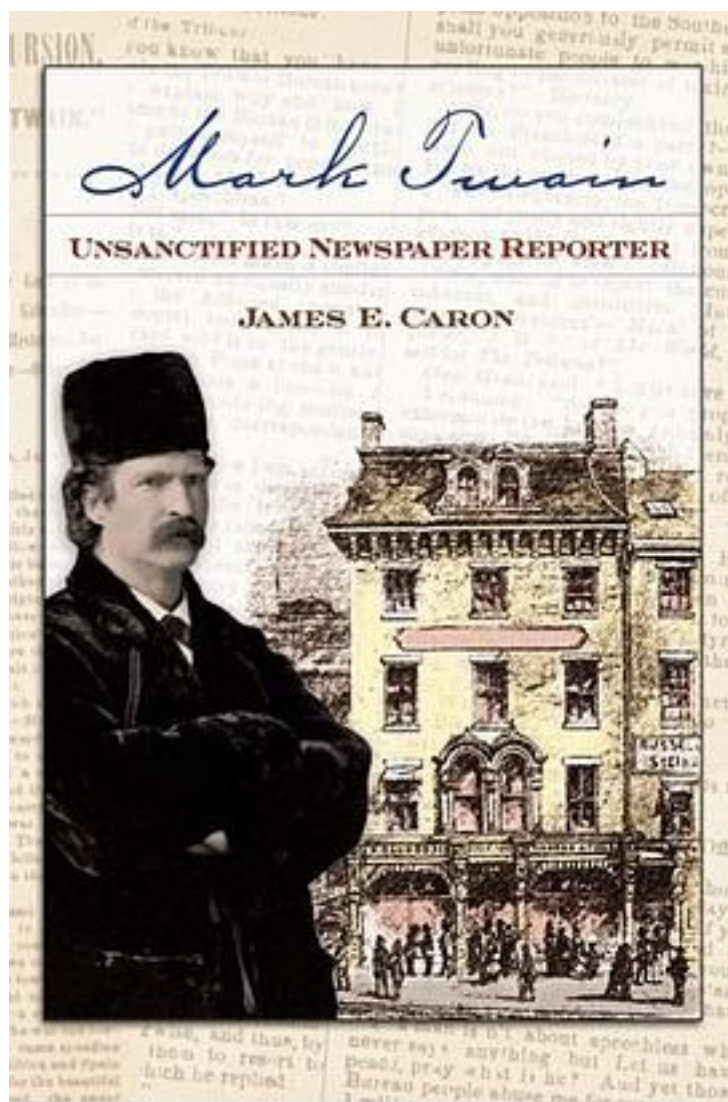


Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter



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Before Mark Twain became a national celebrity with his best-selling *The Innocents Abroad*, he was just another struggling writer perfecting his craft-but already "playin' hell" with the world. In the first book in more than fifty years to examine the initial phase of Samuel Clemens's writing career, James Caron draws on contemporary scholarship and his own careful readings to offer a fresh and comprehensive perspective on those early years--and to challenge many long-standing views of Mark Twain's place in the tradition of American humor. Tracing the arc of Clemens's career from self-described "unsanctified newspaper reporter" to national author between 1862 and 1867, Caron reexamines the early and largely neglected writings--especially the travel letters from Hawaii and the letters chronicling Clemens's trip from California to New York City. Caron connects those sets of letters with comic materials Clemens had already published, drawing on all known items from this first phase of his career--even the virtually forgotten pieces from the *San Francisco Morning Call* in 1864--to reveal how Mark Twain's humor was shaped by the sociocultural context and how it catered to his audience's sensibilities while unpredictably transgressing its standards. Caron reveals how Sam Clemens's contemporaries, notably Charles Webb, provided important comic models, and he shows how Clemens not only adjusted to but also challenged the guidelines of the newspapers and magazines for which he wrote, evolving as a comic writer who transmuted personal circumstances into literary art. Plumbing Mark Twain's cultural significance, Caron draws on anthropological insights from Victor Turner and others to compare the performative aspects of Clemens's early work to the role of ritual clowns in traditional societies. Brimming with fresh insights into such benchmarks as "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands" and "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," this book is a gracefully written work that reflects both patient research and considered judgment to chart the development of an iconic American talent. *Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter* should be required reading for all serious scholars of his work, as well as for anyone interested in the interplay between artistic creativity and the literary marketplace.

作者介绍:

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