

Amersfoort, St. Agatha		anonymous scribe
29.6 × 21	2 coll.	46 ll. 195 fo.
8.3.1445 - 21.7.1445		136 days 1.51 f/d

The average writing speed of these monastic scribes varies considerably, from 0.11 f/d (Nr 609) to 1.54 f/d (Nr 506), but in most cases it lies between 0.5 and 1.5 f/d. Their writing speed is substantially lower than that of the professional scribes in Avignon and of the Dutch scribes in Italy. This conclusion does not imply, of course, that monastic scribes lacked the technical skill needed to write faster or that their script was much more careful. Our figures rather demonstrate that the copying of books was of secondary importance to men and women living in monasteries, although it was highly estimated as an activity benificent to body and soul alike. The *officium divinum*, which was probably much more elaborate and time-consuming in the Charterhouse of Utrecht than in the monastery of the Sisters of the Third Order of St Francis in Maastricht, was the main occupation of day to day monastic life.

Our figures do not confirm Gumbert's statement according to which scribes were able to maintain a high average writing speed during a limited number of days only (see above, p. 214). There is no significant correlation between the average writing speed in f/d and the number of folia copied and the number of days during which the scribe worked on a particular manuscript (or part of a manuscript). Our figures also demonstrate that an average writing speed of less than 1 f/d is not at all unusual in monastic manuscripts from the Netherlands. For that reason it would have been justified if Bozzolo and Ornato had included these figures in their general estimation of the average writing speed of medieval scribes.

##### 5. The writing speed of Herman of Amsterdam, Carthusian in Utrecht

One of the manuscripts copied by monastic scribes, referred to above, was copied by Herman of Amsterdam, a Carthusian of Utrecht. The greater part of this manuscript (Utrecht, U.L. 280), containing *Opuscula* of Richard of St Victor, was copied in 1493 at an average writing speed of 1.33 f/d. The colophon (fo. 181<sup>v</sup>) is as follows: *Explicit tractatus magistri Richardi (...) per manus fratris Heermannii de Amstelredam ordinis Carthusiensis domus Nove Lucis prope Traiectum feliciter. Anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo nonagesimo tercio, altera die beati Mauricii ac sociorum eius* (September 23, 1493). The lesser part was copied in 1487, according to a dating in the lower margin of fo. 49<sup>r</sup>: *In profesto Purificationis Marie Anno 1487* <sup>(28)</sup>. This manuscript is similar in size to a Legendary copied in 1506, to be discussed below <sup>(29)</sup>.

Three other manuscripts written by Herman of Amsterdam have come down to us. The first, a *Speculum sanctae Mariae et preces ad beatam Virginem* (Utrecht, U.L. 370)

(28) This dating is copied from the description in *CMD-NL* 2, pp. 198-199 (Nr. 678).

(29) Cf. [P.A. TIELE], *Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum Bibliothecae Universitatis Theno-Trajectinae*, [vol. 1] (Utrecht/'s-Gravenhage 1887), p. 91.

carries no dating by our scribe, but was dated to the last quarter of the 15th century by K. van der Horst<sup>(30)</sup>. The scribe only reveals his name in the colophon: *Scriptum manu fratris Hermanni de Amsterdam*. The copying of the second manuscript, containing Peter the Lombard's Commentary on the first 50 Psalms, was finished on July 26, 1496: *Explicit prima quinquagena Petri Lombardi cum glosa ordinaria. Scripta et completa per manus fratris Heermannii de Amstelredam monachi et professi in domo Nove Lucis ordinis Carthusiensis prope Traiectum. Anno Domini 1496 ipso die beate Anne matris gloriosissime virginis Marie* (Utrecht, U.L. 267). As this manuscript carries only one dating, it is of no use for the calculation of the scribe's writing speed<sup>(31)</sup>.

