

MARTIN MONAHAN

## YOUR MARGINALIA (AN EXEGESIS)

Skimming books as a pollinating bee (an actual neat efficiency that might at times appear as fastidious indecision), I come across your pencil, penned and luminous notation in a fissure-bound copy of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

I'm messaged something of your younger self. More telling than a photograph (or maybe more misleading), I cannot help but judge. Your books, which are now my books, too, contain a sort of diary. If they could be understood.

Yet your glyphs and comments are erratic. A ransacked furniture of expression. *Viz.*: underscoring dashes ranging from the single to octuple; oval circling, often poly-spiralled; boxes of various sizes framing text for pillorying;

arrows (mono- or multi-headed) link-up quotations; brackets, hashes, bullets, daggers, asterisks, lozenges and squares, all gabble-out your interrogation. There's exclamations like a fishwife! A heckle of question marks. Rife

vertical lines accusing chapters; stark squiggles tagging sections; and strangely, the odd guillemet. Suddenly, there's notes: some a gloss on the Latin you cared to look-up; the rest a running hermeneutic, *exempli gratia*: 'opposite ideal'; 'sic! sic!';

∴ no freedom'; 'got his metaphysical hat on';  
'what things?'; and then this, the longest and most remarkable:  
*A woman broke your heart and you  
are bitter. How different would your writing have been  
had she been able to love you!*

(An incipient apostasy caused this prolixity.  
You worked out your faith by writing, writing!)

It's true, in Lit. Crit. court, marginalia  
rarely stands admissible; it's the glossolalia  
of high-criticism. Can be read as noise and shouts

to leave any scrawler sounding captious;  
or even totally unhinged with logorrhea

(especially when arguing with Nietzsche).  
But it was a puzzle you were solving,  
so you put your mind to pen and paper.  
Each apostil was an undoing; this  
the ideogrammar of your theodicy.