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Beyond Universalism:
Abduction as a Transformation of Method

Kamari Maxine Clarke
The University of Toronto/University of California Los Angeles[1]

Abstract

This article examines American anthropology's universalist tradition and its relegation of Black and Indigenous lives into objects of positivist methodologies. In so doing, it explores the impact of those exclusions on the formation of a particular type of cultural anthropology whose goal became the 'objective' documentation of *other* humans for the purposes of humanist knowledge formation. By asking how alternative ethnographic tools and practices can enable approaches that attend to alternate knowledge forms, the article seeks to move away from the production universalist knowledge forms driven by positivist methods and logics. Instead, it takes seriously the fragmented and unfinished knowledges made explicit through the concept of abduction as a critical method and that can be advanced through a radically humanist approach.

Such an approach to abduction as a critical articulation of partiality as method is used in this article to destabilize the basis on which the knowable subject is pursued in anthropological analysis. The contribution of this essay is in rethinking the foundational making of the canon through its exclusions. The methods discussed in the essay are also reflective of the writing commitments that frame it.

Recent interventions advocating decolonial methods have sought to reveal a range of problems, concerning knowledge production, hierarchies of valorization, and the assumption that there exist neoliberal individual subjects who operate with free will and are knowable and legible to empirical scrutiny (Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2020; Bejaran et al. 2019; Jobson 2020; Kaur and Klinkert 2021; Kennemore and Postero 2021; Mott and Cockayne 2017; Shange 2019). In making these interventions, scholars have critiqued the way that the seeming innocence of positivism has led to the reproduction of unequal knowledge production (Loperena, Hernandez, and Mora 2020; Simpson 2014). Such forms of knowledge production have shaped the anthropological field and have represented anthropology's role through the deliverance of the relative understanding of peoples everywhere (Shweder 2012). These points of departure have their roots in enlightenment thought and shape the basis on which universalist and humanist principles have taken shape in twentieth century social thought (Eriksen and Nielsen 2013; Wynter 2003). And yet, this form of universalist humanism is adumbrated by silences that are not simply absent from anthropology's corpus. Rather its tools and techniques also negate the possibilities of seeing any other way of organizing human knowledge. The basic foundations of the field, as conceived through its positivist and universalist principles, continue to produce the inequalities that anthropology was once celebrated as upholding (Anderson 2019). And yet, uncovering of these realities is not new. Today the call for recognizing theory-building through the way that Black and Brown scholars have been ***always already*** engaged in analyzing and articulating their world involves a range of modalities of thought that include the impossibility of knowing as a starting place.

When knowledge as partial and never fully achievable frames social inquiry not as a failure but as a recognition of complexity, what we see is a disruption in such universalist modes of inquiry and documentation practices. Such realities compel us to ask what alternative ethnographic tools and practices can help safeguard against exclusions and instead enable an approach that attends to the multiplicity of life and knowledge. What new conceptual tools (beyond "culture"—see Brightman 1995) are necessary for an appreciation of these multiplicities? How might we move away from the production of singular knowledge forms and take seriously the fragmented and unfinished knowledges that shape the lives of diverse peoples elsewhere (Omura et al. 2018)? How do we maintain a relational approach to understanding and being in co-existent worlds—especially when the tools that continue to give rise to such understandings have produced an anthropological science whose principles stop short of intervening into its own harmful existence? Ultimately, to what extent might we reimagine anthropology by telling the story of the discipline not simply through those hegemonically aligned with the rise of positivism and the emergence of the science of the discipline but instead through those methods and commitments rendered marginal by such processes?

This article examines American anthropology's relegation of Black and Indigenous lives into objects of positivist methodologies, and the impact of these exclusions on the field. Such forms of positivism came to shape anthropological fieldwork in the form of two primary orientations: first, a methodological scientism, or the belief that only the scientific method can produce a truth, (Habermas 1987) and second, a reduction of epistemology—that is, of the ways knowledge is produced —to a methodological emphasis on fieldwork praxis (Roscoe 1995). We see such formations concretized through the humanist and universalist principles and field-shaping work of Bronislaw Malinowski (2014) and Franz Boas (1920; 1932). Malinowski's advocacy for intensive fieldwork and Boas's development of a research-driven scientific method led to the

emergence of relativist, culture-centered approaches to documenting the lives of Black and/or Indigenous peoples. Such approaches reinforced the dominance of methodologies in which certain practical components of fieldwork were routinized and made replicable and universally applicable, thereby equating science with positivism. This dominance reflects a Western rationality that grants those who adopt its tools the authority to make things knowable, and a broader ideology of Northern success that hides its deep connections to exclusion and epistemological constraints (Wynter 2003).

Though these dominant approaches have affirmed principles of equality of the "races," they have also been incapable of advancing a form of knowledge applicable to the histories and consciousness of peoples whose lives are not fully traceable or knowable through scientific methods. Rather, the lives of Black and Indigenous people in the wake of slavery and ongoing forms of colonialism have unfolded and continue to unfold under conditions of exclusion and negation (Sharpe 2016). These domains of ongoing degradation exist in the afterlife of modernity, what Christina Sharpe describes as *the wake* of the slave ship in which Black consciousness is slavery's "unresolved unfolding" (2016:14). The ongoing degradation caused by slavery and settler colonialism in Black and Indigenous lives speaks to the way that the slave ship's ongoing hold on Black lives and the reservation's presence in Indigenous lives continue to produce a form of consciousness within and outside of histories of abjection. In this regard, the intellectual foundations of our scholarly field are inadequate not just in spite of the Cultural Anthropology's positivist methods but because of them. Without approaches that attend to the ongoing and incomplete realities of those whose lives have been allocated to *the savage slot* (Trouillot 2003) and whose very existence has been mediated through questions about their (in)humanity, we cannot possibly use anthropology's tools to understand Black and Indigenous lives in the afterlife of modernity's capture.

In retelling the story of the field's intellectual heroes—from Malinowski to Boas, and onward— with attention to the marginalized, fragmentary work of the other scholars these heroes relied on, I recast the story of the discipline through its exclusions. From these margins emerges one particular method: an approach to understanding the consciousness of Black and Indigenous life through a mode of becoming known as abduction. Abduction is a form of reasoning that is embodied and quotidian, inseparable from the affects and precarities of daily life (Stewart 2007). This approach is anti-empirical in that it is explicitly based on overlapping forms of partiality instead of an observable totality. Thus, abductive arguments are not meant to be deductively valid, or measurable by the standards of verifiable objectivity. They do not rely on certainty as a way to achieve truth. They start neither from objective particulars nor from abstract generalities. Rather, they are the most common type of logical reasoning used in daily life whose function is first and foremost relational and social, rather than scientific. This article traces how abduction plays out in the methods and writing of Boasian-trained anthropologists and novelists Zora Neale Hurston and Ella Cara Deloria. Examining the story of the field through the life worlds of Hurston and Deloria—scholars who served as intermediaries for a field in formation—opens a new way of reading the discipline through its exclusion of them and through the methodological failures of its positivist foundations.