In 1506 the same scribe copied a Legendary, kept in the Staatsbibliothek of Berlin (Ms. theol. lat. fol. 707). This manuscript is most interesting for the study of the writing speed of late medieval scribes. It measures 29.5 × 21 cm., the written space is 19 × 13.5 cm., divided over two columns of 34 lines each. The script is a *littera gothica textualis* of ordinary quality (see Pl. 13)<sup>(32)</sup>. The codex contains a colophon by the hand of the scribe on the verso of the last leaf (fo. 208<sup>v</sup>), mentioning his name and the day on which the manuscript was finished (December 3, 1506).

Apart from the colophon it contains, at irregular intervals, another 17 datings in the lower margins. These datings do not coincide with the beginning of a new legend, but most of them (12) are written on the first leaf of a quire, including the first leaf of the manuscript. Two datings appear on the last leaf of a quire, the remaining three on the rectos and versos of other leaves. They are written by pencil in a cursive script, presumably by the scribe himself (see Pl. 20). As there are datings on the first and last leaves of the manuscript, we can calculate the number of days it took the scribe to copy the entire Legendary, but by means of the datings in the margins, we can also deduce some evidence about the rhythm of his writing.

But before arriving at any conclusions about Herman of Amsterdam's writing speed and rhythm, we must carefully read and analyse the datings. They are as follows (fo. numbers indicating the first leaf of a quire are printed in bold characters, fo. numbers indicating the last leaf of a quire are printed between brackets):

fo. **1r** *In profesto Annuntiationis Marie* 6<sup>o</sup> [March 24, 1506]  
fo. (8<sup>v</sup>) *Petri martyr* 6<sup>o</sup> [April 29]

(30) Cf. [TIELE], *Catalogus*, p. 122; K. VAN DER HORST, *Illuminated and decorated medieval manuscripts in the University Library, Utrecht* (Maarsse'n's-Gravenhage 1989), p. 32 (Nr 113) and figs. 530-533.

(31) Cf. [TIELE], *Catalogus*, p. 87; *CMD-NL* 2 p. 197 (Nr 673) and plate 799b. R.B. Marks claims to have seen Herman of Amsterdam's hand in Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibl. Hs 1021; cf. R.B. MARKS, *The medieval manuscript library of the Charterhouse of St. Barbara in Cologne*, vol. 2 [= *Analecta Cartusiana*, 22] (Salzburg 1974), p. 332; K.H. STAUB, H. KNAUSS, *Bibelhandschriften. Ältere theologische Texte* [= *Die Handschriften der Hessischen Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek Darmstadt*, 4], Wiesbaden, S. 226.

(32) Cf. P.J. BECKER, T. BRANDIS, *Die theologischen lateinischen Handschriften in folio der Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, vol. 2: Ms. theol. lat. fol. 598-737 (Wiesbaden 1985), pp. 250-252. The script is certainly not a *textualis formata*, as it was stated by Becker and Brandis, p. 250.

- fo. 17r *Gord(iani) et Epy(machi)* [May 10]  
 fo. 33r *Urbani 6<sup>o</sup> 8<sup>o</sup>* <sup>(33)</sup> [May 25]  
 fo. 41ra *In profesto Penthecosten VI<sup>o</sup>* [May 30]  
 fo. 41rb *Prima dies Iunii anno VI<sup>o</sup>* [June 1]  
 fo. 60v *Feria secunda infra octava sancti Viti en Modesti anno VI<sup>o</sup>* [June 22]  
 fo. 79v *In profesto Iohanni et Pauli VI<sup>o</sup>* <sup>(34)</sup> [June 25]  
 fo. 89r *Sabato infra octava Visita[tionis]* [July 4]  
 fo. 97r *Septem fratrum 6<sup>o</sup>* [July 10]  
 fo. 137r *Cyriaci et so(ciorum) eius 6<sup>o</sup>* [August 8]  
 fo. 145r *In profesto Assumptionis 6<sup>o</sup>* [August 14]  
 fo. 153r *In profesto Bernardi* [August 19]  
 fo. 169r *Ultima Augusti. Nu[...]cionum prima die[s]* [August 31]  
 fo. (178v) *In profesto Nativitatis gloriose Virginis, feria 2<sup>a</sup>* [September 7]  
 fo. 193r *Tecele 6<sup>o</sup>* [September 23]  
 fo. 206v *Galli 6<sup>o</sup>* [October 16]  
 fo. 208v *Per fratrem Heermannum de Amstelredam ordinis Carthusiensis professum domus Nove Lucis prope Traiectum inferius presens opus feliciter completum, anno Domini XV<sup>c</sup> et sexto in profesto beate Barbare virginis et martyris* [December 3, 1506]

