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Whitney Battle-Baptiste. *Black Feminist Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2011, 200 pp., 13 b/w illustr., 2 tables, pbk, ISBN 978-1-59874-379-1)

When I first read *Black Feminist Archaeology* in 2011, I thought, ‘it’s about time’. After all, Maria Franklin (2001) called for a Black feminist-inspired archaeology ten years earlier, and it seemed logical that historical archaeology in the Americas, especially the southeastern United States and Caribbean, would quickly integrate a theoretical approach that could add deeper understanding and nuance to our writing about the past. Other African diaspora contexts and colonial sites in Africa would surely follow quickly. It seemed that the constant growth of socially conscious theoretical approaches, and the (unfortunately slow) increase in professionals with personal commitments to intersectional analysis would make applying Black feminist

theory to archaeological interpretation inevitable. While many archaeologists cited Franklin’s work, very few seemed prepared to fully commit to the Black feminist-inspired archaeology she advocated for until Battle-Baptiste’s *Black Feminist Archaeology*. Ten years after publication, I see that it was not timely; rather, it was ahead of its time.

The book is both deeply scholarly and deeply personal. It opens with a foreword by Maria Franklin, followed by an Introduction where Battle-Baptiste describes her positionality and her dual commitments as an academic archaeologist and as part of the broadly constructed descendant community she investigates. Each of the following chapters, except the last, starts with a personal narrative that provides broader context for

that chapter: the author's inspirations, sometimes seemingly tangential experiences that turn out to be anything but, and taken together illustrate her evolution as a theorist. The first chapter, the longest, lays out the theoretical framework of the book, drawing from well over a century of Black essayists, memoirists, novelists, along with more recent feminist and gender-focused archaeology. She then explicitly describes Black feminism, with particular focus on the academic writers in anthropology and sociology whose work is closest and most relevant to building and expanding Black feminist archaeology. Lastly in this chapter, Battle-Baptiste addresses archaeological theory and praxis, describing how Black feminist theory can expand what the discipline looks like and the ways in which research can take new, exciting directions, such as those she demonstrates in the case studies that follow. This is the chapter that is most easily excerpted for use in an archaeological theory class, or indeed in other social science disciplines.

The next three chapters are case studies from different points in Battle-Baptiste's research trajectory. Chapter 2 revisits her dissertation project, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, the plantation of the seventh President of the United States where over 160 people were enslaved (p. 78), that became a museum in the late nineteenth century. This chapter is rich in archaeological detail, and here we see how Black feminist thinking shifts not only which people are the focus of study. We also see how that shift requires that we view space differently, comprised within the concept of 'homespace', which expands the archaeologist's attention beyond the walls of the built environment in a way that better reflects the perspectives of people whose sense of home included lightly modified or unmodified outdoor space and family out of arm's reach.

The next two case studies concern sites in Massachusetts. The northeastern

United States is often ignored in African diaspora and civil rights histories, in part due to its shorter history of slavery and less physically violent racism compared to the south. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on two very different people and places. The first site is the home of a freedwoman, Lucy Foster, in many ways an everywoman who had a modest house not far from Boston. The site was first excavated in the 1940s, then further studied in the 1970s. Battle-Baptiste's modern read puts these earlier studies in cultural-historical context, critiquing their assumptions and conclusions but finding value in what we can learn from them about Lucy Foster, the archaeologists who studied her material culture, and how this site can contribute to historical memory. The subject of Chapter 4 could not be more different. W.E.B. Du Bois is one of the most famous Black intellectuals in US history, and one of the most famous sociologists, full-stop. Battle-Baptiste is the director of a center named for him at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. So much is known about him, much from his own writing. Why, then, should he be a focus of archaeological research generally, and Black feminist archaeology specifically? Here we return to the concept of homespace. The W.E.B. Du Bois homesite, the place he grew up, has no standing structures remaining, but archaeological field schools have been conducted there from the 1980s until 2012. This work helps us see the cultural and familial context that shaped Du Bois, this place that was part of his maternal heritage. The site now has an interpretive trail through the wooded parcel with photos and text, a rare National Historic Landmark associated with an African-American.

The last brief chapter is a reflection on why Battle-Baptiste needed to write *this* book, *this* way. She expresses her hope that others will be open to what might

seem like a provocative position, but more importantly that others will apply this lens. A quick search of syllabi available online shows that a number of scholars have adopted this book, myself included, in part or in whole. These syllabi are probably a small sample of the courses using *Black Feminist Archaeology*, but they include a broad range of institutions, public and private, research and teaching oriented. Many, but not all of these courses are in historical archaeology. It appears in a number of curated lists such as the Register of Professional Archaeologists' ethics database (<https://archaeologicaethics.org/>), and the #TulsaSyllabus (<https://tulsasyllabus.web.unc.edu>, educational and activist resources related to the 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma Race Massacre). It is referenced in textbooks and handbooks, including *The Routledge Handbook of Global Historical Archaeology* (Orser & Zarankin, 2020), and cited in hundreds of articles. However, because this review is for a primarily Europeanist audience, I was interested in seeing how often Battle-Baptiste's book has been cited in European archaeological contexts. While I did find a few citations beyond my own (Sterling, 2015), they are not nearly as numerous, and mostly in English. These references date to 2018 or later, which may be in part a response to current politics, or that people needed time to figure out how these ideas fit into geographic and temporal contexts far removed from the case studies that put theory into practice. Either way, *Black Feminist Archaeology* will remain relevant for years to come.

I recommend this book to any archaeologist. While it is clear how this work is relevant to African diaspora archaeology, it does not require much imagination to translate into other situations where race and gender are relevant to interpretation, such as

Japanese-American internment camps (e.g. Lau-Ozawa, 2021) or Indigenous interactions with settler-colonialists (e.g. Spangen, et al., 2020). Battle-Baptiste's work devotes a great deal of attention to the politics of knowledge production in archaeology, and how identity can shape, limit, or enable archaeologists' entry to and advancement in the field, as well as the kinds of knowledge that are considered legitimate. The European Association of Archaeologists' 2020 Statement on Archaeology and Gender ([www.e-a-a.org/2020Statement](http://www.e-a-a.org/2020Statement)) addresses many of these concerns, as they are relevant to all archaeologists regardless of geographic or temporal focus. *Black Feminist Archaeology* is a profound, yet enjoyable read.

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