In articulating this new genealogy, I consider how to tell a different story about the subject-object relation through the work of refusal. For an examination of the positivist inscriptions that shaped the field is instructive in the attempt to understand how people who were traditionally the objects of anthropological inquiry can become intermediaries of knowledge formation, through which they are not seen as constituting anthropology but instead emerge through exclusions of a

field in formation. I ask what anthropology's positivist trajectory would look like if we told the story of the discipline through the journeys of the dispossessed or the lives of those who have been racialized as "Other" (Li 2021). What might anthropology look like if we were to tell the story of the discipline through theory-building proverbs, unspoken sentiments, gaps, and silences, as well as the unpublished writings of persons otherwise objectified, abducted, or lost? What consequences would stem from attending to the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous land and cultural institutions (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014), the journeys of the enslaved brought to the plantation, the Blacks who made their way to Canada's Chatham and Africville in the early 1800s (de B'beri, Reid-Maroney, and Wright 2014; Nelson 2008), and First Nations storytelling as a partial story about the imagined and fragmented past? Such an approach with abduction as the focus speaks to the key problems in anthropology as a discipline whose methods cannot possibly document and clarify the lives of people whose existence unfolds on the back of the beauty of fragments. As a result, what we would find is a different set of stories. These stories would depart from canonical ethnographies, for they defy the will to separate narrative context from narrative objects of inquiry. To make sense of the many approaches that were not part of twentieth-century anthropology requires a specific methodological outlook that following Charles Sanders Peirce (1998), and his prospective adaptation into the anthropological context by Helmreich (2007), I call abduction. I foreground abduction as a potential radical humanist method, one that requires exploring alternative ethnographic genealogies leading back to Franz Boas, but which departs in a direction that has been largely overlooked in anthropology's canon.

Abduction, as a method of reasoning that moves beyond the estrangement of objects, culture, and more-than-human practices, allows us to understand the refusals of renditions of the liberal, all-knowable subject, and gives us ways of reinscribing meaning in contradictory or unintelligible meanings as a core tenet of anthropology's disjunctural knowledge. Articulating radical humanism through critical abduction provides a methodological alternative to positivism in the ongoing attempt to decolonize anthropology and revive the discipline as a radical form of humanism. I do that by beginning the story of the discipline with empirical/biographical material on Zora Neale Hurston and Ella Cara Deloria by adopting an unconventional structure that allows me to frame the article's unconventional structure as itself an instance of abduction. By seeing how the article works abductively, insofar as it is rooted in and starts from partial accounts of marginalized lives (parts 2 and 3) rather than with a totalizing account of the dominant tradition of positivism (part 4), I depart from disciplinary conventions rather than reproducing the method the article critiques.

Zora Neale Hurston

The publication of *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo* (2018), written by Hurston and published posthumously, reflects abductive commitments. Over a three-month period in 1927, Hurston interviewed Cudjo Lewis who, in 1859, had been the last person captured from West Africa and sold into slavery in the United States. Departing from the disaggregation of researcher and interlocutor, Hurston uses a unique narrative form to document his life through using partial reflections, unsuccessful encounters, partial recollections rather that historically corroborated confirmations of Kossula's past. This approach included her commitment to documenting the complexities and pain of their interactions and conversations together in his hometown Plateau, Alabama not as an artifact of inquiry but as an affective space within which their exchanges happened.

Addressing Lewis not by his *slave* name but by his African name, Kossula, the opening story concerns his coming of age as a boy in Takkoi, his village in West Africa. Over many weeks, with many stops and starts, Kossula tells Hurston of the violence that led to the raiding of the village by the neighboring Dahomey tribe. Not only is abduction part of both the form of Hurston's approach but also the content. For example, Kossula talks about his abduction in a "barracoon," a holding place on the West African coast where he was sold to an American slaver. The story recounts his insufferable pain of separation and loss as he journeyed across the Atlantic on the last slave ship to the United States, and details the five and a half years in Alabama when he was enslaved by his "owner." It continues with a range of events, tragic and otherwise, that included his emancipation in 1865, and the death of not only his wife but also his six children. He relays these memories in temporally disjunctive ways, with various signposts that accent his experience but do not always align with what Hurston understood to be other historical renditions of the same periods. Despite this, Hurston listens and allows Kossula's experiences to shape the contours of his stories. As he recounts one dramatic event after another, they share food, laughter, and sorrow, all the while building their friendship (2018, 94). Hurston's method was directed toward ends that differed from those of her contemporaries. They were not scientific, nor did they presume the knowability of her subjects. Hurston grounded her literary craft in the traditions of Black expressivity, using the trickster figure as a flexible discursive strategy to confront the racial and gender components of Black women's oppression (Meisenhelder 2001). The figure of the trickster in African American folk culture is important here. It is frequently through humor that the trickster achieves its goals, and it is frequently the goal of the trickster to undermine or take advantage of those that dominate others. For example, in exaggeration stories, participants take turns trying to top one another with more ridiculous stories about how mean their boss is (among other examples) through which they lampoon white authority figures. We see the importance of Hurston's method of the concealment and layering of the life worlds of her interlocutors as a form of visibility and invisibility. These approaches to the documentation of the life worlds of Black people was not just intersubjective; it was experiential.

Such approaches to trickster figures as metaphors of fluidity and asymmetry highlights a particular discursive strategy that deploys abduction as a method of nonlinear knowing and as a mode of duplicity. As Hurston made clear in letters to Langston Hughes and Carl Van Bechten, her primary commitments were to "all the life and color of my people" (letter to Langston Hughes, April 30, 1929) and to "put[ting the folktales] back into their natural juices" ("To Carl Van Vechten," January 22, 1934) (Hurston 2002:139, 288). With these commitments came the use of humor as a way to affirm the humanity of her interlocutors. In this respect, her work similarly provides an alternative and counter to positivist methods of knowledge production. In *Mules and Men*, Hurston shows that Black humor is multifaceted and can serve multiple purposes at once: "The brother in black puts a laugh in every vacant place in his mind. His laugh has a hundred meanings. It may mean amusement, anger, grief, bewilderment, chagrin, curiosity, simple pleasure or any other of the known or undefined emotions" ([1935] 1978:67–68). In his preface to *Mules and Men*, Boas ([1935] 1978, ix–x) interprets this humor through what he calls her "charm and loveable personality," not as a reflection of the complexities of building relationships in ethnographic fieldwork but as the means to penetrate the "true inner life of the Negro." However, for Hurston, these multiple simultaneous purposes of humour do not confound conventional means of ascertaining the meaning of a phenomena. Rather, they reflect what de la Cadena (2015) describes as the partiality of our connections in circumstances where "more than one, less than many" most aptly summarizes the character of our encounters. In this regard, Hurston used

examples from folklore, including Br'er Rabbit and the trickster figure High John the Conqueror, whose double register reflects Black people's historic forms of resistance. Slaves, she suggests, could tell these stories in the presence of whites because they could be confident that they would miss the point: "It is no accident that High John de Conqueror has evaded the ears of white people. They were not supposed to know" ([1943] 2019:3).