Based on these datings, the following observations can be made on the scribe's writing habits:

1. Herman of Amsterdam followed the Calendar of the Carthusians, and not the local Calendar of the diocese of Utrecht. <sup>(35)</sup> Following the local Calendar, and writing on June 25, he would not have referred to *In profesto Iohanni et Pauli*, but to the important local feast-day (a *festum fori*) of the Translation of St Lebuin. The only dating not referring to a feast-day in the Carthusian calendar is the one on fo. 206v: St Gall (October 16) was not commemorated in this Order.
2. Our scribe did not stop writing on Sundays. May 10, the dating on fo. 17r, was one. Not all kinds of intellectual work were allowed on Sundays, but the writing of books was not forbidden, not even to the pious and rigid Carthusians, as long as it did not prevent them performing their religious duties <sup>(36)</sup>. But Herman of Amsterdam did not copy the

(33) The meaning of 8<sup>o</sup> is unclear.

(34) The reading of *profesto* is uncertain, but the legible characters make other readings, such as *vigilia* or *octava*, most unlikely.

(35) For the Carthusian calendar, see J. HOURLIER, 'Le calendrier cartusien' in: *Études Grégoriennes* 2 (1957), pp. 151-161; for the Calendar of the diocese of Utrecht see B. KRUITWAGEN, 'Studiemateriaal (heiligen-geografie) voor den kalender van het Middeleeuwsche bisdom Utrecht', in: *Laat-Middeleeuwsche paleografica, paleotypica, liturgica, kalendalia, grammaticalia* ('s-Gravenhage 1942), pp. 155-224, espec. pp. 176-183; E.A. OVERGAAUW, 'Saints in medieval calendars from the diocese of Utrecht as clues for the localization of manuscripts', in: *Codices manuscripti* 16 (1992), pp. 81-103.

(36) B. KRUITWAGEN, 'Het schrijven op feestdagen in de middeleeuwen', in: *Tijdschrift voor Boek- en Bibliotheekwezen* 5 (1907), pp. 97-120, espec. pp. 113-117. Kruitwagen refers to the authoritative writings of Johannes Gerson, Johannes de Indagine and Johannes Trithemius.

Legendary over Penthecost. It appears from his datings that he stopped writing on the Saturday before Penthecost (May 30, fo. 41<sup>ra</sup>), and that he started again on the following Monday (June 1, fo. 41<sup>rb</sup>). This implies that one may include 'ordinary' Sundays in the calculation of the writing-speed of this scribe, but not the major feast-days. We do not know, of course, whether he wrote on *all* Sundays, and we can only guess on which of the major feast-days he stopped writing.

3. Apart from the first dating in the manuscript (on fo. 1<sup>r</sup>), the above-mentioned dating on the day after Penthecost (fo. 41<sup>rb</sup>) and the dating at the end of the manuscript (fo. 208<sup>v</sup>), there is no way of finding out whether Herman of Amsterdam refers in his datings to the beginning or to the end of a writing session. In the preceding sections of this article we took the day following a dating as the first day of the writing of a new manuscript or of a new part of the same manuscript. We will proceed in the same way with this Legendary.

4. The fact that most datings are written on the first page of a quire is significant, although it can hardly be correlated to the writing speed or writing rhythm of the scribe. We have no reliable parameters to decide why he only mentioned certain days in his datings. It cannot be excluded that he added the dating during the day, in the middle of a writing session, as a kind of numbering of the first leaf of a new quire. In that case the datings are not reliable for the calculation of his average writing speed.

5. It is possible, theoretically, that the scribe only worked on this Legendary during the days explicitly mentioned in the lower margins; in that case, he copied all the pages between two datings on one single day. This is most unlikely, as it would imply that he had copied not less than 40 leaves (fo. 97<sup>r</sup>-136<sup>v</sup>) on July 10 (or on August 8).

