

iel G. Hoffman, Thomas Werge, Pascal Covici, Victor Doyno, Arthur G. Pettit, and Harold Beaver had concentrated their attention on three appearances of the figure in the novel in connection with Jim and money and had dealt primarily with the occasions on which the number occurred in that context. No previous scholar, as far as I could ascertain, had undertaken to justify the claim that Twain's repeated use of the number could be directly and significantly linked to "forty acres and a mule"; only James F. Light, in a parenthetical remark, had entertained the possibility that the forty dollars for Jim at the end of the novel was at least "reminiscent" of the phrase ("Paradox, Form, and Despair in *Huckleberry Finn*," *Mark Twain Journal* 21.4 [1983]: 25). Moreover, to my knowledge, no scholar had ever before drawn attention to the many additional contexts in the novel where the figure forty appears or to possible grounds for such repetition. (My paper appeared, under its original title, as ch. 7 of my book *Refiguring Huckleberry Finn* [U of Georgia P, 2000].)

It was therefore of interest to me to discover several aspects of my argument incorporated, unattributed, into the closing segment, "Forty Acres and a Mule," of Stacey Margolis's recent *PMLA* article "*Huckleberry Finn*; or, Consequences" (116 [2001]: 329–43). I realize that Newton and Leibniz developed the foundations of differential and integral calculus independently and almost simultaneously, but since there appears to be no simultaneity in this case, certain questions come to mind: Was Margolis in the audience at Baltimore? If not, through what other channel might she have learned of my research? Why does Margolis acknowledge no other scholar's earlier work on Twain's multiple use of the figure forty and thereby create the impression that she is plowing an uncultivated field? I am aware that new and interesting ideas, once placed in the public domain, can swiftly take wing and travel widely, and this caused me some concern before I presented my unpublished results in Baltimore. I would therefore welcome Margolis's word—not sworn on a

dictionary—that she arrived independently at the conclusion that she now presents as original and as no longer subject to doubt: "Surely forty is meant to recall the promise of forty acres and a mule, which were to make the freedmen equal as well as free" (339).

Carl F. Wieck  
University of Tampere

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Stacey Margolis argues persuasively that Twain's rejection of the "politics of good intentions" lies at the base of some critical attacks on the prominence of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain himself powerfully supports her argument in two comments in his writings. Discussing the life of Hannibal, Missouri, in his childhood, for example, he denies that slavery was "evil": "It is commonly believed that an infallible effect of slavery was to make such as lived in its midst hard-hearted. I think that it had no such effect—speaking in general terms. I think it stupefied everybody's humanity, as regarded the slave, but stopped there" (*Mark Twain's Hannibal, Huck and Tom*, ed. Walter Blair [Berkeley: U of California P, 1969] 50). His primary example was his mother, notable for her kindheartedness to slaves and animals. Tom Sawyer at the end of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is predictably stupid ("intellectual," he says); the yokels at the end of the novel are stupefied—those cases are easy to spot. Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas are also stupefied. Huck, too, is stupefied, acknowledging that the doctor who treats Tom "had a good heart in him and was a good man" (ch. 42). Commending Jim in a speech that Huck applauds, the doctor, of course using classic code words of the segregated, discriminatory South, says twice that "he ain't a bad nigger." *All* the characters in this novel are stupefied to the humanity of the "nigger" because he is "a nigger." Twain's satire is unpalatable because of its truthfulness to the blindness of his characters. As Twain pointed out in "A True Story," a decade before, whites and blacks have very different perceptions of black experience.

Twain's second comment occurred in a draft preface for *A Connecticut Yankee* in 1888: "Human liberty—for white people—may fairly be said to be one hundred years old this year [. . .]" (*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* [Berkeley: U of California P, 1977] 518). Race is at the forefront of Twain's chronology. The real source of discontent is that readers feel that Huck's determination to go to hell for his friend Jim should be followed by a breaking out. The absence of such a breakout and Twain's immersion of his characters in stupefying burlesque and caricature are certainly what antagonized a reader like Ernest Hemingway and later scholarly critics who describe the ending of the novel as "flawed." Yet such an outcome is foreshadowed by the ending of *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, where Huck, the only speaker to use the word "nigger" in the last several chapters, says he is willing to eat with Uncle Jake, whom Huck identifies as "a mighty good nigger," as long as it is not generally known. Race and class issues are consciously, but unpleasantly, jumbled in Twain's satire, as they still are in American society; Twain's humor is confrontational, and so it brings disquiet to readers who are not properly prepared by experience, intrinsic insight, or good teaching. Great works by many other authors share this characteristic, as is easily proved by the line of freshman readers who appear at my desk to ask if Swift really thought eating babies would solve the Irish hunger problem. Twain's challenge, and ours, as Margolis suggests, is to get past our distress at having our "good intentions" exposed as hollow and to accomplish the social and economic conditions that make "human liberty" as Twain understood it—liberty from absolutist authority and also from economic repression—an actuality. Until then, any accurate reader should be discontented with the conclusion of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but as a work of fiction, the novel does its work brilliantly.

David E. E. Sloane  
University of New Haven

### Reply:

Carl F. Wieck calls attention to one aspect of my argument about *Huckleberry Finn*: the connection between the forty dollars handed to Jim at the end of the evasion sequence and the Reconstruction promise to provide the freedmen with "forty acres and a mule." The first time I ever heard of Wieck's work was when *ANQ* sent me his book (*Refiguring Huckleberry Finn*) to review—long after my essay had been accepted for publication by *PMLA*. I confess I was surprised by Wieck's letter, having just submitted a review praising Wieck for tracing structural patterns in the text, like the repetition of the number forty, that have hitherto gone virtually unexamined by critics. But my review also points out that, aside from mentioning the legacy of "forty acres and a mule," he makes no sustained argument about its significance in the novel. It's a shame that Wieck is so wedded to his "results" that he is oblivious to their implications.

Stacey Margolis  
University of Utah

### The Copyediting of Literary Manuscripts

TO THE EDITOR:

M. Thomas Inge opens his "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship" (116 [2001]: 623–30) by announcing that "[i]t is commonplace now to understand that all texts produced by authors are not the products of individual creators," that they are, in other words, products of "the collaborative process." He immediately adds, however, that "the romantic myth of the author as solitary genius" is a continuing and, in his estimation, an objectionable belief. But are not the two points merely the two sides of the same coin? If one is "commonplace," the other is or should be too. I mean to suggest that I have some trouble understanding the driving force behind Inge's article, which, I hasten to add, does lucidly exemplify various kinds of collaboration. In one way Inge's major and pertinent examples—*The Waste Land*, *Sister Carrie*, various works by