In *High John de Conquerer*, Hurston's characters resist racial oppression through subversion of the categories by which their oppressors make sense of them. These are the categories of knowability and discrete classificatory knowledge of early anthropology. "Characteristics of Negro Expression" ([1934] 2020) employed a similar strategy, simultaneously playing into white expectations of a Black woman and undermining those expectations through rhetorical means—"winks," sarcasm, exaggerations, etc. These techniques enabled her to level a deeper critique of oppression and to paint a more nuanced picture of resistance to oppression. Hurston's use of masking, coding, and humor in her work to convey multiple messages at once reflects what she called "feather-bed" tactics:

> the Negro, in spite of his open-faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive. You see we are a polite people and we do not say to our questioner, "Get out of here!" We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a feather-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries. (Hurston [1935] 1978: 2–3)

In *Barracoon*, Hurston did not romanticize Kossula's reflections as self-awareness or the transcendence of a suffering subject. She did not interpret his comments. Rather than inserting herself into the narrative as the learned and probing author, she engaged in deep listening (Hill 1993). This acceptance of the multiple ways that people articulate their stories reflects an important part of abduction. What we see is not only the forms of attachment that allow Hurston to listen, but the creation of a text that dismisses the goal of narrative certainty. Hurston accepted Kossula's sense of his experience as his true story. She shows a willingness to allow disruptions, refusals, contradictions, and friendship to guide the construction of ethnographic truth. This takes shape through the recognition that no person is fully knowable and their authority to articulate their life story forms the principle and ethics of engagement. Through this work, the principles of a self-knowing subject that can be interpreted or translated are disavowed.

In contrast, and like other social scientists of the time, Hurston's mentor Franz Boas presumed a knowable *Other* whose life worlds should be collected and whose peoples needed to be salvaged. In his promotion of relativism, culture was understood as an integrated whole that formed a coherent totality for individuals living within it, grounded in interpretive approaches to social analysis (Anderson 2019, Candea 2018, Darnell 2001). We see this in Boas's introduction to Hurston's *Mules and Men* in which he praised Hurston's ability "to penetrate through that affected demeanor by which the Negro excludes the White observer effectively from participating in his true inner life," thereby adding significantly to "our knowledge of the true inner life of the Negro" ([1935] 1978: xiii). Here Boas assumes that the human subject is knowable, and that Hurston would be the one to pierce through the "feather-bed" tactics and offer the reader the coherent truth of Black social life. This was not the case, however. Instead, Hurston offers the reader enough details to satisfy the lay-reader with a sense of the "inner-life" of her subjects. But her own interpolations and voicings of the folktales she featured help her books subvert and resist

her white-dominated readership in and beyond academia (see Kalos-Kaplan 2016). Hurston does not present these multi-layered complexities of reality as subversive. Nor does she make mention of her interlocutor's psychological and spiritual resistance. Rather, she adopts a relational method that does not involve analyzing the tales she presents. Instead, different audiences were able to draw different meanings from her work. We see this at the beginning of *Mules and Men*, where Hurston argues that the "theory behind our tactics" is to "set something outside the door of [the] mind" to satisfy the white man's desire to "always . . . know into somebody else's business" ([1935] 1978, 3). Tellingly, she reiterates her point in terms of writing: "He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind" (3). This runs contrary to Boas's positivist assumption that data gathered is data that can faithfully represent reality and speak for itself; Hurston understands that the meaning of ethnographic data will always be relational. Through deliberate suppression of her own analysis and point of view, Hurston foregrounded her interlocutors' stories on their own terms.

In *Barracoon*, Hurston shares the exact transcription of Kossula's language as it sounds, rather than translating it into standard English. She transcribes Kossula's story, using his vernacular diction, spelling his words as she hears them pronounced. Sentences follow his syntactical rhythms and maintain his idiomatic expressions and repetitive phrases. Her methods respect Kossula's own storytelling sensibility—one that is rooted in his social, linguistic, and affective relation to his West African homeland and to his American destination for survival. Hurston produced a written text that maintained the braided form of the spoken word. But it was precisely this form that publishers wanted to remove. Hurston refused. In 1931, when Hurston began to submit *Barracoon* to publishers, Viking Press wanted the manuscript in English rather than Kossula's dialect, a compromise Hurston refused. Publishers also wanted Hurston to dramatize her storytelling in order to make people's stories more appealing to non-academic audiences (Kalos-Kapan 2016, 49–53). During her lifetime, *Barracoon* found no takers among publishers, exemplifying the positivist logics that center Western styles of reasoning and contribute to the assertion of anthropology as a project of detachment.

Such forms of refusal spoke to the commitments Hurston held to represent the complexities of the lives of people in their own form. Yet at other times she was highly strategic, especially when needing Boas's stamp of approval in order to advance her work in particular directions. For example, in a 1934 letter, Hurston pleads with Boas to write an introduction to her book, *Mules and Men*. As she says, "I am full of terrors, lest you decide that you do not want to write the introduction to my 'Mules and Men.' I want you to do it so very much" (1934). Aware of Boas's enthusiasm for "scientific rigor," Hurston dismissed the novelistic elements of her work as a product of pressure from the publishing house, ending her letter with an ingratiating flourish: "So please consider all this and do not refuse Mr. Lippincott's request to write the introduction to Mules and Men. And then in addition, I feel that the persons who have the most information on a subject should teach the public. Who knows more about folk-lore than you and Dr. Benedict?" (Hurston 1934).

Despite this deference, Hurston's strategies are as central to the making of twentieth-century anthropology as Boas's. But such strategies reflect a pattern of exclusion in the field that is not singular: there were a range of Black and Indigenous scholars whose work was central to the making of the field yet was rendered marginal in the mainstream story that we tell of the emergence of American anthropology. In this regard, Ella Cara Deloria's relation to anthropology is also instructive. For like Hurston, Deloria combined her cultural knowledge and lived experience

into an expressive form of ethnographic communication that comprised – for the time period – a new way of approaching and creating anthropological knowledge.

Ella Cara Deloria

Deloria was an anthropologist of Métis, Dakota, English, French, and German roots. A student of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, Deloria was trained by Boas in his self-devised method of phonetic transcription in 1927, after he hired her on a part-time basis as a research assistant to transcribe Dakota texts (Cotera 2008:46–47). In February 1928, Deloria travelled to New York to receive her first and only training in Boasian ethnology. While anthropology was considered the "welcoming science," it also fostered a highly racialized and gendered hierarchy. At Columbia, for example, Deloria was labelled "an Indian girl," though she was more than forty years old (Bonnie and Krook 2018:288). It is not so much that people directly challenged Deloria's work, but that it was largely ignored so as to maintain the status quo. By and large, where there were disagreements, the interpretations of earlier, European American anthropologists ruled the day.

Deloria undertook five fieldwork trips for Boas and Benedict, and two more trips through grants from the American Philosophical Society, dedicating a significant amount of her paid time to positivist documentation and translation of their Indigenous collection. Boas had modeled his version of anthropology on a vision of the scientific method, injecting emotional detachment into the process. However, Deloria's approach aimed to dismantle the barrier between herself as researcher and her people as the "studied" (Cotera 2008:52–53). Deploying her status as an insider with her interlocutors, her "kinship ethnography . . . transformed the objectifying relations of the ethnographic encounter by foregrounding reciprocity, relatedness, and dialogue" (2008:52). Although Deloria was recognized as an expert on Dakota in the Boasian milieu, she was overlooked when it came to government jobs, for example, repeatedly being passed over by the Office of Indian Affairs in favor of non-Indigenous "experts" with PhDs (Cotera 2008, 43). Yet, because she was considered too educated to be "authentic," Deloria also found herself sidelined in governmental consultation processes, for example, in the creation of the "Indian New Deal"—an initiative tasked with preserving and promoting Native American education, language and customs. This was the "middle ground" that Deloria occupied. Her social obligations to the Dakota, about whom she was reluctant to say too much, compounded the contradictions of her identity as an insider scholar.