6. If we suppose, however, that he divided the copying of the pages between two datings over the days between these two datings (including Sundays, but excluding the major feast-days), the average number of leaves copied per day (0.86 f/d) is rather low, but not as low as calculated for some of the monastic scribes referred to in the preceding section of this article, and certainly exceeds the *pensum* accomplished by Hans Ried (0.3 f/d). But his average daily output still remains far below that calculated by Ornato and Bozzolo (2.85 f/d).

The last column in the following scheme gives the average writing-speed of Herman of Amsterdam, calculated as the number of folia per day during the days between two datings.

fo. 1 <sup>r</sup> -8 <sup>r</sup>	7.5 fo. in 32 days (March 24 - April 28) <sup>(37)</sup>	0.24 f/d
fo. 8 <sup>v</sup> -16 <sup>v</sup>	8.5 fo in 11 days (April 29 - May 9)	0.78 f/d
fo. 17 <sup>r</sup> -32 <sup>v</sup>	16 fo in 14 days (May 10-24) <sup>(38)</sup>	1.15 f/d
fo. 33 <sup>r</sup> -41 <sup>ra</sup>	8.25 fo. in 6 days (May 25-30)	1.38 f/d
fo. 41 <sup>rb</sup> -60 <sup>r</sup>	19.25 fo. in 19 days (June 1-21) <sup>(39)</sup>	1.02 f/d
fo. 60 <sup>v</sup> -79 <sup>r</sup>	19 fo. in 2 days (June 22-23) <sup>(40)</sup>	9.5 f/d

(37) Not counted: Annunciation, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Eastern.

(38) Not counted: Ascension Day.

(39) Not counted: Trinity, Corpus Christi.

(40) Not counted: John the Baptist's Day.

fo. 79 <sup>v</sup> -88 <sup>v</sup>	9.5 fo. in 7 days (June 25 - July 3) <sup>(41)</sup>	1.36 f/d
fo. 89 <sup>r</sup> -96 <sup>v</sup>	8.5 fo. in 6 days (July 4-9)	1.44 f/d
fo. 97 <sup>r</sup> -136 <sup>v</sup>	40 fo. in 29 days (July 10 - Aug. 7)	2.76 f/d
fo. 137 <sup>r</sup> -144 <sup>v</sup>	8 fo. in 5 days (Aug. 8-13) <sup>(42)</sup>	1.6 f/d
fo. 145 <sup>r</sup> -152 <sup>v</sup>	8 fo. in 4 days (Aug. 14-18) <sup>(43)</sup>	2.0 f/d
fo. 153 <sup>r</sup> -168 <sup>v</sup>	16 fo. in 12 days (Aug. 19-30)	1.33 f/d
fo. 169 <sup>r</sup> -178 <sup>r</sup>	9.5 fo. in 7 days (Aug. 31 - Sept. 7)	1.36 f/d
fo. 178 <sup>v</sup> -192 <sup>v</sup>	14.5 fo. in 14 days (Sept. 8-22) <sup>(44)</sup>	1.04 f/d
fo. 193 <sup>r</sup> -206 <sup>r</sup>	13.5 fo. in 23 days (Sept. 23 - Oct. 15)	0.58 f/d
fo. 206 <sup>v</sup> -208 <sup>v</sup>	2.5 fo. in 48 days (Oct. 16 - Dec. 3) <sup>(45)</sup>	0.05 f/d

This scheme gives us some insight into the writing speed and writing rhythm of Herman of Amsterdam, but it raises some questions that cannot be answered on the basis of the given datings alone. Our scribe's average daily output (208 fo. in 241 days, excluding the feast-days mentioned in the footnotes) is 0.86 f/d, but he was very slow when he started copying the *Legendary* (0.24 f/d) and even slower before arriving at the end (0.05 f/d). It is only conjectural, but a possible explanation is that he may have reread and corrected or even decorated his text before adding the colophon. It would be interesting to find out if other scribes were also slow at the beginning and at the end of a manuscript.

