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Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed.. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader.* Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997. ix + 166 pp. $42.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-631-20137-3.

Alonso de Sandoval. *Treatise on Slavery: Selections from De instauranda Aethiopum salute.* Edited and translated by Nicole von Germeten. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008. xxxi + 206 pp. $42.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-87220-930-5.

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In this review, I examine two books of sources about race and slavery, one significantly newer than the other. Of the two, the more established book is ***Race and the Enlightenment***, edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. Eze collected excerpts from some influential Enlightenment writers and prefaced each with a short introduction. The other is the ***Treatise on Slavery: Selections from De instauranda Aethiopum salute*** (On Restoring Ethiopian Salvation) written by Alonso de Sandoval in 1627, and translated and introduced by Nicole von Germeten. Germeten brought to the spotlight some of Sandoval's most useful sources, apparently the earliest systematic study of African slavery in the colonial Americas. Since these collections of edited documents are quite approachable, not only graduate but also undergraduate courses would benefit from them. In looking at them simultaneously I attempt here to draw a pilot picture of the evolution of race as a modern idea. This I do by narrowly focusing on how a few of these books' sources point to one specific change in the European perception of Africans in the Americas.

The nobleman and naturalist Jean Baptiste Pierre Romain authored over seventy essays for the *Encyclopedie* while working as a defense engineer in Grenada for the French colonial govern-

ment in the 1740s.[1] He wrote the short entry titled "Negre," as well as other essays on the customs and living conditions of the Caribbean people, in the same cold and Enlightenment fashion that he would have addressed plants, animals, and minerals. Referring to reasons why Africans were black, he wrote the following: "***The vessels of the mucous body, following the observations of Malpighi***: the skin and the cuticle of the negroes are white; the blackness comes only from the mucous or the reticular membrane which is between the epidermis and the skin" (Eze, p. 92).

In contrast to Romain's diagnosis, Sandoval, a Jesuit working among expatriate Africans in Cartagena in the early 1600s, had reached a more ambiguous conclusion in his treatise ***De instauranda***, completed over one hundred years before the ***Encyclopedie.*** He wrote, "The reason [that Ethiopians have white teeth but not white fingernails] is that the skin where the fingernails grow from is black and the nails carry the same color and are burned by the sun" (Sandoval, p. 21) At first glance these competing ideas on the origin of black skin and nails seem just another entry on the debate about nature versus nurture.

Although born in Spain, Sandoval spent most of his life outside Europe, growing up in Peru where he received a Catholic education in prestigious colonial institutions. The dedication he exuded toward the church's mission in "rescuing" the degenerated and downtrodden was not that different from that of Bartolomé de las Casas (though differently from las Casas, Sandoval did not denounce slavery of Africans as criminal). Romain, in contrast, was a man of practical science and concerned with developing a view of the world free from religious nuisances, like with most contributors to the staggering ***Encyclopedie*** project. At the heart of his motivations was the itching for expanding the reach of European, and more specifically, French civilization. Both men's perceptions of slavery and race in the Caribbean joined the multitude of allied discourses about the non-European, which in turn came to influence the views of many writers who never set a foot outside of Europe.

That both European men were overly concerned with the causes of blackness should not surprise us today. Explaining the otherness of Africans, Americans, and Asians became an intellectual sport for European thinkers since the dawn of modernity. That they both focused on fingernails and yet reached such differing opinions is, admittedly, interesting. Because they came to the Americas at different times with radically different purposes, their New World experiences were also distinct, and thus the same with their perceptions of the Africans inhabiting the Caribbean. But their differences, instead of pointing to a fundamental asymmetry, identify various points in the evolution of the notion of race.

The reader may have suspected that the contest over fingernails illustrates a microcosm of larger discussions that took place concerning race. Romain's analysis concluded that the nail originated in whiteness and then became black as a result of inherent, biological phenomena. Sandoval, however, described the nail as initially black with an external environmental force, the sun, reinforcing that color by smoldering it.

Although subtle, the relationship between racial ideology and fingernails certainly functions as a unique lens from which the evolving racial discourse of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries can be dissected to reveal the trajectory that established white superiority as a basis of social hierarchy. And here lies these books' greatest contribution. Through primary sources the student of the Atlantic World, the Caribbean, and Latin America may examine, in detail, the complicated and unstructured unraveling of race as a powerful concept moving through history hand in hand with the chart of modern chattel slavery.

Germeten and Eze's purpose in translating the works of privileged white men who wrote

about race and slavery from the 1600s to the 1800s was to expose the original voices that helped construct the concepts of "otherness" that in turn came to justify slavery through the distinction of race. Both editors hoped that by unveiling these voices and creating a greater depth of historical context for academic audiences they could expand and complicate modern discussions of racism and its origins. And indeed, these multilingual (yet translated) sources bring a fuller perspective to the dialogue.

