‘This is for me nota’: The Annotator of The Chastising of God’s Children in Yale, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn fa46

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The history of reading pays special attention to readers who tell others what to think about books because these people have left more evidence of their reading in those moments of preaching or bossiness. Over the centuries, most other encounters have left no trace. If the word *reading* is understood with persnickety literalness as the movement of the eyes over the page, and the thoughts this activity provoked, then we cannot, strictly speaking, study reading from the past. The eyes, the thoughts have gone. What we study is people’s commentary on their reading, expressed in the various ways they make and mark texts. Therefore, the readers we know best are writers, whether in the sense of ‘authors’, ‘scribes’, or simply ‘people who wield a pen while reading’.¹

We should do all we can to document readerly taste.²

One of the scholarly joys of studying medieval literature is that the distance between the 21st century scholar and the medieval text in its context needs to be bridged by empirical study and interpretation. It is one of the joys, but also – at times – one of the frustrations. When we want to find out how a given text was received by its medieval audience, the evidence is circumstantial, especially, it would seem, in the case of religious texts in the vernacular. There are no reviews, no authorial biographies, few commentaries. We can look at the number of manuscripts the text survives in to gauge its popularity, we can check which other texts it was collected with in its surviving manuscripts, and we can assess whether fragments from the text were borrowed and recontextualized in other religious texts. We can also look whether and how a text was laid out on the manuscript page, and we can study the completeness and the accuracy with which it was copied. All of these moments in the transmission of a text in manuscript form involve agents who were readers of the text.

¹ This paper is one in a series of papers on the reception of *The Chastising of God’s Children*, written as part of the Swiss National Science Foundation project ‘Late Medieval Religiosity in England : The Evidence of Late Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Devotional Compilations’, carried out at the University of Lausanne by Professor Denis Renevey, Ms Diana Denissen and I. The research on the Cambridge and Oxford manuscripts discussed in the paper was carried out at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge on a Short Term Scientific Mission funded by the Cost-Action project IS 1301, New Communities of Interpretation : Contexts, Strategies and Processes of religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe.
they copied and collected. Their actions are visible in the book they produced, rubricated, corrected. Often these actions seem the result of very pragmatic decisions: there was a demand for a particular text, and it was copied, and collected with a text or various texts with a similar subject matter. It was owned and read, and left to other readers by gift or bequest.

In this paper, I trace a specific kind of reader; not the one who read the text during the selection and copying process, but the one who held the finished volume, and used it as part of his or her spiritual and contemplative practice. As Daniel Wakelin points out, most encounters of medieval readers with a text 'have left no trace'. But some readers do 'wield a pen while reading', and this paper follows in the footsteps of one such reader, the annotator of *The Chastising of God’s Children* in Yale, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn fa46 (olim Taunton, Somerset Record Office, MS Heneage 3084, He). In what follows, I first introduce the text and the manuscripts relevant for my discussion of He, and the environment in which they were read. Then I survey the layout and scribal annotations in He, before discussing the annotator’s ‘notae’ and other marginal annotations.

That this annotator may well have been a Carthusian, makes this paper a fitting tribute to Frans Hendrickx, whom I know best as the former librarian of the Ruusbroec Institute library. Conversation with him, usually brief, quiet, so as not to disturb whoever is working in the library, and always cordial, usually has the study of the Carthusians at its heart. In this paper, too, I put the (Carthusian?) annotator centre stage.

*The Chastising of God’s Children*, described by its compiler as ‘a short pistle ... of the matier of temptacions’ (95/1-2), is a late fourteenth – early fifteenth century devotional compilation. It was written by a cleric, possibly a Carthusian, for a

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5 Michael G. Sargent, ‘A new Manuscript of *The Chastising of God’s Children* with an Ascription to Walter Hilton’, *Medium Aevum* 46 (1977), pp. 49-65. He has also been digitised, and can be found at [http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3812671](http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3812671) (Accessed 5 February 2016).
‘religious sister’, and it teaches her how to find comfort of soul – both comfort for the afflictions concomitant with the advanced contemplative life (despair at the perceived absence of God from the soul, the desire to have prescience, pride and presumption, and temptation by the devil) and reassurance through knowledge that helps the reader discern between genuine revelations and contemplation and false visions and natural rest. The text enjoyed a uniform dissemination, and, with its 12 surviving manuscripts and early printed edition, can be called a fairly popular text in the fifteenth century.

The Chastising translates long sections from Latin texts into Middle English, creating a treatise in 27 chapters that can be subdivided in thematic groups. All the topics the compiler addresses revolve around the advanced contemplative life, the life led by people who, like the ‘religious sister’ to whom the text is addressed, have decided to devote themselves to God entirely, and around the difficulties contemplatives are likely to encounter. Chapters 1 to 6 describe how God gives spiritual comforts to the soul and withdraws them in order to teach the contemplative.

