking the boat is riskier the more precarious you are; if you are already near the edge, and you rock the boat, you might fear you will topple right over. But the more secure you are, the more you have to conserve. We are returning to what I described as a paradox in my conclusion of chapter 4: that if you proceed on a path in order to disrupt it, you can end up not disrupting it in order to proceed. The more we are resourced by an organization, the more its losses become our own losses. When I spoke out about sexual harassment at my institution, I was told I had caused not only damage to the organization but damage to feminism. Perhaps we are learning the requirements of professional feminism. Perhaps in order to become a professional feminist, you need not to rock the boat; you need to polish the furniture, to stop information getting out, to protect the organization's reputation. Of course, we all have to work out what to do in conditions that are not of our making. Our decisions are compromised, necessarily so. But when silence about violence becomes a way of holding onto feminist resources, we have a problem.

We might need to become unprofessional feminists and let it out. A leak can be a lead. A leak can be a feminist lead. Even complaints that do

C.7. Hard to find, harder to follow.

not seem to get anywhere can lead us to each other. I have been learning how those who make complaints end up finding out about others who made complaints before them; complaint becomes a kind of intergenerational intimacy. One student who made a complaint about sexual harassment noted: "The scale of the response was so extreme in a way compared to what we were complaining about. Now on reflection I guess it was because there were hundreds of complaints they had suppressed that they did not want to have a lid lifted on it." There is so much more to come out because of how much has been contained.

It might seem that complaints that do not get anywhere disappear without a trace like that unused path, hard to find, harder to follow (figure C.7).

In making a complaint, we keep a history alive; we do not let go. Feminist memory can become a counterinstitutional project; we have to find ways of creating paths for others to follow, to leave traces in places. Another student spoke to me about making an informal complaint about

white supremacy in her classroom: using that kind of term for what is *here*, at the university, can get you in serious trouble; she knew that but she was willing to do that. She became, in her terms, "an indigenous feminist monster," and she ended up completing her PhD off campus. She said that "an unexpected little gift" was how other students could come to her: "They know you are out there and they can reach out to you." You hold on by passing a refusal on. A complaint in taking you back can point forward, to those who come after, who can receive something from you because of what you tried to do, even though you did not get through, even though all you seemed to do was scratch the surface. Even what or who has been binned can acquire a new life. The complaints in the graveyard can come back to haunt institutions. It is a promise.

When we are stopped from getting *through*, we have to find other methods for getting information *out*. We might have to make other uses of paper, queer uses—leaflets or letters or posts that can be shared because they cannot be traced back to a source, a tale without a trail. We might whisper, speaking quietly to create a line of connection, so that information can be passed down. Vandalism becomes a tactic when we have to cut a message off from a body. We have to invent new methods for getting stuff out not just because we have exhausted usual procedures—such as complaint procedures—or because we are exhausted by them, though many of us have and are. We have to invent new methods because we have learned that working "in house" too often ends up being a restoration project, polishing the furniture so it appears less damaged—a labor I have called, with reference to the uses of diversity, "institutional polishing" (Ahmed 2012, 2017). In house, the master's house—we can remember Audre Lorde: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1984, 110–13). Of course, we have limited options, and we use the tools available to us. Sometimes we do what is required: we might even be willing to reflect the good image the organization has of itself back to itself. But we have to be careful not to lose ourselves in that reflection. We do not want to polish away the scratches; they are testimony.

Yes, those scratches: we are back to those scratches (figure C.8). We can reach each other through what appears as damage, mere scratch and scribble. Complaints become writing on the wall: we were here; we did not get used it.

C.8. Writing on the wall.

Survival and Creativity

The riskier it is to speak out, the more inventive we have to become. The requirement to be inventive is not just a matter of communication. Audre Lorde in her poem "A Litany for Survival" evokes "those of us" who "love in doorways coming and going in the hours between dawns" (1978, 31). You might have to use the less-used paths, turn a doorway into a meeting place: a shadowy place can be a safer place to meet. You stop and loiter at the very threshold you are supposed to pass through quickly. You might have to try to slide by undetected because being seen is dangerous when you are seen as dangerous. Queer use can be a matter of survival, becoming fainter as your best chance of being at all.

