Chapter 2

Dear Toni Morrison

On Black Girls as Makers of Theories and Worlds

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Lucille Clifton's poem "what the mirror said" begins with this invocation:

> listen,
> you a wonder, ([1980] 2012: 199)

We read this poem in a graduate class on girlhoods in the spring of 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the relentless precarity that it brought into our lives. In this course, we also read Toni Morrison's ([1970] 2007) debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*. We returned to Clifton's poem throughout the semester, forming the contours of the course and rooting our analysis in the body/ies that girls inhabit. To be brought back to our bodies as a source of wonder and strength in a moment when all we wanted was to protect our bodies was a stark reminder of the multitudes and complexities of all that our girlhoods contain. Morrison's book, too, was a reckoning: challenging us to think about girls, girlhoods, space, relationality, knowledge, and so much more in different and urgently needed ways. Morrison begins her story with the marigolds that did not bloom in the fall of 1941—not just their (Claudia and her family's) marigolds, "no-

Notes for this section can be found on page 75.

body's did" ([1970] 2007: xix). Introducing Claudia and Pecola's world this way to the reader helped us understand their girlhood as intimately connected to the making of the world. As former girls, it also urged us to think of our own stories in relation to Claudia, Pecola, and the making of their, and our, world.

Together, Clifton's ([1980] 2012) poem and Morrison's ([1970] 2007) book helped shape our understanding of (our own) girlhoods as complex, relational, spatial, and deeply important to understanding the current spaces and world we are trying to (survive and) live in. One of the assignments for this course was to write a letter addressed to Toni Morrison as a response to *The Bluest Eye*; collected here are our individual letters. Writing these letters was an unexpected gift during a time of isolation and loneliness; as a method, it invited us to engage with the text with a vulnerability mostly ridiculed in academic spaces, while reaching for the relationality that Morrison's work demands. These are our stories, each offering our memories and moments of suffering, resistance, love, and joy. By way of connection, this assignment illuminated the distance created—or perhaps made more visible—by the pandemic and reminded us of the ways we struggle to build relations and even make community across the time and space between us. Our virtual class sessions each week were a refuge from loneliness and became a space of collaboration. These letters reflect that space, and we share them here as a way to think about how our stories might help us all find openings for solidarity and mutuality through and across differences and across space and time. We all might not always see our own selves or experiences in Pecola and/or Claudia (although some of us do), but we are always, *always*, in relation to these girls, to their knowledge and world-making. We should not shy away from that relation.

Each of our letters offers a different perspective on themes of reclaiming, repairing, (re)imagining, and hoping for new fertile soils, of life, death, and memory. The foci of these letters include undoing/remaking/(re)claiming the world in relation to Black girls' place-based ontoepistemologies; a politics against white epistemologies of ignorance; and affective solidarities, reflexivity, and voice. Read together, it is our hope that these letters demonstrate what might be possible through a careful (Sharpe 2016) study of Black girlhood that pays attention to spatiotemporality, sociality, relationality, reflexivity, and knowledge production, while understanding Morrison ([1970] 2007) and the girls in her book as spatial theorists and makers of knowledge (and worlds). From this perspective, in these letters, we seek to address three questions:

1. What kind of knowledge is harvested in those soils?
2. What and how does that knowledge matter?
3. What possibilities open up for all of us when we take girls seriously as theorists and creative writers of the world?

McKittrick (2000: 130) wrote, "It is through the instability and incoherence of place and sense of self that the characters in Morrison's novel [*The Bluest Eye*] continually 'become': they are embodied processes rather than passive recipients of cultural subjugation." This incoherence comes partly in the characters' relationships to Blackness and whiteness: "To be an acceptable part of the nation—to belong—is to be white" (133); how Pecola and Claudia negotiate their *un*belonging, their construction of space outside of whiteness (the United States), is a damnation of our current world. Pecola does not have a happy ending; there is no resolution, no good feeling in her story. Claudia, in the closing lines of the novel, understands that sometimes, and particularly in the case of her friend Pecola, the land and soil that should nurture Black girlhood instead "kills of its own volition" and that when this happens, "we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live" (Morrison [1970] 2007: 206). This is a particularly difficult reality to bear now, in this moment, as we all witness the utter disposability of children in the United States: the ways in which we (i.e., adults, society, this land that should nourish) have abandoned our responsibility to care and to nourish—or rather, how our society was only ever meant to nourish certain children, certain lives, at the devastating expense of others. The knowledge generated in these soils is unrelenting in its demands for upheaval, in its urgent calls for an otherwise. In these letters, the three of us attempt to reckon with this urgency while also holding Clifton's ([1980] 2012) wonder at the center of our analysis.

Understanding Me without Seeing Me: A Reflexive Letter to Toni Morrison after Reading *The Bluest Eye*

By Lauryn DuPree

Dear Ms. Morrison,

Unfortunately, you'll never read this, but as you well know, writing is not always about the audience or recipient. Writing offers a space for reflection, understanding, expression, protest, apologizing, and healing, among a host of other functions. Similarly, reading offers many of those

outlets, too. For me, reading was my safe place, my escape. As you were as a child, I too was a voracious reader, devouring books as fast as I possibly could, befriending main characters whose relationships with me were always cut too short, and mourning as I felt the pages under my fingertips begin to dwindle as I neared the book endings (Als 2003). As a young girl, I frequented libraries and bookstores, which greeted me with the smell of words on pages and the possibilities for new places and friends.

Books took me to places that my physical body did not allow. You see, I spent most of my life living with crippling hidden anxiety and existing in a body that did not feel like it belonged to me. For a number of medical reasons, I was morbidly obese for the majority of my adolescent and young adult years. Looking at me, you would have seen a brown-haired, hazel-eyed, chubby-cheeked, taller-than-average, fat white girl. In earnest, I was all of those things. What I was *not*, though, were the societal judgments that each of those descriptors carry/ied. So, although you in no way wrote *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison [1970] 2007) for me, a white girl-still-turning-woman, I could not help but see parts of me embodied in both Claudia and Pecola. Not wanting blue-eyed dolls and not totally fangirling over Shirley Temple–like white-girl icons connected me to Claudia. Struggling with what it is like to live a life in which you do not feel seen for who you are, but seen for your circumstances, the story of Pecola resonated with parts of my coming-of-age story. However, I need to say that *The Bluest Eye* is not mine to claim. I do not get to colonize the stories of Claudia and Pecola, to assert them as my own.