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7 The matter of The Chastising’s authorship has not been resolved. As the text the compiler borrows from most often is Ruusbroec’s *Die Geestelike Brulocht*, by way of Geert Grote’s *Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis*, and as the translation into Middle English of Ruusbroec’s *Vanden blinkenden steen* as *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* survives in a single copy in London, British Library, MS Additional 37790, the reception of Ruusbroec’s works in England has been located in the Carthusian milieu. However, the transfer of Low Country Carthusians to Sheen Charterhouse (founded 1415) that is usually seen as the moment at which Ruusbroec’s texts travelled across the Channel may be too late for The Chastising, as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C57 (R), the copy Kingslow gave to Sheen (though perhaps as late as 1430), is already at some remove from the archetype (Doyle describes it as ‘relatively inferior’). See A.I. Doyle, ‘A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries with Special Consideration of the part of the Clergy Therein’ (Cambridge, PhD Dissertation 2301-2302, 1954), Volume I, p. 237. Carthusian authorship could be defended on text-internal grounds, as the text uses eremitical role-models when borrowing from Cassian’s *Collationes* in chapters 16 and 17. For these chapters, see Bazire and Colledge, pp. 160/15 to 169/2.


how to respond appropriately both to God’s absence and his presence.  

Chapters 7 to 12 describe illnesses deriving from erroneous responses to God’s presence or absence. When God’s presence makes people proud and presumptuous, or when they respond to his absence by idleness, they can become physically ill, and may suffer from one of four fevers, or fall into the errors of natural rest, hypocrisy and free spiritism.

Chapter 13 discusses the benefits of temptation, chapter 14 focuses on the temptation of despair and its remedies, and chapter 15 discusses the temptations inherent in preoccupation with predestination, and how they can be remedied. Chapters 16 and 17 discuss diabolical temptations with examples and lessons of the Desert Fathers. Chapters 18 to 21 return to the theme of God’s gifts and presence addressed in the opening chapters of the text in their focus on revelations, the temptations inherent in them, and the need to discern between true and false revelations. The remaining five chapters each have a single theme, again related to the main theme of temptation and remedies for them. Chapter 23 discusses the importance of reasonable affection, chapter 24 discusses patience as a general remedy for all kinds of temptations, chapter 25 discusses the seven deadly sins, chapter 26 addresses the theme of penance. Chapter 27 offers a recapitulation of the treatise as a whole, and a discussion of prayer.

Among the twelve manuscripts that contain *The Chastising* four have links or have been associated with the English Carthusians.

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10 These chapters borrow from *Ancrene Wisse* via the Latin compilation *Quandoque tribularis*, John Ruusbroec’s *Spiritual Espousals* via Geert Grote’s *Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis*, and Henry Suso’s *Horologium Sapientiae*.

11 These chapters borrow from John Ruusbroec’s *Spiritual Espousals*, and are recapitulated in chapter 22, which shows the importance the compiler attached to what is taught in them. On the borrowings from Ruusbroec, see Cré, “We are United with God”, and ‘Take a Walk on the Safe Side’.

12 The compiler here borrows from Isidore of Seville’s *Sentences*; Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Job* and James of Milan’s *Stimulus amoris*.

13 The stories and examples in these chapters are drawn from John Cassian’s *Collationes*.

14 These chapters insert fragments taken from Isidore of Seville’s *Sentences*, Gregory the Great’s *Moralia*, and Alphonse of Pecha’s *Epistola solitarii ad reges*.

15 Chapter 23 borrows from Aelred of Rievaulx’ *Speculum charitatis*.

16 Again, these chapters have passages from Isidore of Seville’s *Sentences*, John Cassian’s *Collationes*, and Henry Suso’s *Horologium Sapientiae*.

17 The manuscripts not focused on in this paper are MS. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 41 (second half fifteenth century); MS. London, British Library, Additional 33971 (middle or second half of the fifteenth century); MS. London, British Library, Harley 6615 (second half fifteenth century); MS. London, British Library, Harley 2218 (middle or second half fifteenth century; chapters 24 and 25); MS. Cambridge, St John’s College, E.25 (fifteenth century, probably not before 1450); MS. Liverpool, Liverpool University Library, Ryl. F.40.10 (mid-fifteenth century); MS. Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2125 (first half fifteenth century); MS. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Don e 247 (first quarter fifteenth century). MS.
these – Yale, Beinecke Library, MS Oborn fa46 (olim Heneage 3084) (He; first half fifteenth century) – I will discuss the group of manuscripts to which it belongs, made up of He itself; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C57 (R; first quarter 15th century); Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.19 (T; first quarter 15th century); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 505 (B; first half 15th century). Of this group, Rawlinson and Bodley have the strongest claim to Carthusian ownership, and thus, presumably, to Carthusian readership too, as they have an inscription claiming ownership by a Charterhouse, of Sheen and London respectively. R is the earliest Chastising manuscript (dated to the first quarter of the 15th century), and was given to Sheen Charterhouse by John Kingslow, the first Sheen recluse, who had already died when the inscription was made. The inscription suggests that the book stayed in the Charterhouse after its donation, and that it was read by its inhabitants.

Iste liber est domus ihesu de Bethleem ordinis Cartusie de Schen ex dono domini Johannis Kyngeslow, primi reclusi eiusdem, cuius anime propicietur deus. Amen (f. 54v)

B, usually dated to the first half of the fifteenth century, has an ownership inscription linking the book to Edmund Storoure, a monk of the house at the time the inscription was written, and prior between 1469 and 1477.

