unfree mobility . . . needs to be specific to region and to time" (245). Evidence on the 1773 muster lists alone undermines Bugg's suggestion. Besides men from Europe and British America, the ninety-man complement of the *Racehorse* included at least two able seamen born in Africa: Madagascar-born Jonathan Syfax and Guinea-born Richard Yorke. Madagascar-born able seaman Joseph Brown served on the *Carcass*, the *Racehorse*'s companion ship on the expedition. Neither Syfax, Yorke, nor Brown saw any reason to conceal an African birth. Why would Equiano have done so when the records indicate that he could have claimed any birthplace he wished? Why would someone wanting to conceal an enslaved past choose South Carolina, the most fully developed slave society in North America? Besides, what is the likelihood that anyone hunting runaway slaves would target royal naval vessels sailing between England and the North Pole?

Bugg suggests that the misrecordings of "Vassa" as "Feston" and "Weston" on the 1773 muster lists of the *Racehorse* cast doubt on the age and South Carolina place of birth recorded for him on the same lists. As unlikely as those names may seem, they are no greater misunderstandings of "Gustavus Vassa" than the "Gusta Worcester" recorded by another purser sixteen years earlier on another vessel. Foreign names were frequently misrecorded. What are the odds that the purser of the *Racehorse* misheard Equiano's place of birth and age so as to render them fortuitously consistent with his previous records? Bugg offers several other candidates as possible men miscalled Feston or Weston. But what are the chances that either the future soldier or criminal Bugg suggests was among the best seamen available in peacetime for a dangerous government-sponsored voyage, rather than the experienced and demonstrably multitalented Vassa-Equiano? If Feston-Weston was not Vassa-Equiano, who was? Or does Bugg mean to imply that Equiano fabricated his participation in the expedition?

Vincent Carretta
University of Maryland, College Park

Reply:

Anyone seeking to understand the trajectory of Equiano's life is indebted to Vincent Carretta, who has laid much of the field's groundwork, not least in the meticulous research behind his Penguin editions of *The Interesting Narrative*. I am therefore glad that Carretta finds my archival work on Equiano to be of interest, and I am happy to join him, Paul Edwards, Nini Rodgers, and James Green in examining Equiano's book tour and its significance. I visited archives at several of the cities on Equiano's tour, and at each I found interesting, unpublished material. As Equiano's itinerary included no less than two dozen stops, I am certain that further research will continue to develop our picture of his venture, the interest it generated, and its importance to abolition history, radical politics in 1790s Britain and Ireland, and the history of the book.

William Blake's famous verdict that "[n]othing can be more contemptible than to suppose Public RECORDS to be True" is not the most helpful motto for scholars of literary history (*The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. [Berkeley: U of California P, 1982] 617), but those who work on Equiano do deal with a complex, elusive set of historical materials, and I welcome the chance to participate in a conversation about this archive and in particular about its uncertainties. (Readers might be interested in Paul E. Lovejoy's recent contribution to this discussion, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-slave Studies* 27 [2006]: 317–47.) I appreciate Carretta's candid revision of some of his earlier claims and his clarification of his present position. Even so, because Carretta's original, attention-grabbing work on Equiano's birthplace is still far better known than his subsequent refinements, I think it is necessary, for now anyway, to keep stressing the instability of the evidence.

This leaves the question of how to interpret "evidence found in Equiano's naval records," on which I respectfully disagree with Carretta. I do not accept that the "Weston" listed in the *Racehorse*'s log book is necessarily "Vassa," rather than one of the many Westons involved in the maritime industry at the time (the few I list in my article are presented as symptoms of, not solutions to, the problem). And while it may be that Jonathan Syfax and Richard Yorke did not disguise their national identities, Equiano was more adept at identity politics than the average sailor. The question of sailors' nationalities led the United States in 1798

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to require "Seaman's Protection Certificates" of all mariners, verifying national identities. And if we are to accept Carretta's argument that "Weston" is a mistaken entry for "Vassa," then is there any basis for believing that the entries for "Syfax" and "Yorke" are stable? I realize that I dissent from Carretta in regarding the muster lists as part of the evidentiary problem, not the court of appeal.

