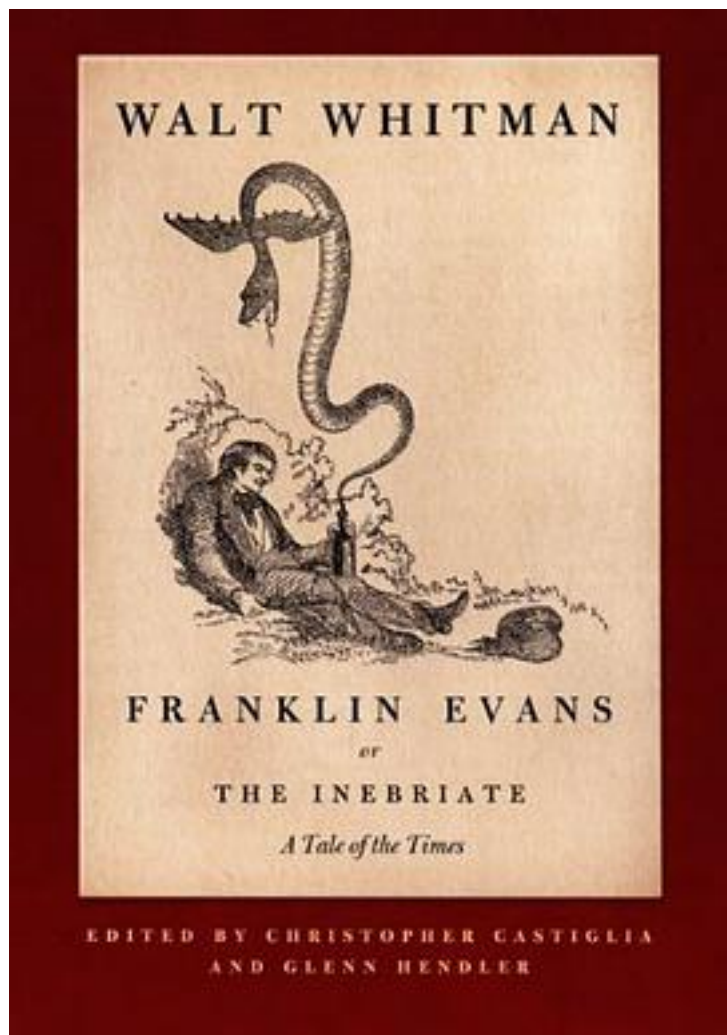


# Franklin Evans, or the Inebriate



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Not many people know that Walt Whitman - arguably the pre-eminent American poet

of the nineteenth century - began his literary career as a novelist. Out of print since 1967, "Franklin Evans, or the Inebriate: A Tale of the Times", was his first and only novel. Published in 1842, during a period of intense temperance movement activity, it became Whitman's most popular work during his lifetime, selling some twenty thousand copies. The novel tells the rags-to-riches story of Franklin Evans, an innocent young man from the Long Island countryside who seeks his fortune in New York City. Corrupted by music halls, theatres, and above all taverns, he gradually becomes a drunkard. Until the very end of the tale, Evans' efforts to reform fail, and each time he resumes drinking, another series of misadventures ensues. Along the way, he tries to ally himself with several powerful, wealthy men, and he marries twice. His first wife dies the victim of his drunken neglect, and his second wife - a Creole slave that he rescues from a lascivious overseer - kills herself after murdering his mistress. The death of one of his benefactors finally prompts Evans to sign a 'total abstinence pledge'. 'The editors' substantial introduction locates Franklin Evans in relation to Whitman's life and career, mid-nineteenth-century American print culture, and many of the developments and institutions the novel depicts, including urbanization, immigration, slavery, the temperance movement, and new understandings of class, race, gender, and sexuality. This edition includes three very short temperance stories Whitman published at about the same time as he did Franklin Evans, the surviving fragment of what appears to be another unfinished temperance novel by Whitman, and a temperance speech by Abraham Lincoln from the same year Franklin Evans was published.

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