

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.

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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.

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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