Usually in reading a book, I start with thinking of myself and then read to see how the characters fit *me*, as is common in Western (read: white) thought. With *The Bluest Eye*, Blackness is central, and whiteness is left on the outskirts. Upon reading your novel, I did not automatically connect with any character, and reflecting on that realization, I think that was your purpose. As a white (developing) woman, it would be nearly impossible and, dare I say, inappropriate for me to assert that I could fully, wholeheartedly, and immediately latch on to your characters as myself. Instead, you had me feverishly flipping pages, looking for where *I* fit in *your* story. That was when I realized how I used to frame the way I viewed the world, as problematic as that methodology seems when written out.

As a girl, where did *I* fit?

I suppose I could do a quick search on the internet for some cliché, vapid quotes, but it's not that easy. It's not that cut-and-dried. If the solution could be found in a Hallmark card or on a refrigerator magnet, then your

writing would not be held as salient and canonical as it is, half a century after you first penned the work.

My story of not fitting in started early in my life, and I mean *fitting* in every sense of the word. Early in life, it was fitting in with how I played, fitting into friend groups, fitting in to what I should or should not do. Later in life, it transformed into fitting in to "cool" clothes and even physically fitting into spaces.

> It had begun with Christmas and the gift of dolls. The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. From the clucking sounds of adults I knew that the doll represented what they thought was my fondest wish. I was bemused with the thing itself, and the way it looked. What I was I supposed to do with it? . . .
>
> . . . Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl treasured. "Here," they said "*this* is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it." (Morrison [1970] 2007: 19–21)

My very first doll (and the only doll I ever played with or connected myself to) was a Cabbage Patch doll. Obviously, as a late-1980s baby, I was apparently born into the time of the Cabbage Patch phenomenon, but I was oblivious. Did that stop my parents from stalking stores until shipments arrived? Of course not. In the small town where I lived at the time, *all* of the young girls were getting Cabbage Patch dolls, and in my parents' eyes, if any kid in town deserved a Cabbage Patch doll, it was me. That fateful day, the day these dolls were available in the only toy store in our town that carried them, my parents packed me up and let me choose exactly which Cabbage Patch doll I wanted.

There were plenty of "blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll[s]" (Morrison [1970] 2007: 21) from which I could have picked from the cabbage patch, so to speak. I chose a little boy with mocha-colored skin and short, brown, twisted hair made of yarn, dressed in a gray and yellow athletic-looking outfit. From my mother's recollection, he came with a birth certificate and the name "Michael Jack," which I determined was too cumbersome. He soon became affectionately known as Mick Jack, and he was my companion, as I was an only child at the time, not yet having the experience of a sibling. Looking back, I'm not sure if I didn't *want* a doll that looked like me, didn't *see* a doll that looked like me, or just didn't care, but I chose the doll that I truly wanted.

In any case, for a period of time, Mick Jack went with me wherever I went, including friends' houses in my neighborhood. The two girls I

played with most often were petite, blond-haired, blue-eyed girls who *always* made the better dance teams than I did. They let me play when it was not something that I would hold them back in, so doll play fit that bill. At our first play session with Mick Jack, I proudly sat him down as part of our group, and their eyes grew as big as the pretend saucers on which our plastic teacups sat.

"Why would you get *that* doll?"

"You got a boy? With dark skin? Why not a girl like you?"

"Was he on sale?"

Like Claudia, in that moment, I was infuriated. I saw these two girls with their dolls who had shiny, synthetic blond hairs on their heads and painted blue eyes, with three little dots to mimic the glossiness of eyes, sitting in front of me with faces glued in disdain. I had the urge to grab their dolls and throw them across the room. I was so proud of Mick Jack. At the time, I internalized what they said and let them know that I had, in fact, chosen him and that I needed a "break" from "girl" things. They looked at each other and giggled, still in disbelief that I would've chosen him. But then again, I wasn't like them. I didn't have the blond hair that I could find on a doll or the blue eyes that people commented on. My hazel eyes, at the time, garnered much less attention than cerulean blue eyes did. My body was awkward and chubby and soft, surely not intended for the invitation-only acrobatics team on which they both starred.

Like Claudia, in that moment, I was not just mad at their dolls; I was mad at *them*.

> "Oh," said Frieda, "somebody has to love you."
>
> "Oh."
>
> There was a long pause in which Pecola and I thought this over. It would involve, I supposed, "my man," who, before leaving me, would love me. . . .
>
> Then Pecola asked a question that had never entered my mind. "How do you do that? I mean, *how do you get somebody to love you* [emphasis added]?" But Frieda was asleep. And I didn't know. (Morrison [1970] 2007: 32)

> Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time. Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would only see what there was to see: *the eyes of other people* [emphasis added]. (46–47)

The little girl in me who proudly brought Mick Jack to her friends' house, only to find that both me and my brown-faced doll were not good

enough, grew up looking to others for validation, approval, and affirmation. In school, it manifested differently than how it did in Pecola: I was the teacher's pet who could do no wrong. With friends, also different from Pecola's experience, I decided to go a different route. I was *everyone's* friend, allowing others to (ab)use me in ways that I thought would earn their friendship and trust. I bounced from friend group to friend group, dabbling in extracurricular activities, like Yearbook, that let me be looked up to, as you were (Als 2003). I let a boy use me for companionship, advice, pleasure, and (secretly) math answers.

Through high school and college, because of a medical condition, I rapidly gained weight despite not eating as society would deem an obese person should eat and not being "lazy" as society quickly labeled an obese person. In fact, doctors told me that because of this condition, I could eat a salad, and for whatever reason, my body would hold onto every calorie I ate as if I were starving. Friends would share meals with me and say, "Lauryn, you don't eat like a fat person." How does one respond to this? I usually internalized their use of the word *fat* and committed to never again eat in front of whomever had brought that up.