Becoming fainter: a queer archive too is made up of fainter trails, "an archive of the ephemeral," as José Esteban Muñoz (1996) described so perfectly, an archive that is possible because queers are attuned to the fleeting, to the flickering, to the significance of what arrives only to disappear again (see also Halberstam 2006, 161). There can be queer possibilities not only in use—in how materials can be picked up when we refuse an instruction—but in being not of use. Perhaps these possibilities are closer together than they seem: queer use as finding a use for what has been designated not much use, finding that a potential has not been exhausted. Elizabeth Freeman suggests that a queer method attends to what has been deemed useless: "The point may be to trail behind actually

existing social possibilities: to be interested in the tail end of things, to be willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless" (2010, xiii). In queering the archive, we have affection for what has been discarded; we find uses for what has been declared useless.

Ironically, or perhaps not, it was a much-used book that gave me a glimpse of a queer use for what is not much use. I noted in chapter 2 how there is a discussion in *The Origin of the Species* of vestigial organs, as parts that are no longer useful but linger, however dwindled, such as the small eye of the blind mole; these parts are sometimes called leftovers. Vestigiality is the retention of structures or attributes of ancestral species that have lost their functionality: another version of the strange temporality of use. Let me quote again from Darwin: "Rudimentary parts, as it is generally admitted, are apt to be highly variable. . . . *Their variability seems to result from their uselessness*, and consequently from natural selection having had no power to check deviations in their structure" ([1859] 2009, 118–19, emphasis mine).

Darwin here is considering uselessness not as injurious but as indifference: what is useless neither helps nor hinders an organism. But we know how compulsory heterosexuality can make variations that seem indifferent to fate, fatal. And we know how deviants are punished, how deviation as such is understood as harm. And we know how uselessness has been a deadly assignment, a history of who and what is discarded: how the fragments are swept up and away. We can find other ways of telling the history of use and uselessness, hearing the queer potential in a sentence from a much-used book. That potential: not being selected is not to be checked; not being selected is to have more room to roam, to vary, to deviate; to proliferate. If queer use can be about survival, following the less well-used path in order not to be detected, queer use can also be about creativity, the variations that are possible when you are not selected and rewarded for going the right way.

Not being selected also means not being supported. And so, we have to create our own support systems, queer handles—how we hold on, how a life can go on—when we are shattered, because we are shattered. No wonder then: the stories of the exhaustion of inhabiting worlds that do not accommodate us, the stories of the weary and the worn, the teary and the torn are the same stories as the stories of inventiveness, of creating something, of making something. Some of this inventiveness can be understood as description; there is nothing mere about description. A world has too often been described from the point of view of those

who are accommodated. A world might seem open if it was open to you. When we describe the world from the point of view of those not accommodated, a different world appears.[11] If you do not have a key—and as I explored in chapter 1, a body can be a key—a door is a wall. We have to share accounts of how doors are closed, for whom doors are closed.

When doors are closed to some people, they are also closed to our stories, which include our stories about closed doors. When a door is closed, you have to find other ways to get information out. You might have to make use of the resources available to you in order to create new resources. Barbara Smith describes why the Kitchen Table Press, dedicated to publishing the work of women of color, took its name: "We chose our name because the kitchen was the centre of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other" (1989, 11). She describes the commitment of this press: "Our work is both cultural and political, connected to the struggles of freedom of all of our peoples. We hope to serve as a communication network for Women of Colour in the U.S. and elsewhere" (12). You turn a kitchen table into a publishing house; the places where many of us gather, work, meet, and greet become communication networks, vehicles for sending information out, for getting out, for reaching each other.

The Kitchen Table Press closed soon after Audre Lorde's death. There are many more stories to be told about the life legacies of collectives that do not seem to last, at least in the form they assume at a given point in time. I think too of the UK-based organization OWAAD (Organization of Women of Asian and African Descent), which was established in 1978 and closed in 1982. A four-year institutional life can be a lifelong legacy. The 1985 book *Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain*, written by Beverley Bryan and Stella Dadzie, who were founding members of OWAAD, and Suzanne Scafe, who was also a member, was recently republished. This book is a founding text in Black British feminism. The new edition includes an interview with Heidi Mirza and the authors. Heidi Mirza questions the narrative that OWAAD failed because it did not last: "Why should it last forever? These things don't. The whole point of organising: it doesn't last forever" (2018, 262). In addressing the reasons OWAAD did not last, Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe have much to teach us about lives and legacies. We learn that for OWAAD to have lasted longer, it would have had to make different decisions; it would have had to change the direction of the organization in order to secure funding. Sometimes to secure a future for an organization requires funding. Sometimes securing

funding requires giving up on a project. Sometimes to keep hold of a project, you must give up on a future for an organization. If an institutional death is sometimes necessary for a political life, an institutional life can sometimes require a political death. A cessation can be a continuation by other means. A legacy can be what is enabled for those who are part of an organization at the very moment it ceases to be; not lasting can be how a lifeline is thrown out, how you can reach others by what you refuse to give up. And so we learn: less lasting does not mean less important or even less widely received. What is fainter might survive in another sense: in the hearts and minds of those who tell the tale, a tale as another queer trail.

