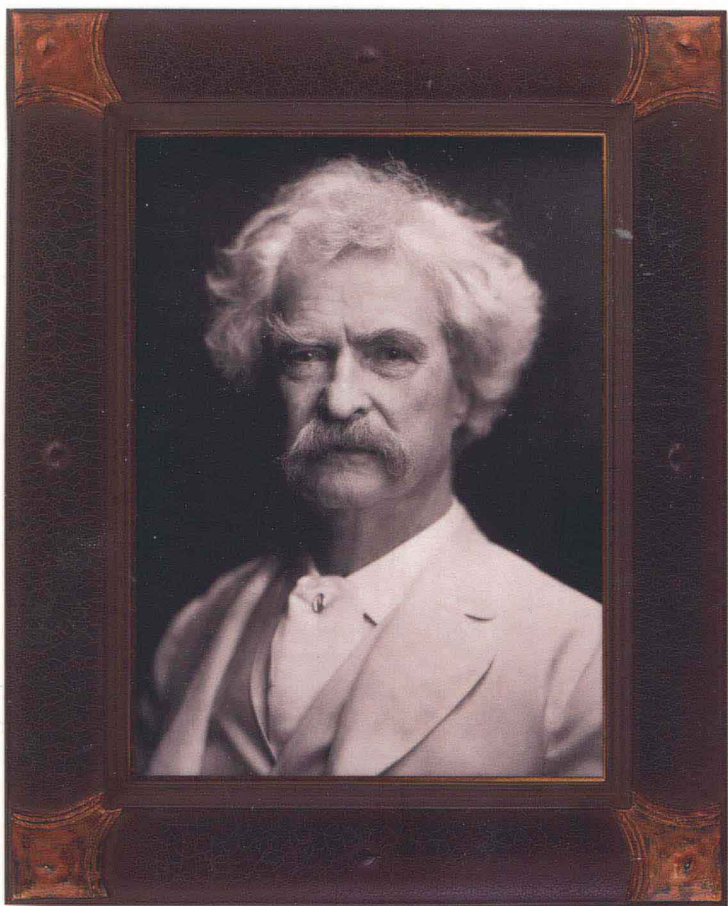


【了如指掌·人物馆】

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了如指掌

# 在咖啡馆遇见马克·吐温

【美】弗瑞德·卡普兰 / 著 王铮 / 译



黑龙江教育出版社

FRED KAPLAN  
FOREWORD BY JAY MCINERNEY

【美】弗瑞德·卡普兰 / 著    【美】杰伊·麦金纳尼 / 序

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COFFEE WITH

MARK TWAIN

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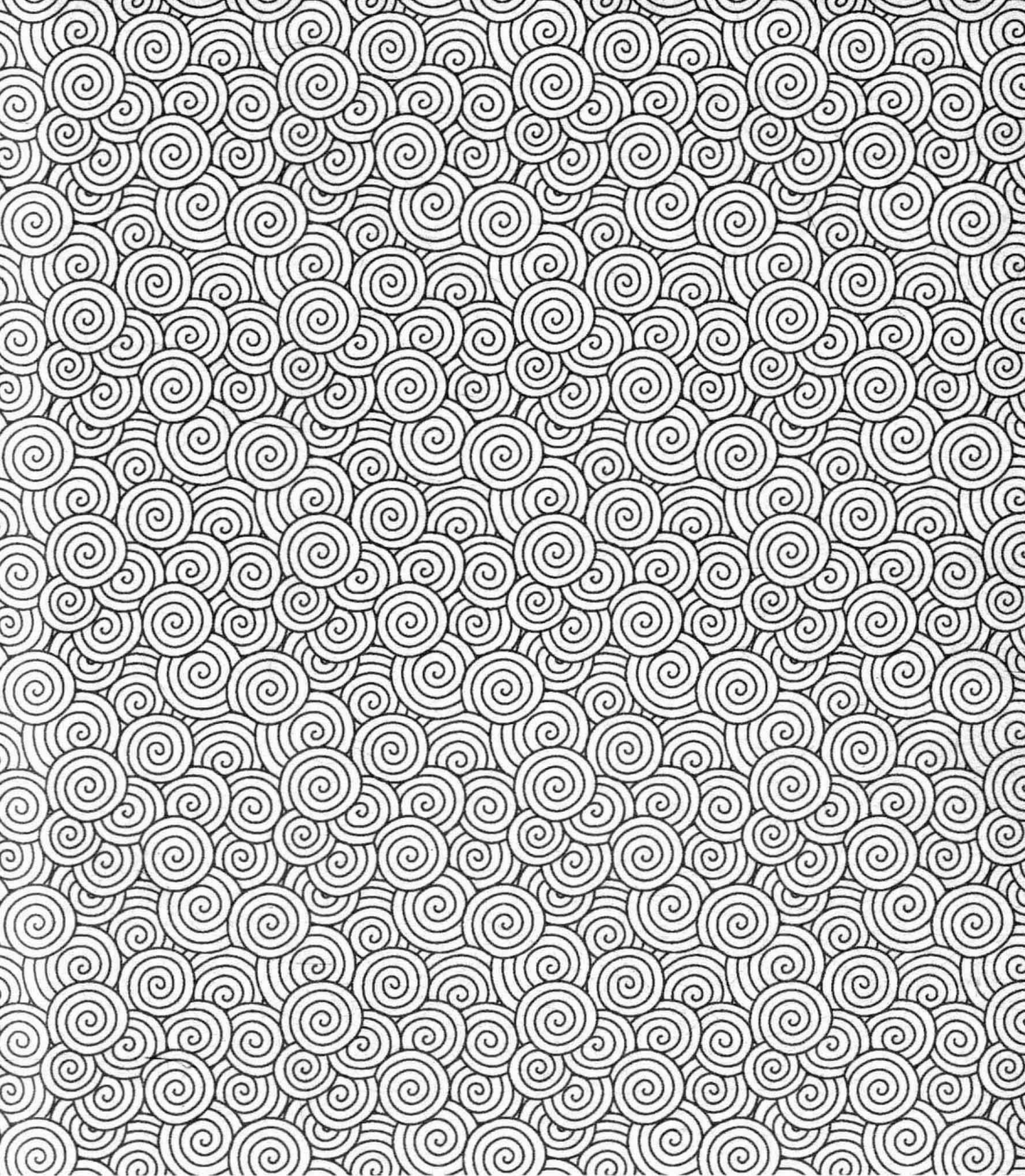
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## Foreword

by JAY McINERNEY

Humor is notoriously evanescent—with a shelf-life somewhere between that of a fish and a software program—and yet almost a hundred years after his death Mark Twain remains one of the most durable and popular American writers. The 2007 *Yale Book of Quotations* has 153 quotations from Twain—140 more than Karl Marx. Many of Twain's "serious" and high-minded contemporaries, such as his friend William Dean Howells, are little more than footnotes to literary history while Twain continues to acquire new readers: my 12-year old son recently picked up and finished *Tom Sawyer* of his own volition, without prompting from myself, his mother, or a teacher. "It was cool," was his laconic assessment.

Twain grew up on the banks of the Mississippi and served as a riverboat pilot in his early twenties. When he was 25 he went West to seek his fortune. Much of his greatest comedy derives from skewering the gullible optimism and exuberant greed of the young republic. Twain found rich fodder in the great American belief in the big score, the lucky strike, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—a tendency that