

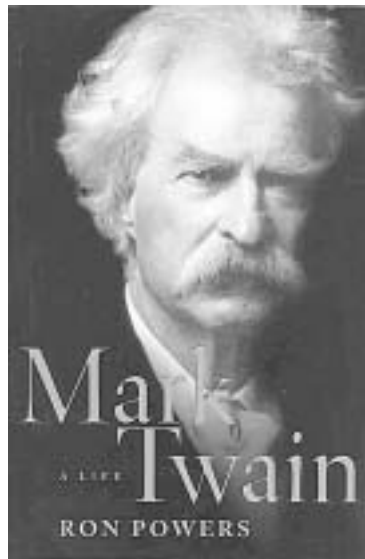
So Many Shadowed Corners Illuminated By: Job Conger

BOOK REVIEW - PART 2

Mark Twain: a Life by Ron Powers

Too few aspiring bards ascend to the plateau in which the business of writing takes more time than the art of writing. In *Mark Twain: A Life* by Ron Powers, that achievement occurs about halfway through the 627 pages of text, followed by almost 100 pages of notes, bibliography, acknowledgements, and index.

In the February *PenChant* part one of this review, I described Twain's presaging of Hunter S. Thompson's random diversions from established trains of thought and plot as carefully crafted. As I read the second half of the book, it became apparent that what appeared to be crafted placement was not that at all. What people read was what came from the pen *in the main*. The diversions were "Twains of thought" (forgive me for I know knot whot I doo-doo) as the gifted author intended. Powers reveals also how Twain's words in print were *not* Twain "unleashed," but Twain "bound" (for glory)! His gift for writing the roughly-hewn spoken dialects and lexicon of his



times, unbridled in his early writing – *Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It* and countless newspaper contributions – was tempered by feedback from his wife "Livy" (the former Olivia Langdon) and his friend William Dean Howells. An established icon of his times, well known in literary circles as Twain, Howells was a prolific novelist and the touch-

(Continued on page 5)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Nancy Ganguli	2
Your Little Child and Ugh, A Slug	2
Calendar Pages	3-4
So Many Shadowed...	5
Something Different	5
A Word or Two	6
Events at a Glance	6
Different	6

A WORD ...OR SOMETHING

By: Vicki Bamman

Some words just stop being used, and assume a sort of half-life, lingering in dictionaries and only occasionally popping out for use by a word maven. Expressive, descriptive words that deserve more respect—and more use—seem to stay glued to the page, never enter our vocabularies. Instead, we use other words that approximate our real meaning, or we make up words.

English readily permits, and accepts, new coinages. If they

get exposure and serve a purpose, they may quickly be adopted into use. A recent example is "truthiness" as opposed to truthfulness. If it serves a need, it will become a permanent part of the language.

Sometimes we make up words for things that already have a name but we can't think of it. Those stay around too, in the writing and everyday speech of people around us, even if they don't get the official recognition

of being in the dictionary. In fact, English has an ever-expanding group of words for the "vaguely precise," the words we use when we know exactly what we mean even if we can't say it. Paul Dickson calls these words kadigans.

Because of the flexibility of English, we don't have to use the colorless "What's-his-name" to refer to someone whose name we've temporarily forgotten. We

(Continued on page 6)

FEATURED READER...NANCY GANGULI

On Wednesday, March 15th, Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield, Illinois is proud to feature the talented poet, Nancy Ganguli. So how did we come to have such a wonderful poet among us? Here is an excerpt from a letter Nancy shared with me recently. In her own words, this is how she found Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield, Illinois.

"Ahh, Springfield, how deeply I love you, here where I continued to grow and evolve towards significant betterment in so many spheres during these past 4 years! Living in Springfield less than 2 weeks, on a whim I picked up a telephone book and started calling coffee houses listed in the yellow pages ... "Hi—do you folks by any chance have poetry readings at your cafe?" Bingo! First one I called was Trout Lily. I showed up that first Saturday at 10 AM and was warmly welcomed into Poet & Writers Literary Forum (PWLF). I quickly became heavily involved

with PWLF, a diverse, enriching community of writing folks where I flourished with a needed sense of home-belongingness and honed my writing skills over the next 4 yrs."

Nancy is a lyrical poet who speaks in rhythms born from deep within. She is water flowing over smooth river stones, falling from great heights, and the deep stillness of cool pools. You'll love every moment of her words

This event will take place at IMO's, 751 S. Durkin, here in Springfield. We will begin the evening with a brief open mic (all readers are asked to limit themselves to one poem or less than 3 minutes of prose -

REALLY!). Sign-up starts about 6:45 or so and the open mic around 7 p.m. After the open mic we will have a brief five-ten minute break so Nancy can get herself set up and then we will sit back, relax, and enjoy her words.