Perhaps what we create is fragile because we need it to survive. Attending to the uses of use has led me to reflect more about what is necessary, on *need* as politics. When a world has been assembled around your needs—when you are given what you need to live, to move on, to get on—need does not need to matter. If you have to work to have what you need, need matters. For Audre Lorde (1984), poetry is not a luxury but as necessary as bread. And Lorde often writes of bread—bread as what we make, kneading, as what we break, needing, to live our lives fully. Judith Butler reminds us that "for those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity" (2004, 31). I think of how a still lingers, how possibility is something we have to fight for still because of what is still. Use can be how a possibility has been restricted. Complaints are often what you have to make for something to be possible. Complaints too are necessary.

I think of Alexis Pauline Gumbs writing in response to the devastation of Hurricane Harvey—of the survival of indigenous, immigrant, queer, black, people of color, poor loved ones—writing of how their survival is **necessary**, emphasizing the word in bold.[12] I retain her emphasis; we can share an emphasis. I think of exclamation points, which began as an example of overuse but then became something we do, or even are: in making a complaint we are heard as shouting; in being we are heard as insistent. Necessary is bold as well as insistent; it requires being bold for some not to do what they are told. Necessary is a claim; *it is what some have to do to be.* The work we have to do to be could be understood as building work. If I have considered queer use as how we dismantle a world that has been built to accommodate only some, we can also think of queer use as a building project. We might aim not to build more secure institutions, using the well-used paths, but to build from the needs of those who are

not enabled by following those routes. Such spaces might be understood as shelters: places to go for nourishment so that we can return to do the hard work of dismantling what has become built into a system.

For those who have to fight for what they need to survive, use itself becomes useful. Distance from use, rather like distance from necessity, often depends on the labor of others who will attend to one's needs. In chapters 2 and 3, I explored how elites distanced themselves from utility. The scholar sets himself apart from the administrator, the artist from the craftsperson. That some are required to be useful is how others are freed from that requirement. We can refuse any such distance or any such freedom predicated on having access to the labor of others who will attend to our needs. We can also value the labor of *that* attending. Those who do the housework, who have to take care of bodies and things, know stuff; to know is to know about needs. You come to know things from working intimately with them, working out how far to go before they too say no.

The project of queering use does not aim to create distance from use but to inhabit use all the more. We might respond to the problem of instrumentalism not by rejecting the idea of useful knowledge but by calling for knowledge that is useful to others, with this "to" being an opening, an invitation, a connection. We can follow those who came before us. bell hooks offers a powerful critique of how theory can be used "as an instrument of domination" (1994, 65), used to enforce rather than loosen hierarchies. hooks does not end there, with the sharp edge of a critique. She also suggests theory "may also contain important insights, thoughts, visions, that could if used differently serve a healing liberatory function" (65). For a past use not to be exhaustive, we have work to do, the work of enabling a tool to be used for other purposes. Marilyn Strathern reflects on the problematic of the requirement to produce "useful knowledge."[13] She notes the existence of an "evidence based era of policy," which is "articulated in an extreme form in the view that knowledge that cannot be communicated is useless knowledge" (2005, 75). But she also acknowledges that "there is nothing that cannot be useful if by that we mean putting knowledge to human ends" (73). Her attempt to value a different kind of intellectual work rests on an idea of cultivating capacities, which "need 'using' in the sense of exercising—use that is not pre-empted by possible usefulness" (103). Our task in challenging instrumental rationality is to make use of other uses of use.