As Boas's research assistant, Deloria's relationship with Boas was a source of frustration for her: she provided him with data on Indian kinship, folklore, language, and ways of life, but she struggled to make her views of this world intelligible to the frameworks of scientific understanding established by Boas and her other mentors. This led to a paradoxical relationship between the two, wherein she was simultaneously supported and distorted (Finn 1993:340). The support was clear in references to Boas as "Father Franz," (Finn 1993, 341) underscoring her kinship obligation in her relationship with him. For Deloria, kinship obligations were intimately tied to her ways of knowing the world. She not only reported to Boas about kinship systems; she was also obligated and imbricated within them. Kinship was an integral component of her work and her writing referred not only to biological relatives but also to the "social relatives" with whom she conducted interviews. Yet resistance to Boasian epistemology is evident in Deloria's writing, such as in her July 1932 letter to Boas critiquing his practice of limiting compensation for research participants. Having kinship obligations to her interlocutors meant for Deloria, that there was an expectation of mutual exchange. As she made clear to Boas, she was unwilling to let the prerogatives of western science undermine these obligations, for to "go at it like a white man, for me, an Indian, is to throw

up an immediate barrier between myself and the people" (Deloria 1932). Rather, in her own writing Deloria conceived of *Waterlily* as a truly collaborative, and collective endeavor (Gardner 2003:681). For Boas, however, personal relationships were separate from the objective methods of anthropological work (Finn 1993:341). Divergences emerged in the many ways that Deloria sought to sensitize him to the various other ways of knowing that exceeded objectivity.

In 1937 Boas enlisted Deloria's skills in verifying a previous account of the Sun Dance Ceremony. She informed Boas that this would put her in a difficult position, since two key informants were relatives of hers whom she knew to be reluctant to share information with outsiders, but who might also feel obligated to share because of their kinship ties. The ensuing conversation revealed not only Deloria's skepticism of the authenticity of this previous account against Boas's concern with the verification of objective truth, but also her insistence that such verifiability was beside the point in a context where diverse accounts were consistent with the multiple social locations and relations of Dakota people (Finn 1993:341–42). This approach to the multiplicities of truth was dismissed by Boas. Yet just as Hurston understood that Black folklore was adapting and changing and was no less "authentic" or "verifiable" as a result, Deloria understood that storytelling was not about a consistent authentic truth. Rather, it was context specific. It involved improvisation and individualizations of the narrative and required listeners to experience the lesson of the story in the moment. However, though these dynamic adaptations of stories intrigued Deloria, Boas did not see them as legitimate, raising major issues in their work relationship (Gardner 2003:682). In these circumstances, Deloria often could not provide the "verifiability" Boas was looking for, for it was verifiability of what the white establishment of anthropologists thought they knew that was wanted, and this was something Deloria was not willing to concede if it did not reflect her findings and her own intimate knowledge of Dakota culture (Bonnie and Krook 2018, 290). Known as the "walker affair," this disagreement ultimately led to a break in their working relationship of about a year until they resumed work together again in 1939 (Cotera 2008:53–57). It was Deloria's "dissatisfaction with the scope of social scientific discourse, both in terms of its potential audience and its descriptive limitations," that provoked her to pursue the novel *Waterlily* (Cotera 2004:53), which models critical abduction in anthropological work.

Waterlily, written between 1928 and 1935 but not published until 1988, is a story about Indigenous Dakota lifeways before settler colonialism. The novel maps the experiences of two generations of women with the goal of demonstrating the centrality of kinship. Set in the Great Plains, a large part of the story involves the history of nomadic life and what was called the Sioux camp circle, and Deloria uses the camp circle as a metaphor for the relationships, conflict, and social change in women's lives. Rather than taking a chronological path as she was instructed to by Benedict and Boas, the text presents women's struggles and joys as a collaborative story told from the perspective of many women differently positioned.

In a letter to Mead (October 1948), Deloria described *Waterlily* as being "about a girl who lived a century ago, in a remote camp-circle of the Teton Dakotas," but she clarified that

> Only my characters are imaginary; the things that happen are what the many old women informants have told me as having been their own or their mothers' or other relatives' experiences. I can claim as original only the method of fitting these events and ceremonies into the tale. . . . It reads convincingly to any who understand

> Dakota life. . . . And it is purely the woman's point of view, her problems, aspirations, ideals, etc. (Gardner 2003, 667)

Her education had been formal and westernized, and her training in the English language proper and ornate. With *Waterlily* she fought against this training, struggling to render the story in everyday relatable language. In a list of named sources provided to Mead, Deloria lists 49 principal contributors with whom she had worked extensively in gathering stories that spanned at least a century; "I have been steeped in Dakota lore and seen and felt it ever since childhood," she writes; "it is in fact the very texture of my being" (Gardner 2003, 681).

Deloria's letter exchanges with Ruth Benedict reveal many of Deloria's original ideas for the novel (including plotlines) as well as the "search for an accessible style for a potentially uninterested and definitely uninformed audience; the determination to present her people in the best light; and her deference to Benedict" (Gardner 2003, 677). Ultimately, the novel's first draft was completed by 1944. In 1947 Deloria was still working through major cuts at the recommendation of two outside reviewers whom Benedict had asked to edit the novel. Of this editorial process Deloria remarked:

> I have tried to pare it down. . . . But there is repetition about kinship obligations, etc., especially between brother and sisters; and some, or perhaps all, of the visions could be cut. . . . I realize that sort of supernatural stuff is hard to swallow in this day and age. Maybe it should all be left out, and make them prosaic, matter-of-fact people. But that isn't true, either. (Cotera 2003:677)

The correspondence between Benedict and Deloria, and the cutting of *Waterlily*, continued until April of 1948. In a letter to Deloria dated November 7, 1944, Benedict praised the quality of the manuscript but recommended cuts to bring it "down to the usual size for such a book." She wrote: "We must get together and go over them, so that, when the war is over and publishers are taking books that don't have to do with the war effort, the manuscript will be ready to submit" (cited in Publisher's Preface; Deloria 2009:xxxv).

The hope was to publish *Waterlily* in late 1948, but Benedict died in September of that year, and Mead inherited Benedict's responsibility over the manuscript. Editors who had reviewed the text at Benedict's request recommended that Deloria to write the book as a popular fiction with a "running narrative" for the sake of a smoother story "without repetition" (Gardner 2003, 678), and insisted that Deloria present Waterlily as a heroine. This move was geared toward highlighting plot development around issues that traditional Dakota women found too personal to discuss in public. Deloria heeded her editor's advice, as she was more interested in finishing her other manuscript and wanted *Waterlily* out of the way. Later, however, she came to regret some of the changes she was being asked to make: "Probably it is because I wrote it, and the people grew familiar to me, but I like the tale quite much! And I do miss Waterlily, since she has gone off to you" (Gardner 2003, 678). In the end, the publishers rejected *Waterlily* for publication and the book was not published in Deloria's lifetime, even though she did shorten the manuscript, reducing the length by at least half. As late as 1948, a few months before her death, Benedict pronounced, "I think you can well be very proud of it" (Gardner 2009:xvii). For Deloria, however, it was not the book she had envisaged. Even at less than half the length of the original manuscript, it remained unpublished until 1988.

