

## REVIEW

“The Poet” (1844), lecture by Ralph Waldo Emerson



Walt Whitman

(1819-1892)



Ralph Waldo Emerson

(1803-1882)

The Transcendentalist had a very full house on Saturday evening. There were a few beautiful maids--but more ugly women, mostly blue stockings; several interesting young men with Byron collars, doctors, and parsons; Grahamites and abolitionists; sage editors, a few of whom were taking notes; and all the other species of literati. Greeley was in ecstasies whenever any thing particularly good was said, which seemed to be one in about five minutes--he would flounce about like a fish out of water, or a tickled girl--look around, to see those behind him and at his side; all of which plainly told to those both far and near, that he knew a thing or two more about these matters than other men.

The lecture was on the ‘Poetry of the Times.’ He said that the first man who called another an ass was a poet. Because the business of the poet is expression--the giving utterance to the emotions and sentiments of the soul; and metaphors. But it would do the lecturer great injustice to attempt anything like a sketch of his ideas. Suffice it to say, the lecture was one of the richest and most beautiful compositions, both for its matter and style, we have ever heard anywhere, at any time.

[Emerson also declared in this lecture that “All things are symbols. We say of man that he is grass.”]