And we might challenge how functionalism becomes fatalism, how for some *for* is treated as *before*, becoming an end before you even begin. But

in challenging how the requirement to be useful can be imposed on us, we open up a conversation about usefulness and how it might matter. I think again of Audre Lorde, who especially in her later work often spoke of her desire to be useful to others. She spoke even of her desire for her own death to be a useful death (1988, 53). She writes of how she thought about death, about how to die (as well as how to live): "rather than just fall into death any old way, by default, according to somebody else's rules" (53). Not falling into death, not going the same way others are going, as things have gone before, requires asking questions. Usefulness here is about asking questions about how to do something, how to be something. She notes that you have no choice; mortality is the condition of having to die. But mortality acquires a different meaning for those whose existence is not supported: "We all have to die at least once. Making that death useful would be winning for me. I wasn't supposed to exist anyway, not in any meaningful way in this fucked-up whiteboys' world" (53). Usefulness might matter more for those who were not "supposed to exist." Usefulness then becomes a political address, a way of facing outward, toward others. Audre Lorde teaches us that we need to keep the question of use alive not because use does not matter but because it does. What's the use? I noted in my introduction how this question can sound like exasperation, giving up on the point of something. I considered how for Virginia Woolf that question, however difficult, throws everything into question. To make use a question is to inherit a feminist and queer project of living differently. Asking the point *of* use might be an address *to*. To be useful can be a way of addressing a world: a multiple plural *to*; *to* that faces many directions; *to* that can animate a life, too.

Animation: queer use as the work you have to do to be. The more you are blocked, the more you have to try to find a way through. The less support you have, the more support you need. We might become each other's resources; we prop each other up because we understand how diminishing it can be to have to fight for an existence, to have to fight, even, to enter a room. Perhaps the harder it is to be, the more use you have for use. We can return to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's approach to misfits. Garland-Thomson uses the analogy of a square peg and a round hole: no amount of pushing will get that peg into the hole. Her conclusion is not that the peg needs to be modified in order that it can fit. Rather she suggests that "one of the fundamental premises of disability politics is that social justice and equal access should be achieved by changing the shape of the world, not changing the shape of our bodies" (2011, 597).

We need to change the shape of the world. Garland-Thomson also suggests we need to think about the world from the point of view of those whose shape has not allowed them to fit. In other words, she argues *for* misfitting: "Let me linger on a final reason why disability misfits should be in the world" (604). Lingering itself, I have suggested, can be a form of queer attention. Her reasons are as follows:

> The moral understandings, subjugated knowledge, or ethical fitting that can emerge from what might be called socially conscious, or even theoretically mediated, misfitting can yield innovative perspectives and skills in adapting to changing and challenging environments. Acquiring or being born with the traits we call disabilities fosters an adaptability and resourcefulness that often is underdeveloped in those whose bodies fit smoothly into the prevailing, sustaining environment. This epistemic status fosters a resourcefulness that can extend to the nondisabled and not yet disabled as they relate to and live with people with disabilities. For example, people born without arms all learn to use their toes to accomplish tasks that those of us with arms never are able to do. Blind people learn to navigate through the world without the aid of light, a skill useful when sources of artificial light that seeing people depend upon fail. Deaf people develop modes of communication that are silent. Such misfitting can be generative rather than necessarily catastrophic for human beings. (604)

Garland-Thomson offers a powerful critique of how worlds are built to enable some to fit, and not others. She is also suggesting here, with reference to the creativity of use, that the experience of not being accommodated, while painful, difficult, and exhausting—even catastrophic—is not only that. You acquire resources and skills in negotiating a world that is not built for you, making use of what you have because you do not have what it is assumed you need. In making use of what you have but what is not usually used to accomplish something—making use of your toes to do what hands usually do—you build something, create something, that would not otherwise be here. When we cannot make use of some things, we might find uses for other things. What is usually understood as a limit or a restriction can be an opening. If a restriction of possibility can be an opening, then being used up, being depleted, shattered, does not end there.

Misfitting can be understood as generative precisely given it involves friction; when bodies do not fit seamlessly into space, things happen.

Aimi Hamraie introduces the concept of "crip technoscience" to investigate the "critical design work of how misfit disabled users, for whom estrangement is already a pervasive experience, draw on the sensibilities of friction and disorientation to enact design politics" (2017, 103). Crip and queer meet at an odd angle. When you draw upon what does not fit, what is slant-wise or bent, you draw a different world. We can think of the disability design work of Liz Jackson, who describes how "our lives are spent cultivating an intuitive creativity, because we navigate a world that isn't built for our bodies."[14] Indeed, Jackson also notes how often the creativity of disabled designers is written out of the history of design, how too often disabled people are assumed to be the recipients of, rather than agents in, the design process. Jackson calls disabled designers the "original life hackers." When you have to modify things to make them usable, you are creating out of necessity. The expression "life hacker" also conveys how creativity can be a disruption in the order of things and can be intended as such. A hacker is also a vandal; you have to break into a system when you do not have legitimate access to that system. A break can be how you leak information out as well as how you expose the failure of that system.