Deloria's manuscripts were difficult for her to write because "the genres and audiences available to her were culturally inappropriate for what she was trying to accomplish" (Gardner 2003:699). She knew what her various audiences expected, but could not fully offer them what they wanted. This conundrum was also apparent in the more "scientific" writing she was producing at the same time, which Boas was uneasy with. Her writing had a subtext, and all of the editing undertaken to make it conform to the mold of popular literature still did not obscure its "oral communal origins" (Gardner 2003, 692). Deloria had to write this text slantwise, similar to the ways that humor in Hurston's work was coded. Through these circuitous routes to knowledge production, Deloria's contributions to anthropology in the Boasian vein, and in institutional white academia, were limited by various racial and gendered hierarchies as well as by the frameworks through which knowledge was understood. Her turn to a more dialogical and relational approach, and her interest in speaking to female perspectives, represent a departure from scientific, institutionalized, Boasian anthropology that is perhaps best represented in *Waterlily*.

What we see from the examples of Hurston and Deloria, therefore, are particular ways of thinking about the researcher's engagements with her interlocutors through recentering the human in the research experience. Using humor, fiction, attachment, and deep engagement to tell stories about the complexities of cultural life, many Black and Indigenous twentieth-century anthropologists forged new directions in the articulation of anthropological work. But to understand these new possibilities, let us return to the rise of positivism and the role it played in shaping anthropological methodologies.

Franz Boas and the Consolidation of Positivism

Franz Boas's proclivity for the exactitude of science is clear from his early studies in physics (see Goldenweiser 1933; Kroeber 1943; Radin 1933; Spier 1943), but in his empirical emphasis on observable facts, the discipline of geography became Boas's primary epistemological guide (White 1963). For the physicist, says Boas, "single facts become less important to him, as he lays stress on the general law alone. On the other hand, the facts are the object which is of importance and interest to the historian. . . . Cosmography . . . considers every phenomenon as worthy of being studied for its own sake" (1887:138). This approach decenters the singular facts that make us human, sublimating them to the larger order that naturalists use to organize the world. As Boas argued, "The cosmographer . . . holds to the phenomenon which is the object of his study and lovingly tries to penetrate into its secrets until every feature is plain and clear" (1887, 140). Here we see how the desire to understand the "truth" framed Boas's method. His inductive commitments are revealed in his approach: . . .

Boas's Kwakiutl research and the popular publications by his students that draw upon it (e.g., Benedict 2005 [1934]) were extremely influential in the development of anthropology. As a fieldworker, Boas felt that it was important to document ethnographic recordings about Indigenous people not only in their language but through recordings that they themselves documented (White 1963, 22). This, he felt, allowed him to "present the culture as it appears to the Indian himself" (Boas 1909, 309). His more general ethnographic contributions concern classical topics in anthropology: marriage, social organization, belief systems, kinship, etc., but his principle ethnological publications consisted of myths and folktales from the Northwest Coast, much of which concerns the Kwakiutl Indigenous people. Boas's relationship with Hurston and Deloria took place within the broader context of positivism and Hurston and Deloria's struggles with it. As a lineage of thought, positivism is often understood to have originated in early modern Europe, but it did not appear in name until the work of Auguste Comte in the mid-nineteenth

century. Under Comte, a positivist orientation to the world spread to the social sciences—including through the work of Spencer, Durkheim, Mauss—and later to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown and virtually all modernist anthropology, especially cultural materialism and comparative anthropology. These anthropologists were influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, which maintained that biological diversity resulted from gradual responses to environmental pressures. It is no surprise that the thrust of the Darwinian evolutionary approach to anthropology was philological and reflected an attempt to reconstruct what Candea refers to as "historical sequences, branching associations and progressions by comparing the state of affairs in a number of distinct contemporary cases" (2018:23). The critique of such thinking and its broad implications for anthropology's conception of itself has been, of course, substantial in modern anthropological literature (Fabian 1983; Wolf 1982).

With Malinowski, the method of long-term participant observation leading to a monograph-length publication came to structure disciplinary understandings of objects of study (Stocking 1992). Immersive fieldwork and lab methods enabled the perception of observations that could describe a holistic totality. However, the spirit of positivism itself remained outside of the critique. Such processes of knowledge production pursued the search for greater meaning, and in that process led to the production of persons and things as objects of inquiry. Positivist precepts thus became linked to science via the inculcation of this worldview. As such, forms of (white) hegemonic power could not see alternate modes of being. For positivism is not just a project of methods and logics; it is also, as is evident in the cases of Hurston and Deloria, a project of purposeful exclusion of those who do not adopt its logics (McKittrick 2020).

For Franz Boas, who saw himself as a twentieth-century humanist, anthropology was to be a science that would study histories of each society to see how it developed, rather than relying on evolutionary formulas to explain cultural difference. For example, in "The Methods of Ethnology," Boas (1920) argued against two other predominant theories of culture at the time: evolutionism, with its phylogenic conception of cultural progress, and World Diffusionism, which posited a model of cultural development based upon the diffusion of traits from a central locale. He thought that these theories made unproven assumptions about human culture, using evidence selectively. Instead, Boas advocated a process of working inductively from data to theory, being careful not to let biases come in the way. He argued that theory was important, but only once the correct data had been accumulated, and always spoke of "discovering" and "finding" laws rather than formulating them. Such discoveries were possible to his mind because of his inductive commitments, which rid him of the need to reflexively understand how his own formulations and limitations always already figured into such "discoveries" (White 1963:64). This empirical and inductive model of analysis has been foundational in anthropology; as I will explore below, however, the inductive method articulated with a methodological scientism that asserted a particular notion of truth and depended on an epistemology that requires a subject-object relation.

Boas focused on the empiricist demand for the particular in his fieldwork rather than the general. This drove his extended commitment to the idea of a representable reality; informed by this commitment, he advanced the task of observation, followed by the reconstruction of cultural history, and then the discovery of laws of cultural development. The last was described by Boas as involving the "frequent occurrence of similar phenomena in cultural areas that have no historical contacts"; such a commonality, he wrote, "suggests that important results may be derived from their study, for it shows that the human mind develops everywhere according to the same laws. The discovery of these is the greatest aim of our science" (1888:637). For Boas believed in the

accuracy and scientific validity of his historical method—a testament to his ultra-empiricist, ultra-inductive commitments, based on assumptions and hypotheses rather than proof (White 1963:62). He insisted that anthropology ought to focus on understanding "individual phenomena" as opposed to establishing "general laws which, on account of the complexity of the material, will be necessarily vague and, we might almost say, so self-evident that they are of little help to real understanding" (1932:612).

Because non-Indigenous scholars struggled with interpretation, he encouraged students to learn their informants' language, yet he never became fluent in any Indigenous Northwest Coast language (Cannizzo 1983:47). And while he acknowledged the need to intensively study a single people, Boas himself usually visited only briefly, travelling from one fieldsite to another and staying in boarding houses or hotels, rarely "participating" in the lives of his interlocutors (Cannizzo 1983:48). These factors contributed to Boas's dependence on fieldworkers like George Hunt (1886–1933), Ella Deloria (1927–1942), and Zora Neale Hurston (from 1926 through the mid-1930s) among many other "native fieldworkers" whose data collection skills Boas valued above all others (Berman 1996). As Berman (1996:226) points out, what these fieldworkers shared was "labor in service of Boas's quest for the most authentic ethnographic materials." The perception of this authenticity was, however, something Boas himself sought to manufacture.