he thoroughly embodied in his own life. No matter how much money Twain made from his writing, he was always involved in get-rich schemes, and lost several fortunes in mining stocks, bogus inventions, and dubious business ventures. Smarter in his work than in his life, he almost never condescended to his characters, no matter how foolish or venal.

## 序言

幽默易逝——它的保鲜期大概在一条鱼和一套软件程序之间吧——然而，去世近一个世纪后，马克·吐温依旧位居最有生命力和最受欢迎的美国作家之列。2007年度《耶鲁语录》收录了吐温的153条经典言论，比卡尔·马克思多了140条。众多“严肃”和高傲的同时代文人，例如他的朋友威廉·迪恩·豪威尔斯，都沦落到了文学史的注脚里，而吐温却在继续收获新的读者：十二岁的儿子最近独自看完了《汤姆·索亚》，没有我和他妈妈，或者老师的督促。“真爽！”他给了句简洁的评价。

吐温在密西西比河畔长大，二十岁出头当上了汽船领航员，二十五岁那年去了西部寻找发财机会。他身上最具喜剧性之处是，容易轻信的乐观主义恰好遇上了一个贪欲横生的年轻共和制国家。吐温在伟大的美国人对大生意、财运当头和彩虹尽头的那罐金子的信仰中寻觅到了丰富的创作素材——这种倾向也彻底映射到了他自己的生活中。不管有多少写作收入，他总是执著于自己的发财计划，在矿业股票、骗人的发明和不靠谱的投机生意上损失了不少钱。他在工作中比在生活中更潇洒，几乎从不屈就自己的个性，不管它有多么愚蠢或唯利是图。



Twain shuttles effortlessly between the ostensibly distant poles of sheer antic nonsense and sermonizing. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865) is pure fluff, a tall tale that does nothing more than send up the art of tall-tale telling and the rough manners and colorful speech of the Western mining camps where Twain spent time in his twenties. "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" (1874) is an indictment not only of slavery but of the stupidity of the narrator himself (presumably Twain) for imagining that the life of an ol' black mammy was idyllic. Both of these stories, like most of Twain's work, were told in an American vernacular which helped to forge an idiomatic American literary tradition thoroughly distinct from European antecedents.

