

Second Hand Books

Reading poetry from second hand books is fine except for the books whose looks have almost been destroyed by students who as a rule spoil the rhythm and the pace, defacing the pages with note-taking scrawls. They sprawl into the margins, monuments to their innocence for the most part.

Don't they know that poetry is indescribable?
And can't be explained? I am pained by a page stained by their graffiti in pencil or ink. I know I pleated a page of a book in fourth grade primary and got a blow across my knuckles as a reward for my day-dreaming while I was listening to the expounded reason behind the meaning of the piece.

*Your mother had to pay for that book, she said.
She'll need to sell it after you have finished with it.*

Rounding on me with her ruler I learned my lesson then and never used a pen in the margin of a book or took liberties with a pencil. And when someone sensible told me that poetry had no rules, I liked the sound of that and didn't feel compelled to rhyme each line, I just went with the rhythm. It's a given I must write the rhythms in my book and my only depravity defacing a poem will be on one of my own.

Monks in their time wrote things in the margins of manuscripts describing their own state of being and of mind. They didn't find that they had to write a critique of an oblique reason they thought may have occupied the writer's mind. Sitting on their three-legged stools, they ground their inks and paints, copied for their wages, the words onto parchment, writing only complaints in the margins of the pages.

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