Boas also believed that anthropology should have an activist dimension, and he became involved in studies that would challenge white supremacy, though many have argued that his anti-racism work was limited by its framing within the language of discrimination and by his emphasis on miscegenation, both the result of his commitment to liberalism (Anderson 2019; Baker 1998, 2010). Through this work, he saw himself advancing a twentieth-century humanism. His interventions into immigration in New York's Lower East Side, Indigenous knowledge recovery, the consolidation of four-field methodologies, and anti-racism invigorated his commitments. As much as Boasian anthropology was oriented toward condemning racism, his approach left the "coloniality" of white supremacy intact (Anderson 2019; Baker 1998, 2010; Smedley 1993, 1998; Teslow 2014; Williams 1996). For example, his work was shaped by his own positivist quest to document, retain, and preserve the certainty of cultural and linguistic practices that further led to the containment of such knowledge. This containment was not without consequences. His methods also depended on the refusal of approaches that did not follow the same positivist formulas. Such refusal contributed to the maintenance of white supremacy through the gatekeeping of knowledge reproduction in educational spaces, the withholding of publishing endorsements, the obstacles to career success faced by minoritized researchers. The result was the widespread uptake of positivist documentation in every aspect of the discipline. These histories of scientism, native informants, analysis and the growth of inductive reasoning were key developments that led to the early consolidation of anthropology as a scientific discipline (Clifford 1983; Sondheim 1970; Stocking 1992; Urry 1972).

But twentieth-century anthropology also concretized a form of disaggregation of beings from objects (from things) that led not only to persons and their life worlds being displayed in museums alongside non-human entities, but also to the concretization of relations of study through their objectification. This approach was produced through the kind of positivism that has given rise to various forms of dispossession widespread in the discipline. These forms of dispossession show why the work of Ella Deloria and Zora Neale Hurston was not typical but rather contrary to practices of the rising science consistent with the history of anthropology's production of humans as objects—some humans who to this day continue to occupy what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003)

referred to as anthropology's "savage slot." For as we know it is not unusual for museums around the world to hold collections of persons—Native American and Black remains—awaiting repatriation. Cranial remnants of Indigenous and Black people abound (Mitchell 2021),[2] and the processes of return are complicated: repatriation involves the recognition of the lives and contexts in which people's remains were taken, and allows the deceased to rest in the cultural dignity of ritual and burial. It seldom happens.

Abduction as a Methodological Proposal

Historically, induction and deduction have been deployed as the precepts of methodological problem-solving that characterized positivist thought. To pursue inductive reasoning (the popular method in cultural anthropology), scholars look for a general characteristic from a set of observable phenomena to predict outcomes. In conventional positivist approaches, deduction moves in the opposite direction: from generalized knowledge to particularized application. As a scholarly practice, it aims to test existing theories already structured in domains of logic. These approaches to positivist thinking have been formative, if not foundational, to the anthropological pursuit of knowledge. They are the basis on which categorical knowledge about others is understood to reflect something "true" about the world as an empirical totality.

Abduction, theorized by Charles Sanders Peirce in varying ways throughout the course of his life (Fann 1970), is a third logical operation. Such operations begin neither from objective particulars, as with induction, nor from universal truths, as with deduction, but from the potential orientation of fragments without recourse to truth (Reichertz 2004). Abduction, as I engage it here, is reasoning that is embodied and quotidian, and relational, eschewing empiricism, certainty and verifiability (Stewart 2007).

As an alternate approach to reasoning, abduction allows us to resist positivist logics that might desecrate commitments to human relations through processes of estrangement that produce detachment and distance. As such it takes seriously the consequences of an ethics and politics of attachment in mapping the way we do anthropology. Abduction allows us to rethink anthropological persons, work, and history through entanglements that make the intersubjective connections of our lives visible and viable. Through its emphasis on connectivity rather than detachment it presages a mode of ethical engagement that amplifies people's own theoretical frameworks. We see this through the rebel methods and lives of Ella Deloria and Zora Neale Hurston.

Hurston's and Deloria's scholarship provokes us to consider the stakes of an abductive orientation to fieldwork that might be otherwise dismissed as illegible. It also, however, illustrates the entrenchments of our discipline's positivist commitments, especially with respect to the relationship between these women of color and their preeminent white mentor, Boas. Hurston's and Deloria's experiences are painful examples of positivist methodologies that produced intermediaries as fodder in the making of cultural anthropology. Deloria's reluctance to slot women's stories into epistemologies of early twentieth-century scholarship haunted her and led her to refuse to publish *Waterlily* as an ethnography. Similarly, Hurston's refusal to rewrite *Barracoon* defied conventions of knowability. Both women remained committed to telling the stories of those disregarded or translated out of anthropology's center on their own terms. Instead, in the way they took seriously people's life worlds on their own terms we see a deep commitment to an ethics and politics of attachment that is brought into being through a commitment to abduction as method. Ethnographers such as Deloria and Hurston deployed abduction as a method

to push against positivist tensions throughout their work. But anthropology's positivist roots constrained the ability of many to reconceptualize the field using other frameworks.

Interestingly, what Bochner (2001) called the "Narrative Turn" in the social sciences of the 1990s (see also Goodson and Gill 2011), took inspiration from such innovative methods. Born of criticism of positivist approaches, including increasing attention to the relationship between self and other, reflexivity, and a growing awareness of the discursive power wielded by researchers to decontextualize others' stories and lives, the narrative turn sought to center the lived experiences of individuals, and to present the diverse "voices" of marginalized actors. However, this approach, when deployed more than fifty years earlier, did little to recover the contributions and validity of marginalized authors like Deloria and Hurston. As scholars excluded from membership in the higher ranks of university social life, their approach involved the embodiment of the middle space, between worlds; they were cultural translators who never fully belonged anywhere. This was especially evident in the attachments they held to multiple communities and the ambivalence they felt about how to reckon with complex narratives and obligations. Such dynamics are instructive because they allow us to see the importance of refusing positivism's will to produce subjects as detached liberal objects for analysis and scrutiny.

The twenty-first century is bursting with abductively resonant scholarly engagements, many of which reach back toward less canonical ethnographic precedents. Through mechanisms of citational ostracization, white supremacy, and neoliberalism, such texts have been excluded from the anthropological canon (Allen and Jobson 2016). Their recent revival, then, helps us to clarify the potential for different forms of worlding to inform anthropological knowledge production. Relational methods that run counter to the positivist tradition foreground abduction as a goal and resonate with what Saidiya Hartman (2019) refers to as critical fabulation—a politics of partiality and unknowability as the human condition. Abduction, like critical fabulation, explores how one can tell an impossible history by taking partial accounts, scattered facts, and biographical snippets to reassemble a narrative in ways that render enslaved and emancipated Black lives intelligible and valid. Such narratives do not produce the type of certainty that emerged from anthropology's longstanding attachment to positivism. Contrary to positivism's presumption of a knowable truth or an all-knowing subject, and to forms of interpretivism that presume the existence of cultural systems of knowledge that form a greater whole, methods like abduction do not involve pulling apart into bits of abstractable data the context in which story is told. Instead, abduction allows us to consider "fabulated" relations, with fabrication and complexity central to the process. Such conceptualizations offer a way of decolonizing positivism by moving away from the assumption that narratives consist of discrete and discoverable units that together produce cultural meaning. This will lead us to a different story about positivism, and perhaps to a different understanding of what science is and can be (McKittrick 2020).