When Mark Twain decided to let Tom Sawyer's scruffy buddy Huck tell his own story, he unleashed one of the great comic voices of American literature and discovered a finely tuned instrument of social critique: among the great ironies that energize the novel is the fact that Huck, the social outcast, feels guilty for transgressing the most unjust and artificial of contemporary social conventions. Huck confuses convention with natural law just as he confuses his own innate sense of morality with "wickedness" when he imagines that he's going to Hell for helping Jim, the runaway slave who becomes his companion.

Floating down the Mississippi on their raft, Huck and Jim enact the great American fantasy of escaping civilization for the wide open spaces even as they stumble upon a dizzying cross-section of society. Few novels have so thoroughly embodied the promises and contradictions of the American character; none comes close to doing so with such exuberance and such a high quotient of sheer entertainment. Most classics inevitably carry the whiff of the classroom; reading Twain feels like playing hookey.



吐温在表面上浅显滑稽的闲言碎语和深奥事理之间穿梭自如。《卡拉维拉斯县知名的跳蛙》(1856)写的纯粹是市井琐事,除了吹牛的艺术、粗鲁的举止和西部采矿营地(吐温二十几岁时还在那里工作过一段时间)的趣闻之外,再无他物。《一个真实的故事——照我听到的逐字叙述的》(1874)是对奴隶制和讲述者(推测就是吐温本人)自身的一场控诉,他竟然想象一位太太的黑人保姆过着田园式生活。与其笔下的大部分作品一样,这两则故事突出了本土语言风格,它有助于形成与欧洲前辈截然不同的美国文学传统。

让汤姆·索亚那位邈邈的好友哈克亲口说出自己的故事,马克·吐温用这样的情节安排释放出美国文学中一个最滑稽的声音,并找到了社会批判的一剂美妙良方:辛辣的嘲讽赋予这部小说独特的魅力,哈克,一个社会的弃儿,竟然对叛逆那个时代的社会传统中最不公平和最虚伪的部分产生了负罪感。他混淆了传统与自然法则,亦如他在与生俱来的道德感与“罪恶感”之间徘徊,帮助逃亡路上的伙伴奴隶吉姆让他心生下地狱的恐惧。

乘着木筏漂流在密西西比河上的哈克和吉姆是伟大的美国式幻想的代言人,偶然瞥见社会混乱的一面,他们就会萌生逃脱文明的束缚、奔向广阔空间的念头。很少有小说如此彻底地表现美国人性格中的承诺性与矛盾性;以这样丰富和大比例的戏谑式笔触道出这一点的作品更是绝无仅有。大部分作品都不可避免地沾染上了教室的味道;阅读吐温将让你体验逃学的乐趣。

杰伊·麦金纳尼

## INTRODUCTION

A master of repartee and never too busy to respond to a request for an interview, Mark Twain set the gold standard for verbal wit and self-revelation in his writings and public statements. In this book he makes a post-mortem appearance, as usual with a cigar in his hand and dressed in an immaculate white suit. An obsessive self-dramatist, he reveled in his own striking presence. He was a master of the interview form, and always answered the question he wanted to answer, which was not necessarily the question he was asked.

During a life that spanned two-thirds of the 19th century, he was often depicted in drawings and photographs. Widely appreciated for his evocation of American culture, his caustic wit, and his satiric vision, he was instantly recognizable by the newspaper-reading as well as the book-reading public. By old age, he had become an American icon.

Mark Twain honed his verbal skills in impromptu exchanges with reporters and on his lecture tours, in which he entertained audiences with oral performances of edited selections from his books. To Twain, writing was closely related to talking. In both his authorial and his speaking voice he emphasized a colloquial, conversational directness and simplicity that made him a friendly, folksy, and companionable voice. He was never at a loss for words. His prodigious memory provided him with an instantly available anthology of the best of what he had written. And his talent for spontaneous as well as well-honed witty maxims and general observations made him an interviewer's delight.