In 2009, I stepped on the scale and saw that I weighed 455 pounds. I was a first-year teacher. Like Pecola, I did not exist at all on my own; I existed only in comparison with and through the eyes of others. I had relinquished thoughts of romantic relationships because of the way I looked: "Look at you! No one could love you." I was crippled by anxiety stemming from my body: "That person died from a heart attack, and they were way skinnier than you! You're bound to die soon if they did." I did *any* and *every*thing someone asked me to do, even to my own detriment: "If you don't help them, they'll leave you."

Pecola had China, Poland, and Miss Marie. I had my mom, dad, and brother. I did not let anyone *truly* see who I was except for them. In turn, as Pecola did, I put my trust in them alone at this time in my life. Just as Pecola did, when it came to my family, I "loved them, visited them, and ran their errands" (Morrison [1970] 2007: 50–51). I lived with my family, out of insecurity, until I was twenty-six years old. I was too scared to go out into the world on my own; I thought the world would fail me because I had never learned to trust it.

In 2015, I reached my breaking point. My anxiety was worse than it had ever been, triggered by my weight. I decided to have weight-loss surgery. At first, I wanted the surgery to make me *look* like I thought I was supposed to look, or rather, how society thought I should look. The deci-

sion to have this surgery was not an easy way out; in fact, like Pecola, I was faced with a situation that threatened my life. I signed off for the surgery by saying, in essence, that I was willing to die (during surgery) in order to save myself. The difference here, though, is that whereas I had decided what the world thought about *me*, an albeit very egotistical view, Pecola did not get the chance to do so: the world made its own decisions for her.

> All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who know her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. (Morrison [1970] 2007: 205)

During the first year and a half after surgery, I dropped 150 pounds very quickly. I began running and working out; I liked the way it made me feel. I liked the feeling of being in control of my body and proving my body was capable of things it had never imagined before. Those who had not given me the time of day in my "previous" body suddenly reached out to rekindle friendships. Ecstatic to finally meet the standards of others, I found myself filled in a way I had not been previously.

On the contrary, though, I had a group of friends, three girls, who I would've considered family. We did it all together: college, study abroad, trips, relationships, yo-yo diets. We had lost and gained together, or so I thought. When I began losing weight and my body began rapidly changing, they began to distance themselves from me. I had been with them through *everything* they had gone through. I had poured into them when I had nothing from which to pour. They ended up telling me that they didn't know "where they fit" in my "new life" and that my new body had created problems for them. It hit me: I was the designated fat friend. No matter how big or small they were, I would always be there, bigger than them, to make them feel better about themselves. "We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness" (Morrison [1970] 2007: 205).

I began getting attention from men. I got close to a male colleague. We had great times, and we enjoyed our time together. We would laugh and dance and listen to music. We would cook and toast drinks and dream of futures that were more expensive than our teacher incomes could afford. We would spend nights and weekends together. I decided to take him to my childhood vacation spot, a nearby beach, for a weekend trip. It was right there, in the same hotel I had stayed in many times with my family, where I learned that my voice and my no were not loud enough—or maybe they were but were ignored. It was right then, in that moment,

when I experienced a feeling of guilt and embarrassment that I had never experienced before, much less at the hands of someone else. "All of us—all who know her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her" (Morrison [1970] 2007: 205).

> Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. (206)

> But singular as Pecola's life was, I believed some aspects of her woundability were lodged in all young girls. In exploring the social and domestic aggression that could cause a child to literally fall apart, I mounted a series of rejections, some routine, some exceptional, some monstrous. (xii)

Like Claudia takes up in this passage, I too have found that the journey to love is only as beautiful or healthy as the lover. As a damaged girl, I could only love myself through ways that were damaging. As a hurting girl, I could only hurt myself. Claudia's words about love provide a glimmer of hope, not because she writes from a place of hope but because she writes from a place of despair and one that we hope to avoid.

Pecola was never loved well. One may argue that she was *loved*, but the circumstances of that "love" are veritably damaging and leave readers wondering if she is damned to an eternity of never being loved.

If love is contingent upon beauty and one never feels beautiful, is love, by definition, attainable? Can love grow from harm? For Pecola's sake, for Claudia's sake, and for my sake, I hope so.

When I first sat down to write this letter after reading *The Bluest Eye*, I started blindly, not knowing what it was I felt like I needed to say. By just beginning to write, I found my way. I found my words. Although you did not write this novel with a girl like me in mind, your words impacted me in a way that I was in no way prepared to experience. You kept me in my comfort zone, you pushed me out of my comfort zone, and you took me to zones in which I had no experience to ground myself.

You didn't write *The Bluest Eye* for me. Your words were not crafted for me. Yet, your words still helped illuminate the dark parts of my own past in my journey to finding love. I wrote words in this letter that I have only spoken to two other people and have never written down.

Although I know I wasn't who you had in mind while writing, your words grabbed my mind. I'm not one to claim the pain and stories of others as my own or to swap pain-for-pain stories, but I can tell you this:

the soil in the world in which we live does not let every flower bloom. Yet, your words have been the fertilizer for so many flowers to have a chance at growing that would not have normally had a chance at survival, much less blooming. Single flowers are pretty to look at, but beauty comes in numbers.

Your work here is done; it's up to us now to help the seedlings thrive into flowers. Thank you.

Love,

Lauryn

"How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?": Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and a Politics against White Epistemologies of Ignorance

By Katelyn M. Campbell

Dear Toni Morrison,

A few weeks ago, I sat in front of my computer screen listening to the harrowing testimony of four former USA Gymnastics athletes before the US Senate Judiciary Committee about the FBI's gross mishandling of team doctor Larry Nassar's extensive and serial sexual abuse of women and girls. The four former gymnasts, now women, each testified about the extent to which the FBI had failed them. One by one, they shared their stories of being ignored, gaslit, and abandoned.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking testimony came from Simone Biles (Barrett 2021), the lone Black gymnast on the stand, who is widely regarded as the greatest gymnast of all time. She began her testimony by expressing her discomfort with why she had come and what she had to share before reciting her accomplishments, which include winning twenty-five world championship medals and seven Olympic medals while competing for Team USA. Through tears, Biles shared that she was also a victim of child sexual abuse and that she offered her testimony with the hope that no other child would have to experience the abuse that Nassar had perpetrated and that the governing bodies of her sport and federal law enforcement had enabled. She detailed the extent to which those with power over her situation had failed to address the abuse that she and hundreds of other gymnasts had endured. Biles also pointed out that she didn't become aware that USA Gymnastics had known about her abuse until long after

she reported it, and that they had allowed her to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games with this knowledge without anyone having contacted her or her parents. She specified, "It truly feels like the FBI turned a blind eye to us." Biles then invoked fellow gymnast and survivor of Nassar's abuse Rachael Denhollander's question in her address to the committee: "How much is a little girl worth?"