Sometimes we do not have to break in; doors can be opened to those who have previously been refused entry. What happens then? Who do you become then? Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton explore how trans people are now "offered many 'doors,'" that is, "entrances to visibility, to resources, to recognition, and to understanding" (2017, xxiii). They show how some doors can be traps that require accommodation to existing norms. Given doors can be traps, they suggest we can find *trapdoors*: "those clever contraptions that are not entrances or exits but secret passages that take you someplace else, often someplace as yet unknown" (xxiii). Secret passages, backdoors, trapdoors: they can also be what you find because of what you refuse. We have to navigate a world, the openings as well as the closings, making use of what we find along the way.

Sometimes you have to wiggle to make room. I think back to discussions of queer biology, how odd and curious life can be: those inversions, beaks that end up the wrong way up, what is cobbled together out of necessity from parts at hand. Can this be a kind of queer inheritance: how we inherit from past struggles to exist; small modifications, the widening of a passageway or an opening just enough to enable more to get by or to get through; a sociability as worn as wisdom, secret passages,

meeting places, passing information down a line, about where to go, what to do?

How odd that from necessity we might become alive to possibility—how odd, how queer. When we consider use not only as the potential to increase capacity but as contact and friction, wear and tear, bodies come to matter in different ways. Queer use can be offered as an ethics of finitude, an appreciation of the wrinkle or the scratch, expressions of time on the surfaces of bodies and things, loving what does not, and will not, last. *What's the Use?* has been full of old and worn things, broken things, from Silas's much-loved pot, to cups that have flown off their handles (we too can fly off our handles), to used-up tubes of toothpaste, to that sense we might have of being used and used up, of having nothing left to give. A queer affinity can be an affinity with the broken or broken down, to what spills from a container, what shatters under the weight of history. Alison Piepmeier titles an essay "What a Shattered Coffee Mug Says about Life."[15] She writes: "Last week, I was having my second cup of coffee, using my beloved Princess Leia coffee cup. As I added to my ice coffee, I slipped. Princess Leia fell. The cup broke into pieces." When Piepmeier slips, the coffee cup slips. When it shatters, she is shattered. When it is in pieces, she is in pieces. Piepmeier shares with us this shattering story while she is losing her life, while she is dying. She tells us why the coffee cup matters to her. Her brother gave her that cup; a story of how we acquire something can be a story of how we love something. Once we love something, it can become part of a daily routine: "As I got older, the Princess Leia cup entered my life in more complicated ways. Her image became more and more central to my life. I drank from her every day. She became the image of my body. She was my picture on Facebook, in Gmail, and on my blog. Princess Leia became part of my regular morning life." Alison loved Princess Leia: "This Princess Leia, though, wasn't cartoonish. She was confident. She was fearless. She had character." I think of that bond, that fragile bond between Alison and Princess Leila, between Alison and her cup, between Alison and Carrie Fisher, fragility as fierce: "Her face is fierce. . . . There Princess Leia was, in my hands, broken but defiant."

Broken but defiant; we can shatter when things shatter. But this shattering can be fierce as well as fragile: how things can hold more than coffee, how they can hold an idea of who we are, of who we can become. Alison's daughter, Maybelle, witnesses her mother's grief at having broken Princess Leia, as she witnesses her mother's illness; her daughter

understands "that things are changing." Alison's brother finds an online description of kintsugi. In the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery, kintsugi, a break is understood as part of the life of a thing; the break is repaired to show the break rather than to hide the break.[16] Her cup is repaired not to restore it to how it was before but "to recognize the beauty of the effort to mend what is broken, however imperfectly, however incompletely." The effort to mend, the striving, the work: "to see compassion in the work of both potter and physician." I am so moved by this beautiful piece of writing, to think about what it means to hold on not by trying to restore something to what it was before it was broken but to keep "the broken pieces together."