Liber domus salutacionis matris dei ordinis cartusiensis prope London per Edmundum Storoure eiusdem loci monachum. (f. 223v)

Doyle suggests that the book was written for London Charterhouse, and may have been carried from there by a monk to another house of the order. The move may have occasioned the inscription. The preposition ‘per’ in front Storoure’s name suggests that he was instrumental in the acquisition of the work. He may have written it, but it

Osborn fa46 and MS. Don e 247 were unknown at the time The Chastising was edited. Sections of The Chastising were also used in the compilation Disce mori, which survives in Oxford, Jesus College, MS 39 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 99. Disce mori was itself one of the sources for the compilation Ingnorantia sacerdotum, which survives in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.th. c 57. Even though Colledge and Bazire treated these three manuscripts as Chastising–manuscripts for their edition, I do not consider them in this paper.

18 T has been digitised and can be consulted at http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/B_14_19/manuscript.php?fullpage=1&startingpage=1 (Accessed 5 February 2016).

19 The sigla are the ones used by Bazire and Colledge. The He siglum is Michael Sargent’s and remains in use, even though Taunton, Somerset Record Office, MS Heneage 3084, the Chastising manuscript he designated by that siglum, has since been bought by the Beinecke Library, and is now MS Osborn fa46. See Michael G. Sargent, ‘A New Manuscript’.


is perhaps more likely that he bought it.\textsuperscript{22} Again, it seems likely that this book, in which \textit{The Chastising of God's Children} occurs before a copy of the Middle English translation of Marguerite Porète's \textit{Mirouer des Simples Àmes}, was read by Carthusian monks or laybrothers.

\textit{T}, a manuscript in which \textit{The Chastising} occurs with \textit{The Prickinge of Love}, a translation into Middle English of James of Milan’s \textit{Stimulus Amoris}, a short Bernardine tract on discerning fleshly desire, \textit{Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord and Hours of the Passion} and Richard de Caistre’s Hymn is in the same branch of Colledge and Bazire’s \textit{stemma codicum} as \textit{R}, with which it also shares its early date.\textsuperscript{23} \textit{He}, a manuscript in which \textit{The Chastising of God's Children} follows a copy of \textit{The Prickinge of Love}, a translation into Middle English of James of Milan’s \textit{Stimulus amoris}, belongs to the same textual family as \textit{B}.\textsuperscript{24} Yet \textit{T} and \textit{He} are also related to each other, as they have been extensively corrected against each other, which shows that at some point they were in the same place, and that this was a place in which textual accuracy mattered. Editorial activity of this kind was not uncommon in the Carthusian order, and has been amply documented for the Carthusian James Grenehalgh.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{R}, \textit{T}, \textit{B} and \textit{He} also share a text-internal element that serves to link them. All four manuscripts insert a couplet after \textit{The Chastising}'s Epilogue: ‘Ihesu xriste vere: quos castigas miserere.’ This couplet is found in \textit{R} on f. 54v, preceding the ownership and donation inscription, in red ink and in the following form: ‘xriste ihesu vere: quos castigas miserere’. In \textit{T} the couplet can be found in a similar form in \textit{T}, on f. 66r: ‘Xriste ihesu uere: quos castigas miserere’. In \textit{B}, the couplet is on f. 92v, and reads ‘ihesu xriste uere: quos castigas miserere’. In \textit{He}, the couplet occurs twice: it follows the table of contents on p. 77, where it is written in red ink (‘Jhesu xriste uere: quos castigas miserere’) and closes the text on p. 178, written in black ink: ‘Jhesu xriste vere: quos [casti]gas miserere.’\textsuperscript{26} That these manuscripts have this couplet in common at least suggests, if not confirms their origin in the same milieu, or in closely

\textsuperscript{23} Colledge and Bazire, \textit{The Chastising}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{24} For a detailed description of \textit{He} and of how it fits into the textual tradition of \textit{The Chastising} see Michael G. Sargent, ‘A New Manuscript’.
\textsuperscript{25} Michael G. Sargent, James Grenehalgh as a Textual Critic, Analecta Cartusiana 85/1-2 (1984).
\textsuperscript{26} The letters between square brackets have been supplied from the edition. They are illegible in the manuscript as it has been damaged by damp at the inner binding.
connected milieux in which texts were exchanged, corrected and annotated. There is scholarly consensus that this milieu was most likely made up of the Charterhouses of London and Sheen, and the Birgittine Abbey of Syon, which was situated across the Thames from Sheen.27

Keeping all this in mind, it does not seem to be a coincidence that two of these manuscripts have been annotated in hands (in the case of R, which has up to five annotators) or a hand (in the case of He) other than the scribe’s. For Carthusians and Birgittine brothers and sisters books, and more generally, interaction with texts, formed an important part of their spiritual lives, and the annotations are visual indicators of this interaction. In the remainder of this paper, I will focus on the annotations in He, as annotations in T and B are very few.28 The annotations in R will be addressed in a forthcoming paper on this manuscript.29

It was most likely a reader from the Carthusian or Birgittine milieu who left a considerable number of annotations in He, in a small neat script, in black ink, in a hand different from but contemporary with the scribe’s.30 In these annotations, we

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27 It needs to be pointed out here that the line of verse also occurs at the end of The Chastising in London, British Library, MS Harley 6615, in expanded form, on f. 100r: ‘Xriste Ihesu vere: quos castingans miserere / Explicit epistola castigacionis puerorum dei. / Sit laus pax viuis requies defunctis / Ihesu criste fili dei miserere mei Amen.’ It also occurs at the end of the text in Wynkyn de Worde’s c. 1493 printed edition: ‘Ihesu xriste vere: quos castigas / miserere. Amen. / Explicit hic liber castigacionis puerrorum dei.’ See Bazire and Colledge, The Chastising, p. 228, n. 4. Another group of manuscripts that have been linked to the Syon-Sheen-London axis on the basis of the occurrence of the same poem after a text is discussed in Marleen Cré, ‘The Mirror of Simple Souls in Middle English Revisited: The Translator and the Compiler’, in Marguerite Porete et le Miroir des simples âmes: perspectives historiques, philosophiques et littéraires, ed. Sean Field, Robert Lerner and Sylvain Piron (Paris, Vrin, 2014), pp. 254-56.