I open my letter to you with this story from Biles because as she and her three fellow survivors—Aly Raisman, McKayla Maroney, and Maggie Nichols—spoke, I was reminded of the story of young Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye*. As the panel of gymnasts noted, if their abuse as highly visible public figures was not taken seriously, how could anyone trust the FBI to handle other cases with the care and diligence those circumstances necessitate? Although Pecola might not be famous in the style of Biles and her fellow athletes, she is a known entity within her community, marked physically by the abuse she endures and the pregnancy she is forced to bear after being raped by her father, Cholly. The ways young Pecola is visible are used as sources of blame rather than to spotlight the systems and individuals that fail her. When she becomes pregnant, those in her world seem to refashion her into adulthood despite her young age, regarding her as a pariah rather than a victim, a fallen woman rather than an abused child. Yet, we know from the visions you provide of Pecola's interiority that she is indeed still a Black *girl*, navigating girlhood experiences of struggling to belong that are further inflected by racism.

The Bluest Eye is a story not only about Pecola's abuse but also about a girlhood in motion. As McKittrick (2000) noted, Pecola's entrance into the novel comes through her family's physical movement from the South northward to Lorain, Ohio, along the path followed by many Black Southerners during the Great Migration. Pecola is further moved by her desperate desire to be loved, a goal which she will go to impossible lengths to reach. Even as she is marked by her abuse and confined within a space of social exteriority by racism and being branded as a fallen girl, Pecola continues to seek that which eludes her, represented by the metaphor of a pair of blue eyes.

When I first read *The Bluest Eye*, I reacted with horror. I saw in Pecola my own childhood experiences with sexual violence and the failure of those around me to take the knowledge of my abuse seriously. At times, I wondered if I could make it to the end of the novel. The manner in which you address Pecola's abuse is matter of fact. Your account is not told through insinuation or metaphor but rather in a direct manner—a

way that narratives of sexual abuse tend to elide. At the time, I wondered why you gave a chapter-length space for Cholly's backstory. His journey is marked by his own history of abuse and neglect and his reckoning with having grown up with what was likely the label "bastard," doomed from the beginning.[1] His story inspires sympathy until you later connect it with what he becomes. After reading that chapter, I felt conflicted about how I felt bad for what happened to Cholly as a child while still holding him responsible for the rape he commits as an adult. A generous reading would allow for the idea that perhaps this move of yours is to allow readers to see how structural forces produce a moment when parents can transgress their own place in a normative orientation to girlhood by transforming a subject whom they are supposed to protect into an object of their sexual desire and predation.

In the months that have passed since my initial reading of *The Bluest Eye*, I have continued to think back to Pecola's story and what you were trying to tell us through it. For me, among many things, it sparks the methodological question of what would happen if people in power regarded childhood sexual abuse as what it unfortunately is—ordinary—and how that informs the way one considers ideas of girlhood. In acknowledging the violent and quotidian nature of childhood sexual abuse, particularly as it is inflicted upon Black girls, it becomes possible to challenge hegemonic constructions of girlhood that regard any sexual experience as a marker of transgression violating a certain social contract that makes some girls worthy candidates for protection. This practice also holds space for the ways hegemonic norms for girlhood seek to construct a false utopia that girls strive for but most often can never reach. My thinking is ever influenced by the theorist José Esteban Muñoz (2009), whose work in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* set out a queer mode for thinking about utopia as always being situated on the horizon that "queer" as a category strives to reach. How might we consider hegemonic notions of girlhood as a social location that, while residing on the horizon, is in fact a dystopian mirage rather than a safe haven? Such a consideration requires an appraisal of the extrapolations and omissions required to construct the white heteropatriarchal ideal girl.

I am a white settler former-girl who was born in a small town near Charleston, West Virginia, in 1995. I grew up living with both of my biological parents. Both of them had steady work throughout my childhood, and my younger sister and I rarely wanted for much. Almost all of my biological family lived within a few hours of us, with the notable

exception of one of my aunts, who moved to Georgia in the mid-1980s to work in the carpet factories in Dalton and never returned. I remember learning about my aunt through stories that largely regarded her as aberrant and not someone I should aspire to be like. She had struggled in school, whereas her three sisters excelled; she started drinking early and became an alcoholic in high school after her boyfriend died in a car accident, in which she was also involved; she experienced what her sisters called "delusions of grandeur," in which she would obsess over how their family was too poor to allow her to live in the kind of environment that would appease her anxiety. In every story about my aunt when she was only elementary-school age, she was presented as almost an adult, with full cognition and control over her actions. To some extent, she became the Pecola of our family, the person on whom blame is placed whether or not they were at fault for what happened to them.

I formulated a lot of my ideas around what it meant to be a "good" girl through this framework and in the context of a locally conservative political environment. Although my family was not religious and had fairly progressive views about the place of women and girls in society, I picked up many normative and limiting ideas about how I should be from my classmates, their parents, and my teachers in my rural and conservative public school district. School was the site where I became oriented to the image of a hegemonic version of girlhood that structured normative assessments of my and my peers' characters and played out in decisions about our lives.[2] A "good" girl at our school was generally white, able-bodied, thin, conventionally attractive but uninterested in sex, a good student but quiet in class, and from a middle-class family, among a number of other qualities. Our varying abilities to embody this vision of an ideal girl played out in our educational lives; for instance, girls I knew who became pregnant while we were in middle and high school were often hidden away by the school or their parents. I still do not know what happened to several of my classmates who became pregnant when we were only twelve years old. This was amid the "crisis" around teen pregnancy that dominated headlines in the 2000s and early 2010s, when shows like MTV's *Teen Mom* churned out new images of "failed" girls each week.