"...do you folks by any chance have poetry readings at your cafe?"

YOUR LITTLE CHILD

Call me home again.
I am still your little child.
I grew up, married a tall swarthy man
from across the seven seas,
but I am still a little child of this land.
I have traveled many places,
embrace diversity, sway my head
to rhythms of distant rags.
But inside still lives your little child.

Simmering scents of vindaloo drift
from my home more than fragrance
of roasting ribs of pork or beef.
I denounced the sole salvation path
of my childhood faith so long ago,
pray to no god, happily and quietly
embrace a humanist morality.
Still, deep inside lives your little child.

I smell a Christmas tree, hear strands of , "O holy night..... fall on your knees!"
and I know I am still so much your little child,
filled with longing, for your arms, your nurturing

—you, my mother,
my culture,
my country —

Call me home again.
I am still your little child.

WEDNESDAY -
MARCH 15TH
@ IMO's
7:00 P.M.

Challenge: if not a human being, I least want to be ...

UGH, A SLUG

If denied my human form,
I least want to be a snail,
slug or intestinal worm,
all devoid of beauty I can discern,
lacking sense of fun, social interaction,
intellect, ponderment or wonder.
Leaving sticky slime trails
is a questionable quest, risking
being stepped on by bare feet
of little Jeff or Nancy,
being salted by kids up the street.
Unlike my good friend, Thea,
I see no phallic connection
to antennae of snails or slugs,
and the joy of fucking
hermaphrodite fellow slugs
completely eludes me.
Regarding intestinal worms,
their friendly neighborhood
sounds downright shitty.

Nancy Ganguli
11/18/03

Nancy Ganguli

MARCH 2006

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

			1 IMO's Open Mic @7 p.m.	2	3 NTM Deadline for submission	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Featured Reader - Nancy Ganguli IMO's@7 p.m.	16	17	18
19	20 PWLF Board Meeting @ IMO's 6:30 p.m.	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 Ballots for Board Election must be postmark by today!	

APRIL 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<i>National Poetry Month</i>				1
2	3	4	5 Open Mic @ IMO's 7:00 p.m.	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Open Mic @ IMO's 7:00 p.m.	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Navigating the Maze reading - 7 p.m. @ the Hoogland Center for the Arts	28	29
30						

All votes must be received by 4/1/06

PROVIDENTIAL PASSAGE

(Continued from page 1)

stone of Twain's segue from "the west" to legitimacy as a national writer of consequence. No Howells = no Twain as we know him today. Livy perused his words almost as fast as they dried on the pages, typewritten soon after the new invention entered the marketplace. Howells allowed his own writing to be subjugated to Twain's frequent requests for edits, and toward the end, charged for his services. Twain always paid, though not always promptly. The point of this paragraph is to remind writers that "editors" are not the hell-sanctioned deviates as some P&WLF members regarded them early in the life of this organization. Twain accepted their feedback without question. His greatest critic was himself. Powers tells of the Missourian sentencing (no pun intended) 634 draft pages to the trash bin in the course of writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Powers excels in reporting the evolution of epic titles, most notably 'Finn. It took six years to write, off and on, was originally about Huck's and Tom Sawyer's lives through the rest of their youth, adulthood and declining years. Powers shares 21st century perspectives of the book as he continues the story of the author's life. What a solid approach instead of coming back to it later in the book!

Telegraphic mention of other facts revealed . . . Twain had as much busi-

ness sense as his brother and father and lost hundreds of thousands of dollars investing in projects that went nowhere. If he hadn't become a successful writer, he might have shared the same relative ignominy as the rest of his Hannibal family. - - - The former Missouri militia soldier who almost fought the future leader of the Union army as the general marched his troops south, became his close friend as the old soldier, dying,

Powers excels in reporting the evolution of epic titles, most notably 'Finn.

completed *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* memoir for Twain to publish. The book saved Twain's bacon, so to speak . . . Mark Twain hated telephones. . . . Because even after publication of 'Berry, the family finances were ragged, Twain and family spent about 10 years in exile in Europe because the American dollar bought a better life in France, Germany, Austria and Italy than it did in the USA. A financier "savior" cut through the horrible tangle of sorry circumstance and returned him to solvency late in life. - - - Twain compromised his cozy grace with "the establishment" via his outspoken diatribes against American imperialism during the Spanish-American war, and this, plus his growing disenchantment with organized religion, seen for the first time in his first book *Innocents Abroad*, revealed him to

be far more than the home-spun bumpkin caricature later exemplified by Will Rogers. . . . Daughter Clara, who survived her parents' and her siblings' deaths fought hard in her remaining years to limit the world view of her father to that of the loping, smiling, riverboat humorist, and the rest of his friends did almost nothing to counter her actions.