A document that I am inclined to credit, which Carretta does not address, is Equiano's 1785 letter to the Quakers that I mention in my essay. Equiano changed his self-identification as "African" in the 1785 letter to "negro" for the version that he included in *The Interesting Narrative* four years later, an alteration that complicates the claim that Equiano was invested in fabricating a specifically African identity. It is clear that Equiano's vibrant historical presence and ensuing importance have magnetized a field of discussion, fact-checking, and ongoing investigation and debate, of no less concern to us than to his contemporaries, and I am pleased to have Carretta as a colleague in this endeavor.

John Bugg
Princeton University

The Origin of Donne's Soul

To the Editor:

Although Ramie Targoff convincingly argues in "Traducing the Soul: Donne's *Second Anniversarie*" (121 [2006]: 1493–508) that the poem is unexpectedly heterodox regarding the origin of the soul and that its "violation of normative Christian belief . . . has until now escaped our critical eye" (1494), her emphasis on the uniqueness of the soul's generation in the *Second Anniversarie* as compared with the *First Anniversarie* is mistaken. Indeed, while I agree that such lines as "Thinke further on thy selfe, my soule, and thinke / How thou at first was made but in a sinke" have been overlooked as suggesting simultaneous generation of soul and body (*Second Anniversarie*, lines 157–58), I must point out that the same suggestion, albeit less bluntly, lies in "the soule of man / Be got when man is made" (*First Anniversarie*, lines 451–52). Both poems portray the soul not as a separate divine creation but as a result of the same sex act that produces the body.

James H. Sims
University of Southern Mississippi

Human Rights Conference

To the Editor:

In "Relative Humanity: Identity, Rights, and Ethics—Israel as a Case Study" (121 [2006]: 1536–43), Omar Barghouti, using primarily Israeli sources, documents callous and violent Israeli acts against Palestinians. Barghouti neglects to mention the homicide bombings, fatal kidnappings, stabbings, and stonings inflicted by Palestinians upon Israelis. Barghouti suggests that the roots of alleged "Israeli public justification" of Israeli injustice can be found in, "among other sources, [fundamentalist] interpretations of the tenets of Jewish law, or Halakhah" and the Torah (1540). On the Torah, Barghouti quotes from a statement attributed in a controversial work by the late Israeli chemistry professor Israel Shahak to a fundamentalist rabbi, Yitzhak Ginsburgh, who asserts that "[t]he Torah would probably permit" taking a "liver of an innocent non-Jew to save" the life of a Jew who needs one [because] "[t]here is something more holy . . . about Jewish life than about non-Jewish life" (qtd. in Barghouti 1540).

Some twenty-five hundred years of diverse rabbinic opinions encompassing ethics as well as law compose the Halakhah, which means literally a way of "going" or "walking," of being in the world. Having been nourished for decades by Halakhah grounded in such midrashim as one in which God rebukes "the angels" for singing when the sea closes over the newly liberated Israel's pursuing oppressors, whom the midrash recognizes as equally God's creatures, I am horrified by Ginsburgh's wild-eyed if qualified interpretation (*Midrash Rabbah*, Exodus 23.7). But also horrifying is Barghouti's use of Ginsburgh's atypical words to impugn the character of the Torah, the Halakhah, and the ethos that prevails in today's Jewish-Israeli society. The dehumanized, stereotyped image of the Jew as vampire that Barghouti invokes hovers over the remainder of his piece to justify its cynical closing call for an end to the Jewish-Israeli state (1542).

Born of the Torah and the books of the Hebrew prophets, the ideal that attends the two-thousand-year-old Jewish dream of return to the land—no matter how grim the current reality—is a peacefully united world. In published and forthcoming work, I have shown that when the biblical promise of peace fails to materialize, the Torah

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