Despite the near impossibility of the hegemonic utopian girlhood that white supremacy and patriarchy imagine, girls nonetheless try to embody it. These efforts manifest through acts of omission and prayer; they show up as compartmentalization of harassment so as not to be seen as a "problem," as depicted by young Pecola going to the home of Soap-

head Church, despite being afraid of him, to ask for the blue eyes she seeks so she can earn the love she so desperately wants. Aspirations toward normative girlhood can furthermore be read as aspirations toward protection: it is painful to deviate from normative structures of power, and conformity offers a particular kind of embrace. To paraphrase and expand Simone Biles's question from earlier in my letter, "How much is a little girl worth?" (Barrett 2021): what would it take for a little girl to be worth enough to be protected from harm? The desire to be safe from harm—in Pecola's case, harm that is perpetrated within one's own family through both abuse and unloving relationships—motivates girls to pursue even the most impossible attempts at assimilation.

I admit as I write to you that there were parts of *The Bluest Eye* that I struggled to read and that I struggle even harder to write about now. Like in Pecola's family, there was a predator in our lives when I was growing up: he was not a blood relative but the son of a woman who cared for children out of her home while our parents were at work. For a long time, those of us who were victimized by him did not speak about what happened to us ("Quiet as it's kept"; Morrison [1970] 2007: xix), and when we finally spoke about it years later, we were either not believed or told to go back out and play without any further discussion. As I consider the disappointment of our attempt to get help, I am reminded that despite the failure of adults in our lives to step in, as white girls, we were more likely to have been believed in the first place, or at least to have been believed to not be at fault or somehow fatally flawed even if we still were not understood as victims.

The silences each of us kept were part of a coping strategy that relied on a logic of omission: if we did not acknowledge or even could eventually forget what happened, then maybe it would be as if the violation had never occurred, and we could move on with our lives with the trappings of the privileges otherwise afforded to us by our race and station. Yet, attempts to forget did not, in fact, make the story go away. Learning to sit with the knowledge of what happened in order to find paths forward has been critical for building our adult lives.

Scholars within feminist philosophy and critical ethnic studies have pointed to the ways the kinds of ignorance that we were expected to produce and embody are tied to white, Western epistemologies. Mills (2007) argued that white ignorance is a handicap of white supremacy and that it is not simply white people just not knowing something but rather a not-knowing that comes from racism. In my case, the production of igno-

rance or not-knowing through acts of narrative omission yields the possibility that I and others could perhaps someday still reach the utopian standard of white girlhood that is often understood as correlating with living a good life. Thinking more broadly with Mills with regard to the broader milieu of childhood sexual abuse and the broader cultural refusal to know that one in nine girls under eighteen years of age experience sexual abuse seems again to serve the purpose of maintaining the impossible utopian/dystopian subject of girlhood as a tool for social regulation in service of white heteropatriarchy.[3] Rejecting a white epistemology of ignorance requires a fulsome engagement with the intersectional nature of sexual violence, particularly as it relates to the experiences of girls who are marginalized by racism.

In keeping with this charge against ignorance, I admire the way your writing from the beginning requires us to inhabit both the bitter and the sweet. In reply to a friend who asked me about what I was reading when your novel was assigned for a class on Black girlhoods, I remarked that your prose never allows us to sit with a moment of joy long before you introduce a moment of pain or sorrow. From your opening lines—"Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow" (Morrison [1970] 2007: xix)—one learns that the seed, so often seen as a symbol of hope or potential, is not always the blessing that it might seem. The potential utopian world imagined by Pecola's cousins once the marigolds bloom is foreclosed by both their failure to emerge and the presumption that, in the absence of some other explanation, the fallen Pecola is to blame. Through the act of keeping it quiet, of either refusing or being unable to acknowledge or process the violation of Pecola that has occurred, she is rendered as the aberration that soils the plan for perfection. That rendering registers as trauma for Pecola—a trauma that I imagine carries forward in the lives of other Black girls whether they are survivors of the sexual violence Pecola experiences or the quotidian practices of estrangement that structure her daily existence of marginalization and unbelonging.

All the while, Pecola navigates the geographies of her everyday life: the house her father burns down, her new temporary home with her cousins, and the school she attends with them. Pecola often sits alone at school, wondering aloud and in private about what it would take to get someone to love her. Despite its horror and her desire to exist otherwise, Pecola seems to accept her fate, trying to find ways to improve her day-to-day

life while recognizing that although she may never be perfect, she may one day be loved. Through Pecola's isolation, you give us glimpses into her inner world: a geography of its own that holds the knowledge that those around her might keep quiet. This inner world represents a space of both confinement and possibility; it is not only the space where Pecola must go when she has nowhere else left to turn but also a space of potentiality where she can imagine a future otherwise.

Although we get mostly hints of Pecola's interiority through your narrative, the pieces of her we actually see remind me of Jacobs's (1861) writings in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* describing the seven years she hid in a garret, where she could see out to look upon her enslaver and children but could not be seen herself. McKittrick (2006) wrote about this site of Jacobs's fugitivity as a particular form of Black women's geographies, a kind of invisibility that both causes pain and renders a particular vantage point from which Black female subjects can observe the world and develop situated knowledges about it while remaining undetected. These knowledges can be used for acts of subversion and also self-protection.

Your theorizing of Pecola's experience presents an important addendum of specificity to McKittrick's (2006) and Jacobs's (1861) arguments and experiences, suggesting that although Black girls may share some experiences with Black women with regard to experiences of fugitivity, Black girls also live out that positionality while operating developmentally as children who may not have the tools necessary to make sense of it. For instance, whereas Pecola knows the feeling of her isolation, her environment does not seem to enable her to understand the ways that isolation is not her fault but rather the result of a confluence of forces that label her as errant or excessive. This inability to perceive seems to be what fuels her goal of making herself desirable by pursuing whiteness vis-à-vis her pair of blue eyes; it is likely also the cause of what her cousin Claudia describes as Pecola's insanity. It is indeed maddening to live as one's embodied self while aspiring toward a different embodiment and subjectivity, attempting to perform the latter in the hope of escaping the former.