In the remainder of this article, I consider what it might look like to move away from practices of distancing and detachment in service of certainty, and toward a relational space of contingent praxis, based on methods that emphasize a politics of attachment and attention to racial violence. To this end, I consider the value of abduction for a radically humanist anthropology. For whereas positivism has produced cultural anthropology using inductive methods, I suggest that abduction can be deployed as an ethics and politics of attachment, allowing us to tell a story of the field through the human face of knowledge production. To envision abduction as a method for radical humanism is to reconceptualize the construction of new methods when the inscriptions of knowledge that have shaped the discipline—epistemologies, unwritten letters, stolen biographies, and itinerant lives—haunt the proleptic possibilities for a new future.

The Ethics and Politics of Attachment: Abduction as a Radical Humanist Principle

The mid-twentieth century generated significant revisions of early anthropological practices and processes, but these revisions did not ultimately disturb positivist knowledge's foundational role in structuring the anthropological enterprise. Attempts to rethink the North American anthropological tradition took many forms. Heralded by Clifford Geertz's interpretive model (1973) and his method of thick description, we saw attempts to conceive of culture as a text to be interpreted by the anthropologist. This approach emphasized detailed accounts of context and surrounding information, which collectively allowed the reader to grasp the meaning of cultural practices as they appear meaningful to those who are a part of them. As a departure from Malinowskian interpretivism, which emphasized getting into the head of "the native," Geertz framed his method as looking over the shoulder of his informants to decipher their own cultural texts (Geertz 2000). However, in so much of the oral traditions of Indigenous, African, and Black Atlantic cultural worlds, narratives are not decontextualized from the conditions of their telling. Oral stories are meant to be born of connection within the world and are thus recounted relationally and are dependent on the situation and context of the telling (Kovach 2010:94).

From the 1970s onward, critics from within anthropology increasingly linked the anthropological tradition to colonial rule and in so doing attempted to lay bare anthropology's problematic origins (Asad 1973; Fabian 1983; Willis 1972; Wolf 1982). For these early Euro-American anthropological approaches not only maintained the "savage slot" (Trouillot 2003), but also produced timeless subjects in which the assumptions about the Other ultimately promoted the preservation of whiteness as the structure through which Otherness was produced and interpreted (Anderson 2019; Baker 1998, 2004). Today, a range of twenty-first-century work offers insights into the marginalization of scholars deploying other methods. Renewed attention to the "decolonizing generation" discussed by Allen and Jobson (2016) helps to trace a path beyond such elisions, which have been typical of anthropological reflexivity since the 1990s (Harrison 1995; Harrison and Harrison 1999; Harrison and Nonini 1992; Mikell 1999; Mullings 2005; Thomas 2018). Such work has been carried out not only by cultural anthropologists but also by a growing group of BIPOC archaeologists and physical anthropologists (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Blakey 1987, 1999, 2020a, 2020b; de la Cova 2019; Digangi and Bethard 2021; Franklin 1997). Given the seeming intransigence of questions related to anthropological subjectivity, objectives, methods, and techniques of representation, genealogical attention to the development of such foci enables us to consider shifting typologies of knowability in the discipline, making clear along the way the role that white supremacy has played in the concretization of anthropology's positivism. In response, today, we are seeing the emergence of a new and vociferous set of interventions through BIPOC scholars in North America and elsewhere whose work is committed to interrogating methodological approaches and shaping new conceptual terrain. Indigenous scholars such as Audra Simpson have demonstrated that the disciplines of anthropology and political science have lacked the tools to understand the politics of Indigeneity, and in doing so have erased Indigenous nationhood (2007; 2014; 2016; 2016; 2017). By tracing Mohawk strategies of refusal to accept outsiders' terms of Indigenous existence, Simpson shows how anthropological practices and representations are a part of outsider ontologies. Refusal pedagogy, like critical abduction methodologies, makes it possible to enact practices that reinforce attachment and debunk detachment and its consequent alienation. As a method of radical humanism, abduction allows for the unexpected domains of possibility and potentiality, contravening presumptions of universal humanism. It allows us to conceptualize humanism as a "pragmatic politics of the in between"

and, as such, it considers the most primary of logical modes not in relation to objects but in the context of what is between objects and subjects (Massumi 2015:18, 53). It is a mode of "reasoning from an unknown or future state" or a "genre of reasoning that can have unanticipated effects, such as the sudden revelation of the unknown" (Helmreich 2007:230–231).

Such approaches to radical humanism run counter to the humanism of the European enlightenment, with which canonical anthropology is so frequently associated, as well as the forms of Boasian universalism that represent the hegemony of particular European worldings that shaped anthropological positivism. Humanism as a Western philosophy was conceptualized alongside the Copernican Revolution and the European Renaissance of the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Central to its emergence was an attempt to reckon with reason and rationality by developing a universalism that dislodged theological conceptualizations of causality in favor of a new idea of "Man" as a secular political subject. This process involved what Sylvia Wynter (2003) referred to as "coloniality," a reference not only to the material subjugation of one people by another but also to the subjugation of diverse systems of knowledge creation, notions of value, ideas about politics, and sensibilities about hierarchy to those of an overrepresented and externalized universal humanity (see also Copson 2015; da Silva 2007, 2017). For Wynter, the forms of universalism that emerged from coloniality required an externally oriented framework for thinking about the self. This framework was grounded in both the evangelizing mission of the Christian church and the imperializing mission of the state through the tools of Western science. By extension, humanism is core to Trouillot's (2003) critique of Western reliance on the "Other" against which the European "us" could be elaborated, and upon which a separation of culture and nature could be established (de la Cadena 2010). Ultimately, it legitimated the hierarchies of humanity created in and through the new forms of production and labor organization that emerged with the development of plantation-based agriculture in the so-called "New World." The mechanism of this "Othering" was race, a modern classificatory principle and tool of domination that became the secular modality for organizing inequality, for disregarding Indigenous forms of knowledge, and for justifying slavery. Thus, at the core of twentieth-century humanism was a secular imperialism grounded in white supremacy that operated within particular methodologically exclusive approaches (Gilroy 2014; Saldaña-Portillo 2016).

Critiques of humanism have also been articulated as a result of the anthropomorphic centrality of being (Herbrechter and Callus 2018). Posthumanists have been concerned with this disposition. They have moved from the centrality of "Man" and naturalized others in relation to "Man." By expanding the optic to the species rather than culture or race, posthumanists have insisted that we tackle the human-centrism of our thinking and examine the human in relation to other measures—the affective, relational and so forth (Braidotti 2019). Such rethinking resonates with abduction as a method attuned not to deductive or inductive arrivals of truth but to the way that truth is composed in its multiplicities. But the problem with the category of the human is that it places the human in the European enlightenment, its liberalism and forms of rationality (Winnubst, Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018). The Black Radical tradition emerged as a response to these conceptual exclusions of universal humanism, which circulated around the world as a result of European colonialism. It sought to understand Black histories of resistance to capitalist exploitation while also taking seriously the way that European models of history downplay the role that Black people have played as agents of change (Robinson 2020). In a similar vein, posthumanism has argued that the site of production for the human is one and the same as the violent history of racialization. Dismissing the category of the human, it takes racialization, a core component of colonial violence, as the process driving the emergence of the modern concept of

the human (Winnubst, Braidotti and Hlavajova, 2018). From a number of perspectives—planetary humanism, inhumanism, the Black Radical tradition, and so forth—these new approaches to rethinking the human have attempted to conceptualize the human not in relation to their labor value or their racial exclusion but in relation to the complexities of being and becoming and how such formulations are documented and experienced.