28 B has one ‘nota’ in chapter 15, on f. 43r, next to ‘up þese wordis seint austyn seîþ þat oure lord reised þre men fro deeph bi preier of oþer, and he herd by shewyng of oon of his disciplis þat þer was þe fouþe dede man; but for þer were noon þere þat shulden preie for hym, he was nat reised to þe liþ’ (Chastising 157/24-158/4). This passage has also been marked by a marginal annotation, showing that this passage describes ‘Theffekt/of prayer’. On f. 52v, in chapter 24, T has a marginal drawing of a small hand pointing at a passage taken from Isidore’s Sentences written in red ink: ‘A rijftful mannyes soule is traueilid wiþ dyuerse temptacionis for his gret profijt bi þe doom of god. for þe whiche if he þelde lowli and louyngli þanks to god and deme a chastising riȝtfulli sent from god for his owne defaute: þanne schal al þat passioun þat he suffreþ be accountid to him for vertue. Ffor as mych as gladdi he suffreþ and deme himself wiþoþi to suffre and þankiþ god lowli for his passiouns þat he suffreþ’ (equivalent to Chastising 2000/9-16). Both passages highlight what I would call precepts, passages translated from auctores to illustrate and authorize a point.


30 Sargent’s ‘second hand’, which ‘occasionally specifies the doctrinal point in which he is interested’. ‘A New Manuscript’, p. 57. Sargent’s first hand is the scribe, a third hand is the corrector of He, who will not be considered here. A survey of the annotations discussed here can be found in Appendix 2.
encounter someone who adds his response to a text that already had signposting and annotation when he came to it. Indeed, The Chastising’s manuscripts have a recurring programme of layout that suggests controlled transmission, whether by clerical or commercial scribes (both categories might not be mutually exclusive).31 This layout and the scribal annotations associated with it seem to have evolved in the transmission of the text, as the apparatus is more developed in copies of a later date. In He, chapter headings and Latin quotations within the text are rubricated, the chapters themselves start with a two-line initial in red, often decorated with blue penwork, enumerations within the text are signposted by Arabic numerals in the margin, and names of authoritative authors are underlined in red. The rubrication is repeatedly reinforced by marginal annotations. In He biblical and patristic authors mentioned and underlined in the text are signposted again as the scribe also writes their names in the margin.32

Rubrication and signposting are conventional methods to help the readers navigate the text, and, arguably, to direct their reading as it invites them to linger on noteworthy scriptural and patristic quotations. They also anchor The Chastising in tradition, as they highlight the way the compiler evokes earlier biblical and patristic texts, deferring to their authority and at the same time harnessing it to claim his own.33 Thus, the scribe of He works in a tradition, but also adds his own emphases in ‘notae’ and ‘notae bene’ that signal the text’s contemplative content, biblical and patristic passages of note, and lessons about the reader’s conduct, and in thematic annotations flagging topics found in the text.34 In what follows, we will investigate how the He annotator adds another layer to the scribe’s presentation of the text.

The He annotator leaves annotations of different types. Three formally different types of annotations occur in the margins of the table of contents, on pages 75 to 77 of the manuscript. Thus the annotator places a simple ‘nota’ next to the headings of chapters 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 24, 25, and 27, a more intense ‘nota bene’ next to the headings of chapters 18 and 19, and a more elaborate thematic annotation, ‘nota de visions preue no\textsuperscript{3}t a man holy’ next to chapter 21. The annotations and their intensity here suggest that the chapters of the greatest interest to the annotator are 18, 19 and 21, dealing with revelations and the correct

31 Doyle, ‘Book Production’.
32 These annotations occur regularly throughout the manuscript, with ‘dauid’, ‘poul’, ‘gregorie’ and ‘ysodore’ being the most frequent.
33 In its interesting to note here that the most recent author to be named in the text is Aelred of Rievaulx. The compiler does not attribute borrowings to Ruusbroec, Suso, or Alphonse of Pecha. The question of whether rubrication and signposting made readers passive and conformist is discussed in Wakelin, ‘Instructing Readers’.
34 The scribe’s annotations of this type can be found in Appendix 2.
understanding of them. The annotations in the text itself bear this out, and we will see that the annotations in the table of contents do signal the annotator’s preoccupations.