What might a politic against white ignorance in support of Black girls that understands school as a site where norms about girlhood subjectivity are made, shaped, and taught look like? Ahmed (2006) pointed toward an interpretation of socialization and belonging that understands subjectivity as occurring through an orientation to objects that is affected by the locations from which one views the world. With school as a site where subjects with varying social locations intersect, it is first important to ac-

knowledge and understand the positionalities from which students enter the classroom—a task that requires the eschewal of epistemic practices of ignorance I discussed earlier in favor of listening to and *hearing* girls.

As part of that listening and hearing, Ann Cvetkovich's work on trauma, most clearly articulated in her 2003 monograph, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, proves instructive for understanding the archive from which girls draw to narrate their experiences. As she approached the past, Cvetkovich aimed to find where trauma leaves traces when it resists consciousness (its own form of not-knowing), sourcing evidence from a wide archive of objects and experiences that are embedded in performances and the everyday. In thinking with Cvetkovich, I wonder how a project that takes the trauma of girlhood seriously, while also not centering trauma so emphatically that it elides the possibility that girlhood might be a space of pleasure, could help one understand better paths forward for nurturing girls whose trauma marks them as outside of hegemonic norms. If one were to treat trauma as evidence of oppressive systems of power at work rather than an individual failing or experience, how could that open up the possibility for breaking down discursive and interpersonal practices that marginalize Black girls? Perhaps a more useful conception of girlhood within this framework would not rely on attempts to produce a universalized girl subject, but rather would rely on understanding how girls have the ability to be their own agents and theorists of their lives while also needing specialized care and attention to support them as they grow into the adults they will one day become in a world where abuse and trauma are unfortunately all too ordinary.

Thank you again for your generative work.

Sincerely,

Katelyn M. Campbell

Pecola Breedlove and the Undoing of the World

By Lucía Mock Muñoz de Luna

Dear Professor Morrison,

Happy belated birthday! I hope your day was a joyous one, spent with loved ones and good food, wherever it is that you are these days.

Thank you for your reply to our last letter to you; when my colleagues and I wrote to you in November of last year to ask you about

your thoughts on the field of critical whiteness studies, I certainly did not expect a response. But with what seems like your usual clarity of mind, you sent one of your books in response. It reminds me of your rejoinder to Rose's (1998) inane question to you so many years ago: you said that white people had a serious problem with racism and that we needed to get to the business of doing something about it. He asked you for some free advice (it's never free, though, especially when a white man like him is demanding it from you), and you simply responded, "It's all in my books."

So, I am very grateful for your response, particularly because your gentle nudge for me to return to *The Bluest Eye* has reminded me of the importance of simplicity when looking at (and reading) the world. I use *simplicity* with purpose here, without meaning to conflate it with a *lack* of complexity or importance but because I'm starting to realize that many times in the academy long, complicated words and sentences and thoughts are assumed to have some deeper meaning, whereas most of the time, that complication is just subterfuge for bad ideas, for a lack of imagination and courage. Perhaps more importantly, you've reminded me to appreciate that simplicity is never really all that simple, is it? Also, the narrative of simplicity—and innocence, too—in/of childhood often is subterfuge for the harm that the world, and we adults, carry out upon children. That is, who gets to have a simple childhood? Who, in this world, is seen and treated like a child? What does that say about us? In some ways, this letter is my attempt to sit with your response to Rose ("It's all in my books"), to take Black girls' ways of knowing and being in the world as theory, and to meditate on what Black girls' theorizing in *The Bluest Eye* can teach white people about racism. I focus here in many ways on Pecola as a theory builder, in the small moments when she observes the world for what it is, with simple but devastating acuity.

This is an aside, but this realization about simplicity has been one of the most important of my life, as a girl and now as a woman. My uncle (my dad's brother), a Harvard-educated theologian and polyglot, has called my mom "dull" and laughed at her lack of education and globalism; it's some form of hatred that I don't quite have a name for but have felt deeply. (Is it sexism or exotification of Spaniards? My dad's family has always had a sort of Hemingwayesque relationship with Spain: they see the country as their playground, a place for pleasure and not much else. I see this dismissiveness in their treatment of my mom as well.) Looking back now, I can see that as a girl, I was taught that I should laugh at my mom, too: at the simplicity of her ideas, at her feelings, *at her*. Unlearning

that type of (self-)hatred, and finding my way back to my mom, has been a long and needed journey. Along the way, as I mentioned, I've come to see simplicity for the joys and challenges it can bring: clarity, incisiveness, an unflinching commitment to and questioning of truth, and an opening to think carefully about love—like Pecola noting, in a passing moment, her inability to understand why people do not like dandelions ("Why, she wonders, do people call them weeds? She thought they were pretty"; Morrison [1970] 2007: 47). Pecola sees beauty in what others deem ugly, a pest. There is nothing dull about simplicity; its sharpness can cut. Pecola's observation of dandelions, to me, cuts to the heart of the book: the wonder and questioning of how the world has come to the decision of what, and who, is deemed worthy and lovable. In her own response ("She thought they were pretty"), she refuses the world, insisting instead on the beauty she sees and feels. The tragedy of her story, of course, is that she cannot see this same beauty in herself; the damnation of our society comes in how a child like Pecola is destroyed because we refuse to see her beauty or allow her to see it in herself. But I'm getting ahead of myself. What I mean to say is that childhood and simplicity are often connected in my mind, and I want to think through why and how these ideas are in conversation and why you chose to write your first book through the story of a young Black girl and her friends.