No less remarkable than his slow start and finish is the writing speed of our scribe on June 22-23, when he copied as much as 9.5 f/d. Even if he worked on June 24 (the Nativity of St John the Baptist), he still copied 6.35 f/d. This figure may imply that Herman of Amsterdam was able to write much more (or much faster) than he normally did, if he just wanted to, but we do not know what made him accelerate during such a very short period, and to return to his usual speed immediately afterwards. The same figure may also imply, however, that the average production calculated on the basis of the datings at the foot of the pages, does not correspond at all with the *pensum* of an ordinary day's work, but that Herman of Amsterdam did not work on the manuscript every day. In that case, his daily output on June 22-23 (or June 22-24) might represent his ordinary production quite faithfully, whereas the calculated output during the rest of the period between March 24 and December 3, 1506 is highly falsified by our assumption that he worked on it every day, even on Sundays and minor feast-days.

The key to some aspects our scribe's writing-speed and writing rhythm cannot be found in the manuscript itself, and evidence in other sources is hard to find. According to the *Necrology of the Carthusians of Utrecht*, Herman of Amsterdam died on May 3, 1517. Added to his *obit* is a note saying that he always had time at his disposal to copy books for use in the Chapel of his monastery. This suggests that, even at the beginning of

(41) Not counted: Sts Peter and Paul, Visitation of the Virgin.

(42) Not counted: St Lawrence's Day.

(43) Not counted: Assumption of the Virgin.

(44) Not counted: Birth of the Virgin.

(45) Not counted: All the Saints.



the 16th century, he was held in high esteem as a scribe by his fellow Carthusians, that he was a specialist for copying liturgical books, and that he was allowed to skip some of his liturgical duties. Apart from a Martyrology, which was probably not copied for liturgical use (and certainly not by Herman of Amsterdam), the books for Mass and Office of the Carthusians in Utrecht are all lost<sup>(46)</sup>, but we have mentioned already three non-liturgical manuscripts by the hand of our scribe, all kept in Utrecht University Library (p. 222-223).

Herman of Amsterdam can by no means be considered a rapid worker, at least not as far as we can deduce from the datings in two manuscripts, but we cannot exclude the possibility that he spent the best part of his working-hours on the copying of liturgical manuscripts, and that he devoted his 'spare time' to the copying of theological manuscripts.

## 6. Conclusions

We will probably never know whether Hans Ried, the scribe of the *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, was a *raffiniertes Faulpelz* or not, but most scholars will not regret our lack of knowledge in this particular field. Neither the manuscript itself, nor the archival documents on its production give any information on the character of the scribe. The *Ambraser Heldenbuch* will nevertheless remain an important source for German courtly literature. Many other questions concerning the making of this manuscript have been answered on the basis of careful codicological research.

The writing speed of professional scribes has been calculated in this article on the basis of a limited number of archival documents in Avignon and of manuscripts of a few Dutch scribes working in Italy. Substantial knowledge in this field seems possible on the basis of careful research on a limited number of well-defined manuscripts.

The average daily output of non-professional monastic scribes was lower than that of professional scribes, but we still know very little about the importance of the copying of books in everyday monastic life. We should refrain from attributing too much importance to this kind of work for most medieval monastics. The majority of them probably never copied a manuscript at all, and for a few, like Herman of Amsterdam, it was a serious and lasting occupation.

The irregular rhythm of scribal work, demonstrated by means of the datings in the *Legendary* copied by Herman of Amsterdam in 1506, may have been a characteristic feature of monastic book-production in the later Middle Ages<sup>(47)</sup>.

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(46) On this Martyrology see E.A. OVERGAAUW, *Martyrologes manuscrits des anciens diocèses de Liège et d'Utrecht. Étude sur le développement et la diffusion du Martyrologe d'Usuard* [= *Middleleeuwse studies en bronnen*, 30] (Hilversum 1993) p. 117-122.

(47) I am grateful to Ms. Fiona Healy (Berlin), who kindly corrected my English.