The function of the annotations is easier to interpret in the annotations to the text itself than in the annotations to the table of contents. We can distinguish between annotations that function as markers of textual structure, annotations signalling certain themes in the text, annotations marking precepts, and annotations expressing a more personal response to the text.35 The various functions of the annotations are not reflected in a single form for each of them. Thus, markers of textual structure can be a simple ‘nota’, such as the one that, on p. 92, marks the heading of chapter 6. On p. 122, ‘nota capitulum’ marks the heading of chapter 15. On p. 129 and p. 134, the same annotation marks the headings of chapters 17 and 18. The opening of chapter 22, on p. 148, is marked with a more intense ‘nota bene capitulum’. In several instances, the chapter heading or the beginning of a chapter is marked by a thematic annotation, which signals content as well.36 On p. 109 ‘nota. of ffals eretikis’ is written next to the opening line of chapter 11. On p. 112 ‘ypocrites’ is written next to the heading of chapter 12, and on p. 115, the macaronic ‘nota de chastissinge bene’, a form starting with the Latin ‘nota de’, followed by the topic defined in English, and also used for the annotator’s frequent thematic annotations, is written just above the second half of the heading of chapter 13. On p. 119, ‘nota de / dispeir’ is written next to the opening of chapter 14. On p. 137 ‘of þis mater ben þise thre chapitles’ is written next to the opening line of chapter 19, on p. 144 the macaronic ‘nota de mekenesse’ is written next to the opening line of chapter 21, and on p. 156 ‘nota bene remedis / aȝens alle aduer- / cites’ is written next to the opening line of chapter 24.

Thematic annotations are the most common ones the annotator writes. They are annotations that signal the theme of the passage they are written right next to, or, at times, of a passage further down in the text. They generally take the interesting macaronic form noted before. In chapter 1, on p. 79, ‘nota deseite’ (without the Latin ‘de’) is written next to ‘þerfore he is disseyuyd þat wenyþ he is hooly for he is nouȝt temptid’ (equivalent to Chastising 97/12-13), and on p. 81, in the top margin, ‘Nota The pley of loue’ is written above ‘a queynte play. What is þis pley þat we been þus


36 The annotator imitates the scribe, who uses the same form of annotations. See Appendix 1 for the scribe’s annotations on p. 120 of He.
The pley of loue is ioye and sorwe’ (equivalent to 99/7-8). In chapter 2, on p. 83, ‘nota del armonie / de deuoacion’, is written next to ‘pis maner of dronkenes makiþ sum men singge and worshepe god for fulfilling of gladnes’ (equivalent to 103/5-6). In chapter 4, on p. 88, ‘nota de amicis’ is written next to ‘ffor þan of his sufferance þei leesyn outward benfeetis and likyng þat is for to [þat is to seie] / p. 89 frendis and kynsmen and hertly ben forsakyn of alle oþir knowelechyng þat þei did hem chere to byfore. And han hem now in skorne’ (equivalent to 110/11-15). The annotation to the heading chapter 4, written just above the second column on p. 100, nine lines above the heading, is completely in English: ‘of foure maner feueres’ (equivalent to 126/4). In chapter 10, on p. 108, the annotator writes his longest annotation, which is a thematic annotation summarizing a passage further down in the text. He writes ‘Of foure graces þat oure / lady fond aȝens þe fou-/re vises þat adam was / lost by and alle mankinde / with hym’ next to ‘þan a man fallith in to foure perilous synnys þat is for to seie. In to pride, Auarice, Glotenye and lecherie’ (equivalent to 136/17-19). Mary found the grace of meekness against pride, the grace of generosity against avarice, the grace of rendering all savour and sweetness to God against gluttony, and the grace of purity against lechery (Chastising 137/2-21).

In chapter 16, on p. 127, the sentence ‘Also þe confessioun of þe same wicked spirite beryth witness þat þei haue noo power of hem selfe’ (equivalent to 161/23-24), is marked by the annotation ‘Nota of þe fendes power’. In chapter 17, on p. 133, the sentence ‘Also sum haue falle in to blaspheme’ (equivalent to 168/7) is marked by the annotation ‘nota de blasphemeye’. In chapter 20, in the top margin of p. 141, ‘nota de seint bride’ is written above the passage about Birgitta of Sweden: ‘Of þis we haue ensample of þat nobil lady and princesse seint Bride’ (equivalent to 178/6-7, with the name underlined in red). In chaper 22, on p. 148, the annotation ‘of alienacion of / a manis persone / þen of moneie’ turns out to be inspired by passage on p. 149, also underlined in red, ‘þat it is moche more alienacion of a mannys owne persone þan alienacion of money’, equivalent to 189/10-11.

In a few instances, the annotator also marks precepts, such as in chapter 14, on p. 119, where he reinforces the scribe’s marginal authorization ‘Ysodorus’ by writing ‘nota’ next to it. Both the name and the annotation mark a crucial passage in which

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37 The story of Ananias (Acts 5:2), who died because he did not pay money he owed someone, is told to illustrate instability as a result of greed, and to put the readers on their guard: if missteps for material reasons are punished so severely, breaking one’s spiritual promises will be punished much more severely.
the compiler argues that it is never too late to receive God’s mercy. Another ‘nota’ occurs in chapter 23, on p. 155, and marks the sentence ‘þe cause of chaungynge of such afeccion is to moche famyl iarite’ (equivalent to 198/9-10). In two instances the annotation is more insistent. In chapter 27, on p. 172, two passages that comment on the importance of saying the office, and of preferring this communal act of worship to private devotions are each marked by a ‘nota bene’.