If I'm being honest, though, one of the difficulties of living through a pandemic is how much time we've had to think, what it means to take stock of the moment and the world we live in, and what our lives mean in a world like this one. The truth is that as much as I'd like to imagine myself as someone who at least recognizes the injustices of the world and is no longer shocked at its cruelty, I still find myself at a loss when seeing how this year has exposed "the calculus of living and dying" (Brand 2020: para. 6) that forms the contours of our world, and the gleefulness we seem to have in killing one another (particularly the most vulnerable among us), in putting one another at risk for the sake of a return to normal, a return to the steady march toward mutual destruction. So, I am grateful for your words, but I admit that they come at a time when it is hard to feel faith in the world, to not see it for anything but the disaster it is. Pecola's story reminds me of the all-consuming despair that the (white) world puts on the shoulders of some people, especially those who are not white, not male, not straight, not able-bodied, not rich, not a citizen, and so on. Pecola's story also makes me think of how this despair has been written as almost inevitable and all-consuming. And maybe because, in addition to

everything else, we've spent this winter with what feels like constant rain and cold, this moment reminds me of Lorde's ([1988] 2017: 53) question to herself as she battled liver cancer: "How do I hold faith with sun in a sunless place?"

I read your words again while also reading Dumas's (2018) writing on the necessity of meditating on Black suffering, and the dangerous limits of racial justice work in education. He asked those of us in education to consider deeply how schools harm Black students *as a function* of schooling, as a necessary part of education as we know it today. He described Black suffering as the "the ontological position of the Black as having no Human place in the world" (2018: 33), and as a necessary condition of schooling as we know it now. Dumas claimed that unless we all commit ourselves to the death of whiteness, that is, the end of the current world order, any and all attempts at justice will fall short because they only reform a system that necessitates Black death and suffering. Albeit difficult to read, he also described several instances of Black children being brutalized by the structures of schooling and the people who uphold those structures. We assigned Dumas's chapter last month (as we have done for the past two years) in the social justice course that I co-teach with my advisor, who is also a white woman. Intentionally, we read his piece after we read the first few chapters of your book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Morrison 1992), as a way to think through how white people come to know themselves through a relation of dominance to Blackness and how this relation manifests itself in education, which presents itself as an unquestionable social good. But each time we read Dumas's and your chapters together, I'm uneasy with what it means for two white women in a predominantly white field, with mostly white (women) students in class, to meditate on Black suffering when we are often the ones who facilitate that suffering in schools. I'm also uneasy because we don't *actually* meditate on Black suffering: we spend less than one class session on it and then move on. We intellectualize Black suffering, playact at solidarity and understanding, and then continue on as if we've crossed off another item on a checklist that absolves us of our participation in and upholding of a world that delights in anti-Black violence.

I'm starting to think that this thin engagement with Black thought is the standard in white anti-racist work. We list off authors and thinkers we've read as some sort of conquest, claiming them as foundational to our work without actually deeply engaging with the theory put forth (yes, that's shade at critical whiteness scholars again; I won't let that go), and

then our work remains suspiciously safe for and legible to those in power. At this point, I'm not sure which is worse: a disingenuous, or failed, attempt to think with/alongside Black studies, or ignoring it altogether and willfully remaining beholden to white thought. All of this, of course, still holds us non-Black people always in relationship to Blackness, and it is a difficult truth to reconcile with the fact that my sense of being has been rooted in domination and hierarchy—and hatred. I see it now when looking back on my girlhood and the abuse of my mom, and I see it in my identity and work as an educator, where anti-Blackness is cloaked in language of caring, progress, and justice.

I'm also uneasy because I'm not sure that we (i.e., educators, white people, those invested in whiteness) understand what it would mean to behold Black life outside of the violence of whiteness, and I don't know if reading Dumas's (2018) work (and even your work, Ms. Morrison) under the current conditions of a (university) classroom allow for anything beyond a false momentary empathy that ultimately does little to affect Black liberation—which, I am coming to think, will also mean liberation from the Human, as Wynter (2003) noted, which would mean liberation for us all. Gray (2021) recently posted a short piece online in which he wrote, "*Description is not liberation*" (para. 11), questioning how and why images and descriptions of violence against Black people are used to "fuel its [the anti-Black world of white progressives] rage and its 'progress'" (para. 18), making the violence necessary in order to provoke empathy in the white conscience. Ultimately, though, that empathy has done little to make material changes that support Black life or liberation in this country, so what does it mean to evoke Black suffering to justify our work? Does it only serve to reify the (self-)importance of our work? Can white people (and those who maintain whiteness) ever position ourselves to understand Black life outside of suffering, outside of *use*, outside and beyond domination?

I find myself wondering if *The Bluest Eye* is a meditation on Black suffering—the *particular* suffering of a Black girl, who stands at the nexus of so much vitriol and violence (you describe Black girls as being the most vulnerable and delicate members of our world)—and what it means to behold Black suffering and meditate on it through the eyes and experiences of a girl, a child. What does it mean to spend time with a girl whom the world cannot seem to know, or love, without violence ("Love is never any better than the lover"; Morrison [1970] 2007: 206)? What does it mean to expose the violence of the world through the eyes of childhood,

whose simplicity makes its analysis so direct, so damning? You wrote in the foreword of *The Bluest Eye* that ultimately you failed in your intention with the book: "many readers remain touched but not moved" (Morrison [1970] 2007: xii). This reflection has stuck with me because of its honesty and because I wonder what that being "moved" did/would have/will look like. You said you wanted readers not to pity Pecola for her being smashed by the world but rather to interrogate themselves for the smashing. Yet, what good is this interrogation if it doesn't lead to the destruction of the self, of the world?

All of this is to say that perhaps when you told Rose (1998) that your advice to us white people could be found in your books, I take it to mean that you wanted us to spend time in a world that is not our own, a world where we are not the center (or that does away with the notions of centers, and domination, altogether). This spending time with is akin not only to meditating, to pausing, to sitting with Black suffering, but also to what exists beyond and in excess of it—maybe what McKittrick (2021: 1) calls "black livingness," but I'm hesitant to say that because I just started reading her new book, and I don't know if this is quite the idea I'm searching for. You said elsewhere that you

> enjoyed identifying the process by which one is victimized in order to point the finger at exits. Not as escape hatches based on fantasy . . . but real ones. Ones in which the knowledge of the past . . . makes it possible for one to go forward honestly, carefully. (Frías et al. 1994: 275–76)

Your work builds worlds that turn the white gaze on itself, with the point, I think, of exposing it for the travesty it is and ultimately making it irrelevant; Blackness was and is the center (or like I wrote earlier, Blackness is recognized as *the* universe, which has no center but rather is ever expansive; Crawley 2020), and whiteness is dispensed with—or maybe just left to wither and die.