While the intricate machinations of Twain's business activities occasionally arrest the pace of the book from my perspective, the book falls short only in the final chapter. Only nine and a third pages describe the last six years of his life. It is a happy, though intensely poignant chapter if we can accept Twain's death on April 19, 1910 as a positive inevitability. But there is much Powers should have said that he didn't say. Where was Twain buried? What was the world's reaction to his death? I, for one, would like to know. I guess I'll have to go a Googling.

Understanding the full story of the man through Powers' impeccable reportage has left me determined to read more of Twain. Though he was eclipsed in the fashion of the day by a succeeding generation of modernist writers – notably Henry James – Mark Twain is immortal. He lives in hearts all over the world today. He will live even more after you read *Mark Twain: a Life* by Ron Powers.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT - FROM A LISTSERVE I'M ON

OPEN CALL TO POETS

Only those on the ChicagoPoetry.com mailing list received this message and I'm passing it on to you!

Be aware this opportunity is very competitive. Improv Olympics (<http://www.iochicago.net/>) is looking for three to four poets at the most for this series. If you do not make it in the first time around, your information will be held for consideration for future events. Improv Olympics is extending their "Under The Influence" series. They are looking for

three or four poets who are willing to be featured poets during Sunday night events on the following dates: March 5, March 19, March 26, April 2

This is NOT a paying gig, it is for promotion and fun only.

What the gig entails is being part of the improv show for the night. You (the poet) will read a poem on stage in front of their audience and then the improv troupe will create spontaneous skits inspired by your poetry. They have been doing this for over a month now and have had audiences of up to 70 people.

Charlie Rossiter was one of the features previously, and it was a lot of fun. The events take place at 10:30 PM and poets are required to arrive by 9:45.

Improv Olympics is located at 3541 N. Clark (near Clark and Addison).

Poets interested in being considered as one of the featured poets should send an email to Sue Gillan at sgtg33@aol.com

(Continued on page 6)



Poets & Writers Literary Forum

P. O. Box 5666
Springfield, IL 62705

Email: submissions@pwlf.com

If you are interested in contributing to the PenChant, please contact any of the PWLF Board members.

It is through the contributions and energy of all that we are successful.

Your Forum needs strong leadership. Please either volunteer or encourage anyone you know with administrative skills to volunteer for the Board. Let's keep the Forum thriving.

PWLF

To increase awareness and appreciation of Literary Arts

CLASSIFIEDS

Poetry and Prose Wanted:

Information on deadlines and submission guidelines available at:

~ www.pwlf.com

~ www.pitchblackbooks.com

~ www.daybreakpoetry.com

Submit work today!

Poets & Writers Literary Forum of Springfield

Calendar of Events

March 1st—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

March 15th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Featured Reader

Nancy Ganguli

IMO's

April 1st - Ballots for the Board are due by Saturday, April 1st.

CAST YOUR BALLOT - VOTE FOR THREE (3) CANDIDATES

April 5th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

April 19th—7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Open Mic at IMO's

April 27th - 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

***Navigating the Maze Reading @ the
Hoogland Center for the Arts - Club room***

Last Sunday of each month—

Poetry Parnassus @ Joe's to Go—South 6th Street 1 to 3 p.m.



DIFFERENT

(Continued from page 5)

YOU MUST INCLUDE A POETRY RELATED BIO. – DO NOT REQUEST THIS GIG WITHOUT YOUR BIO.

(You may wish to send some sample

poems as well, though the improv troupe will not see your work before you read it on stage to make sure their skits are completely spontaneous.)

A Word ... or Something

By: Vicki Bamman

(Continued from page 1)

can say instead "Whatzizface," or "Butz," or "Gowser," or (my favorite) "Dinglefuzzie," or any equivalent that happens to occur to us.

And when it comes to objects, there have been dozens of made-up words coined and used and remembered and used again. Some of them seem to have broad application and some really are vaguely precise. Anything can be a "thingamabob," but a "thumadoodle" sounds like something small—you couldn't call something a thu-

madoodle if it were bigger than your thumb, could you? A "dooflickety" seems like it ought to have moving parts. An "optriculum" sounds high tech, like an instrument at the eye doctor's.

One of these days some techie is going to invent something that can only be called an optriculum. But that's okay; if anybody trademarks a kadigan, we'll just make up another one.