Finally, two annotations are more personal, and expressive of the annotator’s individual response to the text. This response is notable because in them the annotator expresses the applicability of what he reads to his own situation, and, as a result, testifies to how useful he found the book. In chapter 4, on p. 87, he writes ‘this is for me nota’, next to ‘now muste we se ferber more when he wiðdrawith hym how lowly we shulle bere vs in plesaunce of hym to gete aþen his presence’ (equivalent to 108/22-24). In chapter 5, on p. 91, he writes ‘nota of soore temptacions / for me’, next to ‘He binemyþ hem þe reste of herte and suffriþ hem to be trublyd for to preue wel her impaciens esely first with outward þinggis’ (equivalent to 114/9-11).38 These personal annotations testify to his recognition of the difficulties of the contemplative life, and in particular suggest that he knows from experience that a contemplative meekly needs to desire God’s presence when he does not feel it, and needs to cope with the feelings of unease and restlessness when God withdraws his grace. It is especially this experience that strikes a chord. The annotator’s acute awareness of God’s absence that speaks from these annotations may also explain his apparent interest in the contemplative content of the text evidenced in the annotations to the table of contents, and across the four categories of annotation discussed above. In the table of contents, the annotator marks the clusters of chapters addressing correct and erroneous responses to God’s special gifts to the contemplative. Responses to the sweetness of contemplation and to the contemplative’s feeling of desolation in between the moments when he feels God’s presence is discussed in chapters 7 to 12, of which 9 to 12 have been marked in the table of contents, and chapters 8 to 12 receive some kind of signposting in the text itself as well. Chapters 18 to 21 deal with revelations, and how to read them correctly.

Of these, all except chapter 20 have been marked in the table of contents, and all of them receive signposting in the text as well. In the text itself, the passages eliciting the annotator’s response describe contemplation positively as ‘the pley of loue’ (p. 81), as ‘a maner of dronkenes’ that makes people sing and worship God because he fills them with gladness (p. 83). Another passage the annotator marks affirms the force of God’s mercy even when a person only repents at the last moment after a life of sin (p. 119), and another points out the charity inherent in being forgiven when one is sorry for one’s doubts about eucharistic theology (p. 157).

The annotator also proves to be sensitive to passages describing the moments at which the contemplative is tested and troubled when he feels God withdraws his grace. We can see that in the passages he marks as being ‘for me’ (pp. 87 and 91), but also in the passage that describes how contemplatives are deprived of the comfort of being supported by friends (p. 88). Intriguingly, he also marks the passage that teaches that breaking a spiritual promise is worse than not paying someone back what you owe them (p. 148). In the final chapter the annotator marks what could be seen as passages teaching the remedy against unease and restlessness. Rather than saying the office ‘þe more haastly and wiþ lesse sauour … for grete desire þat þei haue to opir special deuociouns’ (p. 172, equivalent to Chastising 220/13-15), the office should take precedence over private devotions:

þan it is nedful als ferfoorþ as I fele and as I haue lernyd þat we do oure besynes to preie entently in tyme of oure seruyse þat is to sein in tyme þat we seie houris of þe nyȝt and þe day’ (p. 172, equivalent to Chastising 221/27-221/3)

In these annotations, and their focus on the play of love – the dynamic of joy at God’s presence and despair at his absence in contemplation – the annotator of He shows himself to be a reader who responds to exactly what the text sets out to do: to make sure that the ‘religious sister’ (and any reader with her) arrives at a purer and genuine spiritual life through discretio spirituum. Contemplation is joyfully described in some parts of the text, and the reader is given cause for optimism, yet this optimism indeed comes with a call for caution, as affliction and temptation are ever preying upon the contemplative. Whether or not these annotations adduce further evidence that this particular reader who wielded a pen while reading was indeed a Carthusian cannot be conclusively decided,39 but these ‘notae’ and comments prove that, apart from being clearly laid out and meticulously corrected, The Chastising in He was also

39 The Carthusians did have a taste for texts offering first-hand accounts of mystical and visionary experience, and, even though The Chastising mediates the experiences described in its source texts, or comments on contemplation and revelations rather than recording them, the annotator’s ‘notae’ could be seen as a reflection of this taste.
read by an attentive, responsive, and empathetic reader, and this in itself is worth documenting.
APPENDIX 1: The He Annotator

**Table of contents (pp. 75-77)**

‘nota’ in the margin next to the headings of the following chapters:

Chapter 6, and also on p. 92, next to the heading in the body of the text.

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11, and see p. 109

Chapter 12, and see p. 112

Chapter 16

Chapter 17, and see p. 129

‘nota bene’ in the margin next to the following chapters

Chapter 18, and see p. 134

Chapter 19

‘nota de visions preue noȝt a man holy’ next to

Chapter 21

‘nota’ next to the headings of the following chapters:

chapter 24

chapter 25

chapter 27

**Chapter 1**

p. 79, ‘nota deseite’ next to ‘þerfore he is disseyuyd þat wenyp he is hooly for he is nouȝt temptid’, equivalent to 97/12-13.\(^{40}\)

p. 81, Top margin, just above the top column: ‘Nota The pley of loue’ aboue ‘a queynte play. What is þis pley þat we been þus heevy of þe absence of oure loue. The pley of loue is ioye and sorwe’, equivalent to 99/7-8.