When I read *The Bluest Eye* again this time, I was struck by the small moments we get to spend with Pecola, and the gentle yet incisive nature of her relationship to the world. We witness the brief moments of tenderness she experiences with Ms. Marie, Ms. China, and Ms. Poland. We read about Pecola's meditations on disappearing and then belonging to the world (alongside the dandelions—a source of admiration and then the target of her brief but searing anger at the world). We see her gentleness with animals, and theirs with her. We sting in her ability to understand that her Blackness is the source of distaste in white people. We ache in her

question to Claudia, "How do you get someone to love you?" (Morrison 1992: 32).

Because of these glimpses into her inner world, her undoing feels all the more tragic, all the more a loss, but maybe not a surprise. I'm reminded of Saidiya Hartman's (2019) prose poem "The Plot of Her Undoing," which traces the historical and contemporary violence enacted on the titular "'her'—a collective figure whose dispossession forms the basis of our world" (Brooks 2020: para. 2). The piece is unrelenting in its descriptions of violence, the myriad ways the world dispossesses and disappears the most vulnerable of us. Then, toward the end of the poem, the refrain throughout the poem ("The plot of her undoing") becomes instead "The undoing of the plot"; Hartman shifts her attention to the hidden agency and furtive refusals that also define the "her," the "collective figure," who in this moment I cannot help but see in/as Pecola. She is undone by the world; yes, she is the receptacle (a mirror, maybe) for the ugliness of the world. Yet, I wonder if, in choosing to tell her story, you were attempting to undo the plot, to show the moments of her refusals of her undoing. Ultimately, she is undone. But in that undoing, sometimes I feel she is still refusing the world, in a profound way. At the very least, in telling her story, you change the focus from her undoing to the plot (i.e., the gaze, the world) that has undone her.

I'm reminded of Samah Jabr, one of the few psychiatrists in the West Bank of Palestine, who asserts that PTSD is a Western concept that cannot express the condition of her country and people, so she asks, "What is sick, the context or the person?" (quoted in Goldhill 2019: para. 2). This question is in some ways reflected in Claudia's final realization in *The Bluest Eye*:

> I even think now that the land of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year. This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. (Morrison [1970] 2007: 206)

If the soil is hostile to certain seeds, if the world we have created kills those most vulnerable and delicate, what does that mean for those of us who survive? What does that say about those of us who tend the soil, or those of us who claim the victim had no right to live? What happens to those seeds that cannot grow? To put those questions in the context of the rest of this letter, what would it mean to meditate on Black suffering not as

a method of producing white empathy but as a way to destroy the world that demands suffering? What if this meditation allowed one to see the refusals of dispossession and disappearance that otherwise are not beheld? I don't know if this is possible. (Of course, none of this is really the point of your writing, is it? At least, what a white person does with it was not really a concern for you, because white feelings were not the focus of your work. Perhaps that is what makes your writing a liberating force. But still, I find myself asking these questions in relation to your work, and I would rather struggle through these questions than not, and discontinue producing the knowledge that my university and my family taught me to.)

To tie all of this back to my first question, what can Pecola's theorizing teach us white people about racism, about anti-Blackness? Or, to not let myself off the hook here, what do Pecola's ways of being and living and loving teach *me* about racism, about the world? This question begets others: What does it mean for me to (be)hold Black suffering and meditate on it through the eyes and experiences of a girl, a child? What does it mean for me to expose (and/or be exposed to) the violence of the world through the eyes of girlhood? What does it mean to be *moved*?

I'm not sure I can answer these questions, at least not with any certainty. Yet, this is my feeling: following Gray's (2021) writing, I am troubled by the ways that much of white anti-racist identity and work has been fueled by Black suffering, that white progress is dependent on the (ab)use of Black life. I think you wrote about this, too, in your critique of US literature: that the American self comes to know itself through its opposition to Blackness and that the "Africanist presence" (Morrison 1992: 6), as you called it, remains an unacknowledged force in shaping this country and world, both in literature and beyond. What I think is an important first step for us white people is to recognize this relation and then sit with the ways it is predicated on domination and "the mandate for conquest" (3). We consume and attempt to possess Black life and being, even in our attempts to rewrite ourselves as anti-racist, that is, always good and not implicated in this relation of domination. If, however, we were to start from your questions—"Who are you without racism? Are you any good?" (Rose 1998)—we might begin to ask more incisive, unforgiving questions of ourselves and of who we are and have been. Where that takes me is back to my girlhood and back to the ways I saw the world and was educated into whiteness. Perhaps by beginning there, starting with my girlhood, I might start to see and understand myself (and then others) beyond and against conquest and dispossession.

In the graduate course I am currently in that prompted this letter-writing, one of the overarching questions is, Who is the girl? I think about that now in relation to Pecola, to myself, to what *girl* has come to represent: the "'her'—a collective figure whose dispossession forms the basis of our world" (Brooks 2020: para. 2), and maybe also the figure through which the glimpses of liberation begin to take form. My own relationship to the girl becomes complicated as I realize my participation in the world that smashed Pecola, alongside the ways the world has sought to destroy me (i.e., we are all being undone by this world: the where and how and why and when and violence differ, but none of us escapes the undoing), and I recognize the small moments of escape, where the exits are illuminated and a way out and through reveals itself.

You said in an interview that the way forward was "honestly, carefully" (Frías et al. 1994: 276). I hope we find that way out before it's too late, like it was for Pecola. Until then, I'll return to your words and attempt to "honestly, carefully," attend to the girl described therein.

With love and appreciation,

Lucía

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Notes

1. I am reminded here of Spillers's (1987) reading of Moynihan's (1965) report two decades after your novel first hit bookstore shelves, as Spillers spoke to the way this kind of fatherless doom was institutionalized during slavery and its afterlives in the United States.
2. I'm thinking here about Ahmed's (2006) project on exploring how sexuality is lived as an orientation. She theorized orientations as being organized around discursive desire lines. We all learn where our line is over time, and the lines around which we orient ourselves both enable certain possibilities and obscure others.
3. For statistics on sexual abuse of children, see RAINN (n.d.).

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