The final section of this article advances an approach to radical humanism that highlights principles of connection, praxis, and the infinitude of becoming and negotiating multiple worlds. With a commitment to moving beyond a conceptualization of a liberal subject "in the field" that is knowable and reducible to cultural units and ethnographic data, this approach insists on the importance of departing from the humanism and universalisms of the earlier centuries, which never abandoned subject-object distinctions but remained entangled with the hierarchies of positivist certainty. By adopting, instead, a radical humanism that foregrounds the ethical and political life of interlocutors, the approach I describe aims to take seriously the call to abandon anthropology's liberal suppositions (Jobson 2020). This project involves highlighting connection and refusing the presumption that individuals are knowable "subjects," whose inner motives and social lives are transparent; instead, abduction as method makes it possible to embed the life worlds of people in relation to the forms of bricolage and contradiction that constitute their dynamic existence.

Toward Radical Humanism in Anthropology

This article points to both positivist entanglements and detachments: entanglements between the liberal state and the discipline of anthropology, and detachments concerning the new genealogies that are possible beyond the field's positivist inscriptions. One entanglement in this story is of anthropology's savage slot and the production of BIPOC communities as objects of Western rationality. The entanglements between the state and anthropology in the historic objectification of Black and Brown bodies is reflected today in the maintenance of white supremacy in contemporary academic institutions (Beliso-De Jesus and Pierre 2020; Brodkin, Morgen, and Hutchinson 2011). These logics, which emerged out of colonial conquest, have shaped a field in which colonial knowledge domains continue to structure what counts as knowledge. It is no surprise that, insofar as anthropology has provided a way to gain insights into the practices of peoples around the world, it has done so in a way that produces subjects as objects and objects as the estranged matter of scientific inquiry. Cultural anthropology specifically has neglected to tell particular stories of its own emergence, and cultural anthropologists, as a result, have been complacent regarding the discipline's absences. Contrary approaches to twentieth-century anthropology that were peripheral to what became the canon did not represent an absence of conceptualizations or theory-building; these approaches are part of a counter-archive whose time has now come.

As such, anthropological conceptualizations of pluriversality and "worlding" have also enabled an interrogation of multiple practices and ontologies within a single frame, and have produced possibilities for engaging in political discourses, especially vis-à-vis Indigenous realities (de la Cadena 2010; Povinelli 1995; 2002). These frames provide openings for a radically humanist anthropology that not only interrogates the practical implications for fieldwork, but also politicizes the theoretical terrain within which we work. For example, "the pluriverse" (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018) refers to the experience of living in and between multiple worlds at once (living and dead, ancestor and child, human and nonhuman), and to the many creative entanglements of living things (Escobar 2015:14; Lyons 2020). It describes what Zapatistas call "a world where many

worlds fit" (Blaser and de la Cadena 2018; Ejercito 1996; Stengers 2018). This vision supports a politics that resists the flattening of worlds toward universalism, and that challenges us to approach divergent ontological frameworks relationally. Such work is key for showing the radical possibility of abduction and how it might manifest in new ways of doing anthropology.

Over the past fifty years, vigorous decolonizing critiques have called the practices of positivism into question (Sanchez 2018). Today we have alternate paths already crafted within our discipline, from the recuperated work of various BIPOC scholars to emergent scholarship underway. Through the charting of these various genealogies, approaches such as critical abduction, intersubjective engagement, and critical fabulation can help produce a different archive of knowledge, one that is critical to remapping the discipline. As a principle of radical humanism, to advance abduction as a core component of ethnographic methods is to also advance acritical future for thinking the discipline anew.

By imploding positivism (and its framework in which objects are "things" waiting to be found, or discovered, or kept in custody and examined with certainty), radical humanism instead offers new possibilities for framing an ethical-political praxis of knowledge production through which abduction can be foregrounded as a method. Through this alternative formulation, not only is truth resituated, but intersubjectivity remains context driven. Against the background of demands to rethink anthropology's hegemonic inheritances and structures of engagement, I have told a story about the disciplining apparatus of science. This disciplining domain is closely related to anthropology's historical entanglement with the objectification of Black and Indigenous bodies, and the persistence of white supremacy in deployment methods, techniques of representation, and modes of knowing that maintain the fiction of the knowable subject.[3]

What distinguishes this call for critical abduction through a radical humanist lens is the urgency of moving away from the tools of positivism that have produced the detachment between science and humanity, especially in relation to the entanglements that produce forms of distancing in anthropological work. Instead, it calls for an approach that can undo the fictional coherence of knowledge and modernity's claim on particular institutional norms as standards that produce forms of knowledge centered in the Global North. Today, calls for an end to the valorization of a field dominated by institutional white supremacy has led to the rethinking of modes of thought that have not only ordered the writing, practices, and principles at the heart of the discipline but that have also shaped the modes through which knowledge is recognized. Such reformulations require that the deployment of methods such as abduction used in formerly positivist arenas will involve the development of a new politics of ethics, a politics of engagement, a politics of practice and humanity that does not merely consolidate power and knowledge through the not-knowing detachment of positivism. Rather, a critically engaged radical humanism—defined through the rethinking of the atomized and knowable subject—can invigorate the rethinking of the logics of knowledge that is valorized and the stories that we tell of them.

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Endnotes

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[2] The Morton collection contains more than 1,300 crania, most which are the remains of exhumed individuals stolen by grave robbers. Included in the collection are the skulls of many enslaved US individuals. Samuel George Morton (1799–1851) was a Philadelphia-based physician and anatomy lecturer who worked at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Morton's research on the crania sought to establish the intellectual, moral, and physical supremacy of white Europeans, especially those of German and English ancestry. After his death in 1851, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia purchased and expanded the collection. It was

moved to the Penn Museum in 1966. Other prominent osteological collections with historical significance in the discipline of Physical Anthropology include the Hamman-Todd collection, the Robert J. Terry collection, and the Cobb collection. These collections are composed of deceased individuals obtained through the medical system, by way of purchase and donation in the case of the Cobb Collection, and through the possession of unclaimed bodies in the case of the Hamman-Todd and Terry collections. As with the Morton collection, these collections depend upon the social marginalization of the individuals that they are composed of (see de la Cova 2019). Sources: https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/, https://uh.edu/engines/epi3221.htm; https://www.cobbresearchlab.com/collections/overview. See also https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/07/decolonising-museums-isnt-part-of-a-culture-war-its-about-keeping-them-relevant.

Deloria's first position with Boas involved designing culturally appropriate intelligence tests that Boas and the psychologist Otto Klineberg were involved with. Her task was to "study in the greatest detail the habits of action and thought that are present among Dakota children and among adults and to work out in co-operation with a psychologist a test that would fit the conditions of life of the Dakotas." Her involvement with the Klineberg project brought her into contact with Hurston, who had been hired in a similar role to prepare ethnological studies of New Orleans. There are no indications that Hurston and Deloria ever met, but their mutual roles at the margins of high-profile studies led by a prominent white anthropologist are notable.

[3] These principles are in keeping with ongoing work with Deborah Thomas and the Radical Humanism Initiative, with the support of the Wenner Gren Foudation. The second webinar of this initiative is a response to recent events at UPenn and is dedicated to principles of

accountability in museums and in anthropology generally; see

http://blog.wennergren.org/2021/05/webinar-5-20-21/.