**Chapter 2**


**Chapter 4**

p. 87, ‘this is for me nota’, next to ‘now muste we se ferþer more whan he wiþdrawith hym how lowly we shulle bere vs in plesaunce of hym to gete aȝen his presence’, equivalent to 108/22-24.

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p. 88, ‘nota de amicis’, next to ‘ffor þan of his sufferance þei leesyn outward benfeetis and likyng þat is for to [þat is to seie] /p. 89 frendis and kynsmen and hertly ben forsakyn of alle oþir knowelechyng þat þei did hem chere to byfore. And han hem now in skorne’, equivalent to 110/11-15.

Chapter 5
p. 91, ‘nota of soore temptaciones / for me’, next to ‘He binemyþ hem þe reste of herte and suffriþ hem to be trublyd for to preue wel her impaciens esely first with outward þinggis’, equivalent to 114/9-11.

Chapter 6

Chapter 8
p. 100, just above column two, ‘of foure maner feueres’, equivalent to 126/4.

Chapter 10
p. 108, ‘Of foure graces þat oure / lady fond aȝens þe fou-rei vises þat adam was / lost by and alle mankinde / with hym’ next to ‘þan a man fallith in to foure perilous synnys þat is for to seie. In to pride, Auarice, Gloteny and lecherie’, equivalent to 136/17-19.

Chapter 11
p. 109, ‘nota. of ffals eretikis’, next to ‘And what tyme a man haaþ in such idilnes’ (beginning of chapter marked), equivalent to 138/14.

Chapter 12
p. 112, ‘ypocrites’, next to the chapter heading, equivalent to 142/11.

Chapter 13
p. 115, just above the first column, the second part of the chapter heading, ‘nota de chastissinge bene’, equivalent to 145/20.

Chapter 14
p. 119, ‘nota de / dispeir’, next to the opening of the chapter, equivalent to 151/17.

Chapter 15
p. 122, between columns, next to heading ‘nota capitulum’, equivalent to 155/26.

Chapter 16

Chapter 17
p. 129, ‘nota capitulum’ next to the chapter heading, equivalent to 163/27.
p. 133, 'nota de blasphemy', in between the columns, next to 'Also sum haue falle in to blaspheme', equivalent to 168/7.

Chapter 18 (this chapter also has a lot of signposting, so not necessary for this annotator to add anything)

p. 134, 'nota capitulum' next to the chapter heading, equivalent to 169/3.

Chapter 19

p. 137, 'of þis mater ben þise thre chapitiles', next to the beginning of the chapter 'By þe seyng of oure hooly fadris and doctours of hooly chirche. What þat he be man or woman þat haþ visiouns. Þus he shulde be examynyd for to proue his reuelaciouns', equivalent to 173/20-22.

Chapter 20

p. 141, top margin, just above first column, 'nota de seint bride', above (four lines down) 'Of þis we haue ensaump le of þat nobil lady and princesse seint Bride', with the name underlined in red, equivalent to 178/6-7.

Chapter 21

p. 144, 'nota de meknesse', next to the opening of the chapter, equivalent to 182/15.

Chapter 22

p. 148, 'nota bene capitulum', next to 'In such sikenes it is goode to knowe what is þe cause of þe sikenes and þan for a principal remedie it is spedeful to voide þe cause ȝyf it may be voided', equivalent to 187/15-17.

‘of alienacion of / a manis persone / þen of moneie’, inspired by passage on p. 149 (underlined in red): ‘þat it is moche more alienacion of a mannys owne persone þan alienacion of money’, equivalent to 189/10-11.

Chapter 23

p. 155, 'nota', next to 'þe cause of chaungyng of such affeccion i to moche famyliarite', equivalent to 198/9-10.

Chapter 24

p. 156, 'nota bene remedis / aȝens alle aduer- / cites' next to the beginning of the chapter, equivalent to 199/3.

p. 157, 'nota de charite', next to ‘for þouþh ony man be so trauailid by instigacioun of þe deuyl þat / p. 158 he is in doute of ve bileue or of þe sacrament of þe auter as longe as he is sory þere of þat he may not bileuyn it fully, but feyn he wolde, þis man þere whilis synnyth noþ in þat. And þus fariþ by alle hiþe temptaciouns’, equivalent to 201/12-16. (doubt about the sacrament of the altar)

Chapter 27

p. 172, ‘nota bene’ reinforcing red ink ‘Nota’, next to ‘þan it is nedful as ferfoorth as I fele and as I haue lernyd þat we do oure besynes entently in tyme of oure seruyce’, equivalent to 220/27-221/1.
APPENDIX 2: ‘Notae’ by the He scribe

Chapter 1
p. 81: ‘Nota bene’, next to ‘But seeē now what ioye comyth and mateer of ioye of his blessid presence’, equivalent to 99/18-19.41

Chapter 4
p. 89: ‘Nota’, next to ‘ffurst I counseile every man for [to] rette it to his owne defaute þat grace is withdrawe by sum maner necligence’, equivalent to 111/2-4.