The broken can be queer kin. To offer a queer way of working is not to start anew, with the light, the bright, the white, the upright; it is to start with the weighty, the heavy, the weary, and the worn. When a history makes it hard to be, you feel that history as weight. In the first chapter of this book, I mentioned how there can be a certain point when something is used too much, a tipping point. A snap can be a tipping point: those moments when you cannot take it anymore, and you can no longer put up with what you previously endured. Something breaks, shatters. If sometimes we try to get used to what makes it hard, a snap can be how you give yourself a chance at being: snapping as how you do *not* get used to it. We reach a breaking point. We can aim to reach such a point, to take a break, to snap, so that we no longer bear the weight of a history. Our heavy histories are also snappy, rioting, gathering, passing *no* around. Consider the Stonewall uprising. I think of Sylvia Rivera, who, as a trans woman of color, tends not to be remembered in how those events are remembered. In an interview, she describes for us what happened on that day.[17] It was a day like other days for those who gathered at the bar—gays, dykes, drag queens: a racially diverse army of the willingly perverse, an army that is used to living with police violence, an army for whom such violence is usual. Rivera says: "This is what we learned to live with at that time. We had to live with it." But something happens on that day: "We had to live with it until that day. And then, I don't know if it was the customers or it was the police. It just [*snaps fingers*], everything clicked." The snapping of fingers, that sound, snap, snap, allows Rivera to convey the sensation of things falling into place, when suddenly—or it seems sudden but really it took a long time—a collective comes out with a "no," a collective that is fragile, fabulous, full, furious: "Everybody just like, Why the fuck are we doin'

all this for? . . . Oh, it was so exciting. It was like, Wow, we're doing it. We're doing it. We're fucking their nerves."

A snap can be catchy, igniting a crowd—all those years of frustration, pain; all that is wearing, coming out, getting out; claiming the freedom to be what they have tried to stop you from being. To make snap part of how we tell the story of political movements is to show how exhaustion and rebellion can come from the same place. Even when snap comes from sap—from being tired out, depleted—snap can reboot; snap can boost. It can be electric, snap, snap, sizzle; so much comes out when you tip something over. Not getting used to it can be a queer aspiration, a queering of aspiration; it might be what we have to do collectively to breathe.

In not getting used to it, bodies become expressive. The word *express* comes from press. It implies something that is squeezed out. To say snap is expressive is to say what is shared is what is no longer contained. A hand clenches, refusing to be handy; an arm strikes. A queer use of the body allows bodies to do the talking. I think too of snapping fingers as part of this signaling of a refusal to get used to something. Marlon Riggs explores finger snapping as an expression of political resistance perhaps akin to the clenched fist for African American gay men. In Riggs's documentary, *Tongues Untied*, finger snapping offers a collective way of speaking: it is how tongues are released from bondage.[18] Finger snapping can say: don't mess with us. Finger snapping offers a way of speaking back and speaking to, a language of the body that gives room to be in a body that is not given room. Riggs's message is defiant: "Our notice is served. Our silence has ended. Snap!" ([1991] 1999, 311).

We have behind us many snappy messages of defiance. Here is another: we are here, we are queer; *get used to it*. To reverse an instruction is to refuse an instruction. Sometimes we have to become creative because of a restriction or to fight a restriction. We queer the places where we have been, a tail, a trail. We might think of desire lines, those lines on the ground left behind by users who have not followed official paths.[19] Desire lines are created only by use and can be thought of as the promise of queer use: trails that remind us where we have been, trails that tell us where to go to find each other.

I want to end this book by returning one last time to an image (figure C.9). This image of a postbox is a queer teacher. It teaches us that it is possible for those deemed strangers or foreigners to take up residence in spaces that have been assumed as belonging to others, as being for others to use. The postbox could have remained in use: the nest destroyed be-

C.9. A queer teacher.

fore it was completed, the birds displaced. A history of use is a history of such displacements, many violent—displacements that are often unrecognized because of how things remain occupied. It is because of this occupation, this settling of history, this weight, that queering use requires bringing things down. This is why it is not enough to affirm the queerness of use. To bring out the queerness of use requires more than an act of affirmation: it requires a world dismantling effort.[20] In order for queer use to be possible, in order to recover a potential that has not simply been lost but stolen, there is work to do. To queer use is work: it is hard and painstaking work; it is collective and creative work; it is diversity work.

Queer use is the work we have to do to queer use.

This image has something else to teach us. Creating a shelter and disrupting usage can refer to the same action:

A doorway becomes a meeting place.

A kitchen table becomes a publishing house.

A postbox becomes a nest.