But which voices are being heard and which ones are being ignored? The editors' choices, which texts were allowed in and which ones were left out, are as important as their analysis. Germeten, for her part, offered a selection of Sandoval's writing to the English-speaking world--a much-needed labor since with the exception of Margaret Olsen's fine recent book he has been left out of much of the current scholarly discussion on the history of race.[2] It was that simple. Choosing ***De instauranda*** and opening its pages is what her contribution is all about. Indeed, by translating and explicating Sandoval she helps us appreciate his particular angles and empowers us to investigate and contemplate his influence. Moreover, her elegant introduction, and her painstaking research as seen in her extensive notes and section briefings, make her work a must read.

Eze's, however, is another story. Surely, his work was among the first to even consider the idea that Enlightenment thinkers may have been the culprit behind white supremacy. But his paltry preambles to the sources and the fact that he left out critical Enlightenment thinkers, like Benjamin Franklin and Abbé Grégoire, render his work lopsided at best, incomplete at worst.

Sandoval's voice is intriguing for several reasons. In ***De instauranda***, he specified the purpose of his book for the Christian reader with surprising simplicity. "This book's goal," he wrote, "was to encourage the desire to help the Ethiopians, a [race] with a small role on the world stage but a designated place in God's plan" (Sandoval, p. 8). So, the book was supposed to generate compassion for blacks among whites. But, considering their condition as enslaved immigrants in the Americas, this may not have been that easy to achieve. Thus, throughout the book, Sandoval acknowledged the contradictions of imperialist ideology clashing with his Jesuit education, which in turn contributed to his contradictory ideas about race.

Sandoval sympathized with the slaves' plight, yet did not unequivocally reject African slavery. He vacillated between viewing slaves as victimized individuals and beasts of burden. Indeed, his conflicting attitudes could fill the pages of his call to action, ***De instauranda***. Sandoval's position as a spiritual provider to enslaved Africans can explain his persistent hesitation. Being responsible for showing them the way toward salvation would have made their suffering and humanity even more apparent. That race, as an arbitrary human classification, was not part of the European lingo yet may also have helped his wavering. European society at the time lacked a formal ideology to define racial identity since religion was still construing most identities. Germeten, the editor, explains that, in fact, Sandoval's writing became one of the voices that led the conversation toward a more rigid understanding of race and its role in slavery.

With the luxury of hindsight, Germeten identifies how Sandoval's study of Africans fit into the larger evolution of the meaning of race within language and ideology, even as she explains his sympathetic proclivities. The complicated Sandoval dangerously grouped all Africans under the racial umbrella of "Ethiopian." Yet as soon as he denied the complexity and individuality of African identities by calling them all "Ethiopian," in book 1 he turned around and restored their humanity by describing and therefore illuminating the rich and varied cultures of Africa, often overlooked by the European gaze. Sandoval naming all

Africans "Ethiopians," Germeten notes, seemed to have stemmed from his view of Ethiopia as a historically important African nation (Sandoval, p. xxix). For most Europeans at the time, Ethiopia meant Africa--equivalent to how "America" only means the United States for many in the world today.

Some of Eze's sources show a similar trend to that which Germeten identifies in Sandoval with the term "Ethiopian." In his 1776 essay titled "The Degeneration of Races," Johann Friedrich Blumenbach divided humankind into five principal varieties: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay. Blumenbach, again, grouped all Africans as Ethiopians "except those of the north" (Eze, p. 85). Do not mistake him for a narrow-minded illiberal person, though. Blumenbach wrote numerous essays attempting to dispel the myth that nonwhite people were inherently unable to excel in the arts and sciences. However, he simultaneously advocated the "degeneration" theory on the basis of racial variances. Blumenbach situated the Caucasian as the "better and preferable" variety, and Ethiopian and Mongolian types as diverging from the original (Eze, p. 85).

Georges Leopold Cuvier also adopted the Ethiopian terminology in *Animal Kingdom* (1797) when he classified the three distinct human races as "the Caucasian or white, the Mongolian or yellow, and Ethiopian or negro" (Eze, p. 104). Like Blumenbach, Cuvier decided that all other races descended from the Caucasian. His description of the Negro race likened blacks to a "monkey tribe; the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of utter barbarism" (Eze, p. 105).

It is evident that the early modern European usage of the term "Ethiopian" moved gradually away from Sandoval's simple notion of an African identity to become a caption for an inferior biological race. This is what happens when people are grouped and sloppily classified at the expense of their uniqueness and differences--they seem less than human. Germeten, then, may be correct about Sandoval's legacy. Despite his good intentions, by calling all Africans Ethiopians when he knew better, Sandoval may have helped conceive the idea of the African "race" as a static biological trait.

The belief in an inherently superior white race permeated the eighteenth-century Enlightenment community across the Atlantic. Romain's fingernail analysis at the beginning of this essay assumed that all races stemmed from white humans. He postulated that initially all fingernails were white, until biological conditions created the variance of a black fingernail. A century earlier, in contrast, Sandoval had diagnosed the fundamental state of the nail as black. Much had changed in a period of one hundred years; in the interim, whiteness became the original race, a racial benchmark, and this we can witness through the sources thanks to the work of Germeten and Eze.

Notes

[1]. Frank A. Kafker and Serena L. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as Individuals: A Biographical Dictionary of the Authors of the Encyclopedie* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1988), 211.

[2]. Margaret M. Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation in Colonial Cartagena De Indias* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

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