Chapter 5
p. 91: ‘Nota’, with added, in black, ‘nota / of aduersite’, next to ‘Now to oure purpoos in þe same maneroure goode louyng lord crist ihesu goddis sone of heuene . first in the bigynnyng of his dere childrin þe wheche ben goostly lyuers. he fedip hem wiþ softe metis, þe wheche is goostly sweetnes. But aftir þe tyme þat þei ben strenþid by exersise of vertuys. He withdrawith in partie of þat sweetnes and assaijth hem with bittirnes.’, equivalent to 114/4-9.

Chapter 8
p. 100: ‘Nota’, next to ‘The first feuere is clepid cotidian’, with ‘cotidian’ underlined in red in the text, equivalent to 126/11.

Chapter 11

Chapter 12
p. 113, ‘Nota’, next to ‘ffor sooth it is þat þe hooly goost werkith in noo man þat is contrarious of the teching of crist’, equivalent to 143/13-15.

Chapter 13
p. 117, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Such chastising in þis worlde bringiþ a riþiful man to blis withoute ende. Þerfore a riþiful man shal be glad here in peynys and a wicked man sore dredde in prosperite’, equivalent to 148/16-19.

p. 117, ‘Nota’, next to ‘þerfore a wicked aungel was sente to seint poule to turmente hym with temptaciouns’, equivalent to 149/16-17.

p. 118, ‘Nota’, next to ‘And oone notable skille is for þey shulde þe better conseile and counforte oþir in materis of goostly dissese’, equivalent to 150/10-12.

p. 119, ‘Nota’, next to ‘ffor such presumpcion oure lord haath suffrid boþe men and women of hiȝe lyuyng to falle in sum synne þe wheche wendin neuyr to haue falle’, equivalent to 151/3-5.

**Chapter 14**
p. 120, ‘How dispeir comyth of þre þingis’, next to ‘But now as for remedy aȝenst þis temptacioun first ȝe shulle vndirstonde þat þis dispeir comiþ of þre þingis’, equivalent to 152/21-22.

‘Nota de passione xristi’ next to ‘Aȝenst þese þre maners of dispeir. Þere ben þre maners of remedijis … it is goode to þinke mekely on þe passioun of crist ihesu’, equivalent to 152/24-25.

‘Nota de remisione’ next to ‘Also for þe nombre oþir multitude of synne. it is goode to þinke on þe teching of criste. ȝe wheche biddiþ vs not oonly forȝeue seuene sips, but seuynty tymys seuene sips’, equivalent to 153/3-5.

p. 121, ‘Nota’ next to ‘But now parauenture sum man wil seie. I wote wel þat goddis mercy is aboue alle his werkis’, equivalent to 154/13-14.

**Chapter 15**


p. 125, ‘Nota / Bonauentre’, next to ‘How euyr it be of me. Soob it is þat þou art dampnyd’, equivalent to 158/24-15.

‘Euangelium / Nota’, next to ‘I shal not caste hym out þat comyth to me’ (also underlined in red), equivalent to 159/18-19.

**Chapter 16**

p. 128, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Sittiþ in ȝoure sellis, and as moche as ȝe liste etiþ and drinkiþ and slepiþ, so þat ȝe abide stille and performe þat ȝe ben come fore’, equivalent to 163/5-8.

**Chapter 17**
p. 131, ‘Nota’, next to ‘And so seie summe ȝit þat in somme vexaciouns for a special remedie þey myȝte resseyue the sacramentis of hooly chirche’, equivalent to 166/19-20.

p. 133, ‘Nota’, next to ‘To alle such whoos inwarde wittis ben yblyndid’, equivalent to 168/12.
Chapter 20
p. 143, ‘Nota’, next to ‘þus þanne by þese seuene tooknys and examynyngis of visiouns …’, equivalent to 181/12.

Chapter 21
p. 147, ‘Nota bene’, next to ‘Of þis mateere I rede þat þe disciple of loue …’, equivalent to 186/6.

Chapter 22
p. 150, ‘Nota’, next to ‘ffor ȝif a man lyue contrariously to vertuys [he ly]uyþ in synne’, equivalent to 191/4-5.

Chapter 23
p. 155, ‘Nota’, next to ‘for summe whan þei redin such ensaumplis þat ben wretyn of goode intent. Þei turne it aftir her nyse coueytise [for ‘conceytis’], equivalent to 198/1-3.

Chapter 25
p. 161, ‘Nota’, next to ‘þe euil dedis þat we doone ben sekir oure owne, for but we doone mekely penaunce for hem …’, equivalent to 206/22-24.
p. 162, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Also it is nedful to eche man þat is trauaylid with ony spice of pride’, equivalent to 207/4-5.
‘Nota’, next to ‘Also riches encresith auarice’, equivalent to 207/16.
p. 163, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Also it is a remedy to him þat is trauaylid with coueitise for to þeelde …’, equivalent to 208/16-17.
‘Nota’, next to ‘Also in tyme of wraþþe it is goode to chaunge his …’, equivalent to 208/25-26.
p. 165, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Also þe moost spedeful remedy is to hym þat is trauailid with þis passioun to forbere curious and delicate meetis’, equivalent to 211/24-212/1.
p. 166, ‘Nota’, next to ‘Also it is a remedy euermore to drede his owne disposiscioun’, equivalent to 212/19.

Chapter 27
p. 172, ‘Nota’, next to ‘þan it is nedful as ferfoorth as I fele and as I haue lernyd þat we do oure besynes entently in tyme of oure seruyce’, equivalent to 220/27-221/1.