



# Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman and America's First Bohemians (A Merloyd Lawrence Book)

*Justin Martin*

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In the shadow of the Civil War, a circle of radicals in a rowdy saloon changed American society and helped set Walt Whitman on the path to poetic immortality.

*Rebel Souls* is the first book ever written about the colorful group of artists—regulars at Pfaff's Saloon in Manhattan—rightly considered America's original Bohemians. Besides a young Whitman, the circle included actor Edwin Booth; trailblazing stand-up comic Artemus Ward; psychedelic drug pioneer and author Fitz Hugh Ludlow; and brazen performer Adah Menken, famous for her Naked Lady routine. Central to their times, the artists managed to forge connections with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain, and even Abraham Lincoln. This vibrant tale, packed with original research, offers the pleasures of a great group biography like *The Banquet Years* or *The Metaphysical Club*. Justin Martin shows how this first bohemian culture—imported from Paris to a dingy Broadway saloon—seeded and nurtured an American tradition of rebel art that thrives to this day.

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