

POEM- READING & UNDERSTANDING

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ANALYSIS OF A POEM

"THE RETREAT"

POET : HENRY VAUGHAN(1622-95)

Henry Vaughan was from a noble family in Wales. Unfortunately there was an ancient inveterate feud between the Vaughans' and the Herberts'. But Henry Vaughan owed much to the influence of George Herbert. He was born in 1622. He left the University without taking a degree, studied Law in London and got entangled in Politics of the Royalist side, lost his money and hopes of a career at the Bar. He then learned Medicine and retired to Brecknockshire, where he won fame as a benevolent medical practitioner. In the intervals of his practice he wrote the poems we possess. He died in 1695 at the age of 73. His life is uneventful.

Vaughan like Crashaw and Donne, was at heart a mystic, more at home in sacred than in secular verse. His work never rises to the heights reached by Donne or Crashaw, but he was a considerable gift of fantasy, and used it to degrade his serious Muse. He was a man of good intellectual power, but as compared with Crashaw he is like a gentle stream beside an impetuous waterfall. His best work is Silex Scintillans, which contains poems like The Retreat and The Veil.

POEM: THE RETREAT---HENRY VAUGHAN

Happy those early days! when I
Shin'd in my Angel -infancy.
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, Celestiall thought,
When yet I had not walkt above
A mile, or two, from my first love,
And looking back at the short space
Could see a glimpse of his bright -face;
When on some gilded Cloud, or flowre
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My Conscience with a sinfull sound,
Or had the black art to dispence
A sev'rall sinne to ev'ry sence,
But felt through all this fleshly dresse
Bright shootes of everlastingnesse.